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# **Marxism & Nationalism**

**V.I. Lenin**

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# Introduction

*By Doug Lorimer*

Among Vladimir Ilyich Lenin's most outstanding contributions to the theory and practice of Marxism are his writings on nationalism and the national question. Assembled in this volume are a comprehensive selection, presented in chronological order, of Lenin's writings on this subject covering the period from the preparations for the second congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party in 1903 (at which Bolshevism emerged as a "current of political thought and as a political party"<sup>1</sup>) to the formation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in December 1922. Included as an appendix is Joseph Stalin's 1914 pamphlet *Marxism and the National Question* — originally published in 1913 as a series of articles in the Bolshevik magazine *Prosveshcheniye* (Enlightenment) under the title "The National Question and Self-Determination" — which Lenin described in December 1913 as providing the theoretical "fundamentals of a national program for Social-Democracy".<sup>2</sup>

That Lenin dealt extensively with this subject is not surprising — in the "prison-house of nations" that was tsarist Russia, the unification of the workers of different nationalities against the autocratic tsarist state and the capitalist class, which sought to divide the workers along national lines, was at the forefront of the problems facing the revolutionary Marxists. Only a single, multinational, democratically centralised Marxist revolutionary party, Lenin argued, could provide effective leadership to the multinational working class of Russia in the struggle to overthrow the tsarist autocracy and capitalism. It was, of course, just such a party which succeeded in leading the workers and peasants of Russia to victory in the October 1917 Revolution. But in order to build and maintain this party, Lenin had to repeatedly wage a polemical struggle against nationalist tendencies within the socialist movement itself — beginning in 1903 with his rejection of the organisational federalism and pro-Zionist separatism advocated by the Jewish Workers League (Bund) of Lithuania, Poland and Russia and ending with his 1922 criticism of the growing accommodation of a section of the ruling Bolshevik

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*Doug Lorimer* (1953-2013) was a longtime leader of the Democratic Socialist Party.

party headed by Stalin to the nationalist outlook and policy toward the non-Russians within the newly formed Soviet Union of “that really Russian man, the Great-Russian chauvinist, in substance a rascal and a tyrant, such as the typical Russian bureaucrat is”.<sup>3</sup>

The international unity of the working class in the struggle for democracy and socialism was the point of departure and the guiding line that runs through all of Lenin’s writings on the national question. As early as 1903 he noted that it was the task of socialists to “rally the greatest possible *masses* of workers of each and every nationality *more closely*, to rally them for struggle *in the broadest possible arena* for a democratic republic and for socialism”.<sup>4</sup> As a corollary of this approach, Lenin argued that socialists had to “resolutely oppose nationalism in all its forms”, both the “reactionary nationalism” of the tsarist ruling circles and the “refined and disguised nationalism of the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties”.<sup>5</sup>

Tsarist nationalism expressed the outlook and policy of the semi-capitalist, semi-feudal ruling caste of officials who were drawn from the semi-feudal ruling class of big landowners. This form of nationalism strove to safeguard the privileges of the dominant Russian nation at the expense of all the other nations (which together constituted 57% of the population living under tsarist rule), condemning them “to an inferior status, with fewer rights, or even no rights at all”. “Not a single Marxist, and not even a single democrat”, Lenin argued, “can treat this nationalism with anything else but the utmost hostility.”<sup>6</sup>

While the Russian and non-Russian bourgeois-democratic nationalists, Lenin pointed out, advocated equal rights for all nations “in deeds they (often covertly, behind the backs of the people) stand for certain privileges for one nation, and always try to secure greater advantages for ‘their own’ nation (i.e., for the bourgeoisie of their own nation); they strive to separate and segregate nations, to foster national exclusiveness, etc. By talking most of all about ‘national culture’ and emphasising what separates one nation from another, bourgeois nationalists *divide the workers* of the various nations”.

“The class-conscious workers”, Lenin argued in the same article, “combat *all* national oppression and *all* national privileges, but they do not confine themselves to that. They combat all, even the most refined nationalism, and advocate not only the unity, but also the *amalgamation* of the workers of all nationalities in the struggle against reaction and against bourgeois nationalism in all its forms. Our task is not to segregate nations, but to unite the workers of all nations.”<sup>7</sup>

In advocating that they oppose all forms of nationalism, Lenin was therefore not saying that class-conscious workers should ignore national consciousness, national

identity — the recognition of being a member of a particular national community and its relationship to other nations. To the contrary, in order to achieve proletarian class solidarity and the complete organisational amalgamation among workers of different nations living under the rule of a single state, Marxists had to champion the fullest possible equality in the relations between these nations, including the right of each nation to self-determination, to politically separate itself from other nations and constitute itself as a fully sovereign nation-state. At the same time, Marxists had to support “everything that helps to obliterate national distinctions and remove national barriers ... everything that makes the ties between nationalities closer and closer, or tends to merge nations”.<sup>8</sup>

These two, seemingly contradictory, sides of Lenin’s Marxist policy on the national question — defence of the right of each nation to determine its own destiny and the fullest possible equality between nations on the one hand, and, on the other, complete opposition to all forms of nationalism, to the bourgeois outlook and policy of segregating nations and support for everything that tends to remove national distinctions and to merge nations together — flowed from his recognition of the dialectical character of the historical process that gives rise to the national question.

Nations, as a particular objective form of human community, first came into existence with the emergence of capitalist relations of commodity production in feudal Europe, which required the amalgamation and merging of economically isolated and smaller feudal communities. But the growing economic interdependence which led to the emergence of nations and nation-states did not stop at national boundaries. The development of capitalism led to growing economic interdependence between nations, to the emergence of an interdependent worldwide economy and to breaking down of national distinctions and the beginning of the merging or assimilation of nations. In his 1913 article “Critical Remarks on the National Question” Lenin observed:

Developing capitalism knows two historical tendencies in the national question. The first is the awakening of national life and national movements, the struggle against all national oppression and the creation of national states. The second is the development and the growing frequency of international intercourse in every form, the breakdown of national barriers, the creation of the international unity of capital, of economic life in general, of politics, science, etc.

Both tendencies are a universal law of capitalism. The former predominates in the beginning of its development, the latter characterises a mature capitalism that is moving towards its transformation into socialist society.<sup>9</sup>

Lenin went on to ask: “Is there anything real left in the concept of assimilation, after all violence and all inequality [between nations] have been eliminated?” And he replies:

“Yes, there undoubtedly is. What is left is capitalism’s world-historical tendency to break down national barriers, obliterate national distinctions, and to *assimilate* nations — a tendency which manifests itself with every passing decade, and is one of the greatest driving forces for transforming capitalism into socialism.”<sup>10</sup>

Note that Lenin speaks of a “world-historical tendency” to “assimilate nations”, and that he views this tendency not as coming into operation *after* the ending of national oppression but as existing *simultaneously* with the opposing tendency, that expressed in the “awakening of national life and national movements, the struggle against all national oppression and the creation of national states”. He treats the two opposing tendencies as a dialectical unity of opposites and the contradiction between them as the motive force of the historical process of the development of nations.

For capitalism, the two tendencies present an insoluble contradiction, since capitalism is based on the exploitation of an increasingly socialised — i.e., *internationally interdependent* — productive process and productive forces for the private profit of capitalist owners who are increasingly concentrated within the monopolistic economic associations (corporations) of one or a few nations. The more capitalism develops the international interdependence of nations, the more pronounced does the tendency become to divide the world into a handful of privileged nations (characterised by a mature capitalism that is moving toward its transformation into socialism) and a large and growing number of oppressed and capitalistically underdeveloped nations.

As a consequence of this division, “an abstract presentation of the question of nationalism in general is of no use at all”, Lenin argued. “A distinction must necessarily be made between the nationalism of an oppressor nation and that of an oppressed nation”<sup>11</sup>, to wit, Marxists must resolutely oppose the first kind of nationalism since, either overtly or covertly, it defends the privileges of the oppressor nation; the second kind of nationalism, however, “has a general democratic content that is directed *against* [national] oppression and it is this content that we *unconditionally* support”.<sup>12</sup> Again, in his 1913 article “Critical Remarks on the National Question”, Lenin explained that such an approach was not in contradiction to the Marxist policy of opposing every form of nationalism:

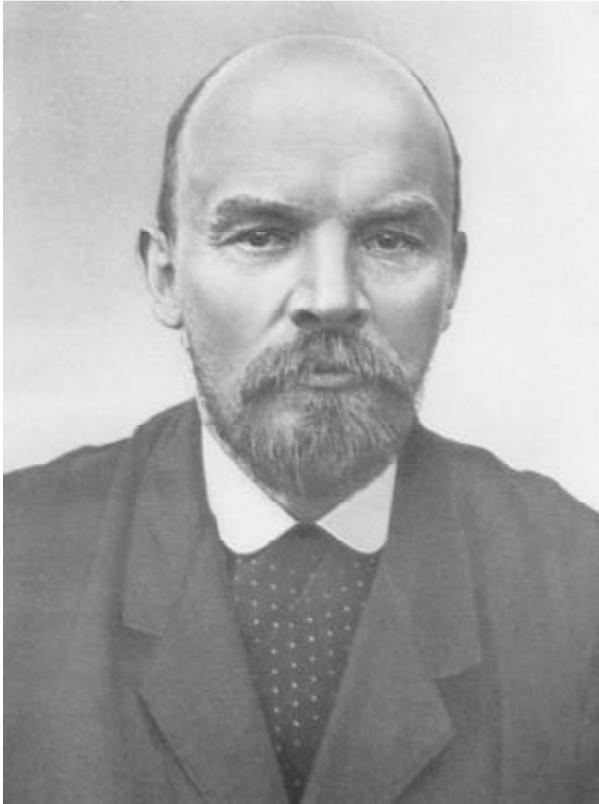
The principle of nationality is historically inevitable in bourgeois society and, taking this society into due account, the Marxist fully recognises the historical legitimacy of national [liberation] movements. But to prevent this recognition from becoming an apologia of nationalism, it must be strictly limited to what is progressive in such movements, in order that this recognition may not lead to bourgeois ideology obscuring proletarian consciousness.

The awakening of the masses from feudal lethargy, and their struggle against

national oppression, for the sovereignty of the people, of the nation, are progressive. Hence, it is the Marxist's *bounden* duty to stand for the most resolute and consistent democratism on all aspects of the national question. This task is largely a negative one. But this is the limit the proletariat can go in supporting nationalism, for beyond that begins the "positive" activity of the *bourgeoisie* to *fortify* nationalism.

To throw off the feudal yoke, all national oppression and all privileges enjoyed by any particular nation or language, is the imperative duty of the proletariat as a democratic force, and is certainly in the interests of proletarian class struggle, which is obscured and retarded by bickering on the national question. But to go *beyond* these strictly limited and definite historical limits in helping bourgeois nationalism means betraying the proletariat and siding with the bourgeoisie.<sup>13</sup>

For Lenin the struggle against national oppression, though absolutely essential to the task of uniting the workers of different nationalities in the struggle against their capitalist rulers, was never one for the perpetuation of national distinctions; its goal was rather to pave the way for the voluntary political union of nations as equals within a multinational, workers' and peasants' democratic republic, the framework for their free merger and assimilation into a new form of human community — the supranational, worldwide community characteristic of the future socialist society. ■



V.I. Lenin (1914)

# On the Manifesto of the League of the Armenian Social-Democrats<sup>14</sup>

A new Social-Democratic organisation has made its appearance in the Caucasus: *The League of Armenian Social-Democrats*. This League, as we know, began its practical activities over half a year ago and already has its own paper, published in Armenian. We have received the first issue of this paper, which is called *Proletariat* and next to its title carries the inscription “Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party”. It contains a number of articles, commentaries, and reports dealing with the social and political conditions which have called into existence the League of Armenian Social-Democrats, and giving a general outline of the program of its activities.

The leading article, “Manifesto of the Armenian Social-Democrats”, states: “In its activities, the League of Armenian Social-Democrats, as one of the branches of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party which extends the network of its organisations far and wide over the entire expanse of Russia, is in complete accord with the RSDLP, and will fight together with it for the interests of the Russian proletariat in general, and of the Armenian proletariat in particular.” Further, after referring to the rapid development of capitalism in the Caucasus and the monstrosly powerful and manifold results of this process, the authors go on to speak of the present state of the working-class movement in the Caucasus. In the industrial centres of the Caucasus, such as Baku, Tiflis, and Batum, with their big capitalist establishments and numerous industrial proletariat, this movement has already struck deep roots. However, because of the extremely low cultural level of the Caucasian workers, their struggle against the employers has naturally been of a more or less instinctive, spontaneous nature till now. A force was necessary which could unite the workers’ scattered forces, give their demands articulate form and develop class-consciousness among them. That force is socialism.

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First published in *Iskra*, February 1, 1903.

Then, after briefly setting forth the main theses of scientific socialism, the League explains its stand in relation to the present-day trends in international, and, in particular, Russian, Social-Democracy. "The attainment of the socialist ideal", says the Manifesto, "is, in our opinion, conceivable neither through the working class' efforts in the economic sphere nor through partial political and social reforms; it is possible only by completely smashing the entire existing system, by means of a social revolution, to which the political dictatorship of the proletariat must be the necessary prologue." Then, pointing out that the existing political system in Russia is hostile to every social movement, especially to that of the working class, the League declares that it sets itself the immediate task of politically educating the Armenian proletariat and drawing it into the struggle of the entire Russian proletariat for the overthrow of the tsarist autocracy. Without at all denying the need for the partial economic struggle of the workers against the employers, the League, however, does not consider it of importance in itself. The League recognises this struggle insofar as it improves the material condition of the workers and helps develop political consciousness and class solidarity among them.

Of particular interest to us is the League's attitude towards the national question. "Taking into consideration", says the Manifesto, "that the Russian state is made up of many different nationalities at varying levels of cultural development, and believing that only the extensive development of local self-government can safeguard the interests of these heterogeneous elements, we deem essential the establishment of a *federative* [italics ours] republic in the future free Russia. As to the Caucasus, in view of the extremely diverse national composition of its population, we shall strive to unite all the local socialist elements and all the workers of the various nationalities; we shall strive to create a united and strong Social-Democratic organisation, for a more successful struggle against the autocracy. In the future Russia we shall recognise the right of all nations to free self-determination, since we regard national freedom as being only one of the aspects of civil liberties in general. Proceeding from this proposition, and taking into account the above-mentioned diverse national composition of the Caucasus and the absence of geographical boundaries between the various nationalities, we do not find it possible to include in our program the demand for political autonomy for the Caucasian peoples; we demand only autonomy in matters pertaining to cultural life, i.e., freedom of language, schools, education, etc."

We wholeheartedly welcome the Manifesto of the League of Armenian Social-Democrats and especially its splendid attempt to give a correct presentation of the national question. It is highly desirable that this attempt be carried through to the end. Two fundamental principles by which all Social-Democrats in Russia should be guided in the national question *have been* quite correctly *outlined* by the League. These are,

firstly, the demand for political and civil liberties and complete equality, rather than for national autonomy; and, secondly, the demand for the right to self-determination for every nationality forming part of the state. But neither of these principles is as yet quite consistently brought out by the League of Armenian Social-Democrats. As a matter of fact, is it possible *from the Armenian Social-Democrats' point of view* to speak of the demand for a *federative* republic? Federation *presupposes* autonomous national political units, whereas the League rejects the demand for national autonomy. To be fully consistent, the League should delete the demand for a *federative* republic from its program, confining itself to the demand for a democratic republic in general. It is not the business of the proletariat to *preach* federalism and national autonomy; it is not the business of the proletariat to advance such demands, which inevitably amount to a demand for the establishment of an autonomous *class* state. It is the business of the proletariat to rally the greatest possible *masses* of workers of each and every nationality *more closely*, to rally them for struggle *in the broadest possible arena* for a democratic republic and for socialism. And since the state arena in which we are working today was created and is being maintained and extended by means of a series of outrageous acts of violence, then, to make the struggle against all forms of exploitation and oppression successful, we must not disperse but unite the forces of the *working class*, which is the most oppressed and the most capable of fighting. The demand for recognition of every nationality's right to self-determination simply implies that we, the party of the proletariat, must always and unconditionally *oppose any attempt* to influence national self-determination from without *by violence or injustice*. While at all times performing this negative duty of ours (to fight and protest against violence), we on our part concern ourselves with the self-determination of the *proletariat* in each nationality rather than with self-determination of peoples or nations. Thus, the general, basic and ever-binding program of Russian Social-Democracy must consist only in the demand for equal rights for all citizens (irrespective of sex, language, creed, race, nationality, etc.) and for their right to free democratic *self-determination*. As to *support* of the demand for *national* autonomy, it is by no means a permanent and binding part of the program of the proletariat. This support may become necessary for it only in isolated and exceptional cases. With regard to Armenian Social-Democracy, the League of Armenian Social-Democrats has itself recognised the absence of such exceptional circumstances.

We hope to return to the question of federalism and nationality. For the time being we shall conclude by once again welcoming a new member of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party — the League of Armenian Social-Democrats. ■

# The National Question in Our Program<sup>15</sup>

In our draft party program we have advanced the demand for a republic with a democratic constitution that would guarantee, among other things, “recognition of the right to self-determination for all nations forming part of the state”. Many did not find this demand in our program sufficiently clear, and in issue No. 33, in speaking about the Manifesto of the Armenian Social-Democrats, we explained the meaning of this point in the following way. The Social-Democrats will always combat every attempt to influence national self-determination from without by violence or by any injustice. However, our unreserved recognition of the struggle for freedom of self-determination does not in any way commit us to supporting every demand for national self-determination. As the party of the proletariat, the Social-Democratic Party considers it to be its positive and principal task to further the self-determination of the proletariat in each nationality rather than that of peoples or nations. We must always and unreservedly work for the *very closest* unity of the proletariat of all nationalities, and it is only in isolated and exceptional cases that we can advance and actively support demands conducive to the establishment of a new class state or to the substitution of a looser federal unity, etc., for the complete political unity of a state.

This explanation of our program on the national question has evoked a strong protest from the Polish Socialist Party (PSP). In an article entitled “The Attitude of the Russian Social-Democrats Towards the National Question” (*Przedswit*,<sup>a</sup> March 1903), the PSP expresses indignation at this “amazing” explanation and at the “vagueness” of this “mysterious” self-determination of ours; it accuses us both of doctrinarism and of holding the “anarchist” view that “the worker is concerned with nothing but the complete abolition of capitalism, since, we learn, language, nationality, culture, and the like are mere bourgeois inventions”, and so on. It is worth considering this argument

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First published in *Iskra*, July 15, 1903.

<sup>a</sup> Dawn — Ed.

in detail, for it reveals almost all the misconceptions in the national question so common and so widespread among socialists.

What makes our explanation so “amazing”? Why is it considered a departure from the “literal” meaning? Does recognition of the *right* of nations to self-determination really imply *support* of any demand of every nation for self-determination? After all, the fact that we recognise the *right* of all citizens to form free associations does not at all commit us, Social-Democrats, to *supporting* the formation of any new association; nor does it prevent us from opposing and campaigning against the formation of a given association as an inexpedient and unwise step. We even recognise the *right* of the Jesuits to carry on agitation freely, but we fight (not by police methods, of course) against an alliance between the Jesuits and the proletarians. Consequently, when the *Przedswit* says: “If this demand for the right to free self-determination is to be taken literally [and that is how we have taken it hitherto], then it would satisfy us” — it is quite obvious that it is precisely the PSP that is departing from the literal meaning of the program. Its conclusion is certainly illogical from the formal point of view.

We do not, however, wish to confine ourselves to a formal verification of our explanation. We shall go straight to the root of the matter: is Social-Democracy in duty bound to demand national independence always and unreservedly, or only under certain circumstances; if the latter is the case then under what circumstances? To this question the PSP has always replied in favour of unreserved recognition; we are not in the least surprised, therefore, at the fondness it displays towards the Russian Socialist-Revolutionaries, who demand a federal state system and speak in favour of “complete and unreserved recognition of the right to national self-determination” (*Revolutsionnaya Rossiya*, No. 18, the article entitled “National Enslavement and Revolutionary Socialism”). Unfortunately, this is nothing more than one of those bourgeois-democratic phrases which, for the hundredth and thousandth time, reveal the true nature of the so-called party of so-called Socialist-Revolutionaries. By falling for the bait presented by these phrases and yielding to the allurements of this clamour, the PSP in its turn proves how weak in theoretical background and political activities is its link with the class struggle of the proletariat. But it is to the interests of this struggle that we must *subordinate* the demand for national self-determination. It is this that makes all the difference between our approach to the national question and the bourgeois-democratic approach. The bourgeois democrat (and the present-day socialist opportunist who follows in his footsteps) imagines that democracy eliminates the class struggle, and that is why he presents all his political demands in an abstract way, lumped together, “without reservations”, from the standpoint of the interests of the “whole people”, or even from that of an eternal and absolute moral principle. Always

and everywhere the Social-Democrat ruthlessly exposes this bourgeois illusion, whether it finds expression in an abstract idealist philosophy or in an absolute demand for national independence.

If there is still need to prove that a Marxist can recognise the demand for national independence only conditionally, namely, on the condition indicated above, let us quote a writer who *defended* from the Marxist viewpoint the Polish proletarians' demand for an independent Poland. In 1896 Karl Kautsky wrote in an article entitled "Finis Poloniae?":<sup>a</sup> "Once the proletariat tackles the Polish question it cannot but take a stand in favour of Poland's independence, and, consequently, it cannot but welcome each step that can be taken in this direction at the present time, insofar as this step is at all compatible with the class interests of the international militant proletariat."

"This reservation", Kautsky goes on to say, "should be made in any case. *National independence is not so inseparably linked with the class interests of the militant proletariat as to make it necessary to strive for it unconditionally, under any circumstances.*"<sup>b</sup> Marx and Engels took a most determined stand in favour of the unification and liberation of Italy, but this did not prevent them from coming out in 1859 against an Italy allied with Napoleon." (*Neue Zeit*, XIV, 2, S. 520.)

As you see, Kautsky categorically rejects the *unconditional* demand for the independence of nations, and categorically demands that the question be placed not merely on a historical basis in general, but specifically on a class basis. And if we examine how Marx and Engels treated the Polish question, we shall see that this was precisely their approach to it from the very outset. *Die Neue Rheinische Zeitung* devoted much space to the Polish question, and emphatically demanded, not only the independence of Poland, but also that Germany go to war with Russia for Poland's freedom. At the same time Marx, however, attacked Ruge, who had spoken in favour of Poland's freedom in the Frankfurt Parliament and had tried to settle the Polish question solely by means of bourgeois-democratic phrases about "shameful injustice" without making any attempt to analyse it historically. Marx was not like those pedants and philistines of the revolution who dread nothing more than "polemics" at revolutionary moments in history. Marx poured pitiless scorn on the "humane" citizen Ruge, and showed him, from the example of the oppression of the south of France by the north of France, that it is not every kind of national oppression that invariably inspires a desire for independence which is justified from the viewpoint of democracy and the proletariat. Marx referred to special social circumstances as a result of which

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<sup>a</sup> "The End of Poland?" — *Ed.*

<sup>b</sup> Italics ours.

“Poland ... became the revolutionary part of Russia, Austria, and Prussia ... Even the Polish nobility, although their foundations were still partly feudal, adhered to the democratic agrarian revolution with unparalleled selflessness. Poland was already a seat of East-European democracy at a time when Germany was still groping her way through the most platitudinous constitutional and high-flown philosophical ideology ... So long as we [Germans] ... help to oppress Poland, so long as we keep part of Poland fettered to Germany, we shall remain fettered to Russia and Russian policy, we shall be unable completely to smash patriarchal feudal absolutism at home. The creation of a democratic Poland is the primary prerequisite of the creation of a democratic Germany.”<sup>16</sup>

We have quoted these statements in such detail because they graphically show the historical background at a time when the attitude of international Social-Democracy to the Polish problem took shape in a way which held good almost throughout the second half of the 19th century. To ignore the changes which have taken place in that background and to continue advocating the old solutions given by Marxism, would mean being true to the letter but not to the spirit of the teaching, would mean repeating the old conclusions by rote, without being able to use the Marxist method of research to analyse the new political situation. Those times and today — the age of the last bourgeois revolutionary movements, and the age of desperate reaction, extreme tension of all forces on the eve of the proletarian revolution — differ in the most obvious way. *In those times* Poland as a whole, not only the peasantry, but even the bulk of the nobility, was revolutionary. The traditions of the struggle for national liberation were so strong and deep-rooted that, after their defeat at home, Poland's best sons went wherever they could find a revolutionary class to support; the memory of Dombrowski and of Wróblewski is inseparably associated with the greatest movement of the proletariat in the 19th century, with the last — and let us hope the last unsuccessful — insurrection of the Paris workers. *In those times* complete victory for democracy in Europe was indeed impossible without the restoration of Poland. *In those times* Poland was indeed the bulwark of civilisation against tsarism, and the vanguard of democracy. *Today* the Polish ruling classes, the gentry in Germany and in Austria, and the industrial and financial magnates in Russia are supporting the ruling classes of the countries that oppress Poland, while the German and the Russian proletariat are fighting for freedom side by side with the Polish proletariat, which has heroically taken over the great traditions of the old revolutionary Poland. *Today* the advanced representatives of Marxism in the neighbouring country, while attentively watching the political evolution of Europe and fully sympathising with the heroic struggle of the Poles, nevertheless frankly admit that “at present St. Petersburg has

become a much more important revolutionary centre than Warsaw, and the Russian revolutionary movement is already of greater international significance than the Polish movement". This is what Kautsky wrote as early as 1896, in defending the inclusion in the Polish Social-Democrats' program of the demand for Poland's restoration. And in 1902 Mehring, who has been studying the evolution of the Polish question since 1848, arrived at the following conclusion: "Had the Polish proletariat desired to inscribe on its banner the restoration of a Polish class state, which the ruling classes themselves do not want to hear of, it would be playing a historical farce; this may well happen to the propertied classes (as, for instance, the Polish nobility in 1791), but it should never happen to the working class. If, on the other hand, this reactionary utopia comes out to win over to proletarian agitation those sections of the intelligentsia and of the petty bourgeoisie which still respond in some measure to national agitation, then that utopia is doubly untenable as an outgrowth of that unworthy opportunism which sacrifices the long-term interests of the working class to the cheap and paltry successes of the moment.

"Those interests dictate categorically that, in all three states that have partitioned Poland, the Polish workers should fight unreservedly side by side with their class comrades. The times are past when a bourgeois revolution could create a free Poland: today the renaissance of Poland is possible only through a social revolution, in the course of which the modern proletariat will break its chains."<sup>17</sup>

We fully subscribe to Mehring's conclusion. We shall only remark that this conclusion remains unassailable even if we do not go as far as Mehring in our arguments. Without any doubt the present state of the Polish question differs radically from that which obtained 50 years ago. However, the present situation cannot be regarded as permanent. Class antagonism has now undoubtedly relegated national questions far into the background, but, without the risk of lapsing into doctrinairism, it cannot be categorically asserted that some particular national question cannot appear temporarily in the foreground of the political drama. No doubt, the restoration of Poland prior to the fall of capitalism is highly improbable, but it cannot be asserted that it is absolutely impossible, or that circumstances may not arise under which the Polish bourgeoisie will take the side of independence, etc. And Russian Social-Democracy does not in the least intend to tie its own hands. In including in its program recognition of the right of nations to self-determination, it takes into account *all* possible, and even all *conceivable*, combinations. That program in no way precludes the adoption by the Polish proletariat of the slogan of a free and independent Polish republic, even though the probability of its becoming a reality before socialism is introduced is infinitesimal. The program merely demands that a genuinely socialist party shall not corrupt proletarian class-

consciousness or slur over the class struggle, or lure the working class with bourgeois-democratic phrases, or break the unity of the proletariat's present-day political struggle. This reservation is the crux of the matter, for only with this reservation do we recognise self-determination. It is useless for the PSP to pretend that it differs from the German or Russian Social-Democrats in their rejection of the right to self-determination, the right to strive for a free and independent republic. It is not this, but the fact that it loses sight of the class point of view, obscures it by chauvinism and disrupts the unity of the present-day political struggle, that prevents us from regarding the PSP as a genuine Social-Democratic workers' party. This, for instance, is how the PSP usually presents the question: "... We can only weaken tsarism by wresting Poland from it; it is the task of the Russian comrades to overthrow it." Or again: "... After the overthrow of tsarism we would simply decide our fate by seceding from Russia." See to what monstrous conclusions this monstrous logic leads, even from the viewpoint of the program demand for Poland's restoration. *Because* the restoration of Poland is one of the possible (but, whilst the bourgeoisie rules, by no means absolutely certain) consequences of democratic evolution, *therefore* the Polish proletariat must not fight together with the Russian proletariat to overthrow tsarism, but "only" to weaken it by wresting Poland from it. *Because* Russian tsarism is concluding a closer and closer alliance with the bourgeoisie and the governments of Germany, Austria, etc., *therefore* the Polish proletariat must weaken its alliance with the proletariat of Russia, Germany, etc., together with whom it is now fighting against *one and the same* yoke. This is nothing more than sacrificing the most vital interests of the proletariat to the bourgeois-democratic conception of national independence. The disintegration of Russia which the PSP desires, *as distinct from* our aim of overthrowing tsarism, is and will remain an empty phrase, as long as economic development continues to bring the different parts of a political whole more and more closely together, and as long as the bourgeoisie of all countries unite more and more closely against their common enemy, the proletariat, and in support of their common ally, the tsar. But *the division of the forces of the proletariat*, which is now suffering under the yoke of this autocracy, is the sad reality, the direct consequence of the error of the PSP, the direct outcome of its worship of bourgeois-democratic formulas. To turn a blind eye to this division of the proletariat, the PSP has to stoop to chauvinism and present the views of the Russian Social-Democrats as follows: "We [the Poles] must wait for the social revolution, and until then we must patiently endure national oppression." This is an utter falsehood. The Russian Social-Democrats have never advised anything of the sort; on the contrary, they themselves fight, and call upon the whole Russian proletariat to fight, against all manifestations of national oppression in Russia; they include in *their* program not

only complete equality of status for all languages, nationalities, etc., but also recognition of every nation's right to determine its own destiny. Recognising this right, we *subordinate* to the interests of the proletarian struggle our support of the demand for national independence, and only a chauvinist can interpret our position as an expression of a Russian's mistrust of a non-Russian, for in reality this position necessarily follows from the class-conscious proletarian's distrust of the bourgeoisie. The PSP takes the view that the national question is *exhausted* by the contrast — “we” (Poles) and “they” (Germans, Russians, etc.). The Social-Democrat, however, gives first place to the contrast — “we”, the proletarians, and “they”, the bourgeoisie. “We”, the proletarians, have seen dozens of times how the bourgeoisie *betrays* the interests of freedom, motherland, language, and nation, when it is confronted with the revolutionary proletariat. We witnessed the French bourgeoisie's surrender to the Prussians at the moment of the greatest humiliation and suppression of the French nation, the Government of National Defence becoming a Government of National Defection, the bourgeoisie of an oppressed nation calling to its aid the troops of the oppressing nation so as to crush its proletarian fellow countrymen, who had dared to assume power. And that is why, undeterred by chauvinist and opportunist heckling, we shall always say to the Polish workers: only the most complete and intimate alliance with the Russian proletariat can meet the requirements of the present political struggle against the autocracy; only such an alliance can guarantee complete political and economic emancipation.

What we have said on the Polish question is wholly applicable to every other national question. The accursed history of autocracy has left us a legacy of tremendous *estrangement* between the working classes of the various nationalities oppressed by that autocracy. This estrangement is a very great evil, a very great obstacle in the struggle against the autocracy, and we must not legitimise this evil or sanctify this outrageous state of affairs by establishing any such “principles” as separate parties or a “federation” of parties. It is, of course, simpler and easier to follow the line of least resistance, and for everyone to make himself comfortable in his own corner following the rule, “it's none of my business”, as the Bund now wants to do. The more we realise the need for unity and the more firmly we are convinced that a concerted offensive against the autocracy is impossible without complete unity, the more obvious becomes the necessity for a centralised organisation of the struggle in the conditions of our political system — the less inclined are we to be satisfied with a “simple”, but specious and, at bottom, profoundly false solution of the problem. So long as the injuriousness of estrangement is not realised, and so long as there is no desire to put an end radically and at all costs to this estrangement in the camp of the proletarian party, there is no need for the fig-leaf of “federation”, and no use in undertaking to solve a problem

which one of the “sides” concerned has no real desire to solve. That being the case, it is better to let the lessons of experience and of the actual movement prove that centralism is essential for success in the struggle waged by the proletarians of all nationalities oppressed by autocracy against that autocracy and against the international bourgeoisie, which is becoming more and more united. ■

# The Position of the Bund in the Party<sup>18</sup>

Under this title the Bund has published a translation of an article from No. 34 of the *Arbeiterstimme*.<sup>19</sup> This article, accompanying the decisions of the Fifth Bund Congress, represents as it were an official commentary on those decisions. It attempts to give a systematic exposition of all the arguments which lead to the conclusion that the Bund “must be a federated component of the Party”. It will be interesting to examine these arguments.

The author begins by stating that the most burning question facing the Russian Social-Democratic movement is the question of unity. On what basis can it be effected? The Manifesto of 1898<sup>20</sup> took the principle of autonomy as the basis. The author examines this principle and finds it to be logically false and inherently contradictory. If by questions which specifically concern the Jewish proletariat are meant only such as relate to methods of agitation (with reference to the specific language, mentality and culture of the Jews), that will be technical (?) autonomy. But such autonomy will mean the destruction of all independence, for it is an autonomy enjoyed by every party committee, and to put the Bund on a par with the committees will be a denial of autonomy. If, on the other hand, autonomy is understood to mean autonomy in some questions of the program, it is unreasonable to deprive the Bund of all independence in the other questions of the program; and independence in questions of program necessarily involves representation of the Bund, as such, on the central bodies of the party — that is, not autonomy, but federation. A sound basis for the position of the Bund in the party must be sought in the history of the Jewish revolutionary movement in Russia, and what that history shows is that all organisations active among the Jewish workers joined to form a single union — the Bund — and that its activities spread from Lithuania to Poland and then to the South of Russia. Consequently, history broke down all regional barriers and brought forward the Bund as the sole representative of

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the Jewish proletariat. And there you have a principle which is not the fruit of an idle brain (?) but follows from the whole history of the Jewish working-class movement: the Bund is the sole representative of the interests of the Jewish proletariat. And, naturally, the organisation of the proletariat of a whole nationality can enter the party only if the latter has a federal structure: the Jewish proletariat is not only part of the world family of proletarians, but also part of the Jewish nation, which occupies a special position among the nations. Lastly, it is federation that denotes close unity between the component elements of the party, for its chief feature is direct participation by each of them in party affairs, and they all feel they have equal rights. Under autonomy, on the other hand, the components of the party have no rights, and there is indifference to its common affairs, and mutual distrust, friction and conflict.

Such is the author's line of argument, which we have presented almost entirely in his own words. It boils down to three things: considerations of a general nature as to the inherent contradictoriness of autonomy and its unsuitability from the standpoint of close unity between the components of the party; lessons from history, which has made the Bund the sole representative of the Jewish proletariat; and, lastly, the affirmation that the Jewish proletariat is the proletariat of a whole nationality, a nationality occupying a special position. Thus the author endeavours to build his case on general principles of organisation, on the lessons of history, and on the idea of nationality. He tries — we must give him his due — to examine the matter from all angles. And for that very reason his statement of the case brings out so saliently the attitude of the Bund on this question which is of deep concern to all of us.

Under federation, we are told, the components of the party have equal rights and share directly in its common affairs; under autonomy they have no rights, and as such do not share in the general life of the party. This argument belongs entirely to the realm of obvious fallacies; it is as like as two peas to those arguments which mathematicians call mathematical sophistries, and which prove — quite logically, at first glance — that twice two are five, that the part is greater than the whole, and so on. There are collections of such mathematical sophistries, and they are of some value to school children. But it is even embarrassing to have to explain to people who claim to be the sole representatives of the Jewish proletariat so elementary a sophistry as the attribution of different meanings to the term “component of the party” in two parts of one and the same argument. When they speak of federation, they mean by a component of the party a sum-total of organisations in different localities; but when they speak of autonomy, they mean by it each local organisation separately. Put these supposedly identical concepts side by side in the same syllogism, and you will arrive inevitably at the conclusion that twice two are five. And if the Bundists are still unclear as to the

nature of their sophistry, let them consult their own maximum rules and they will see that it is under federation that the local organisations communicate with the party centre *indirectly*, and under autonomy — directly. No, our federalists would do better not to talk about “close unity”! By trying to disprove that federation means the *isolation*, and autonomy the *fusion* of the different components of the party, they only provoke hilarity.

Hardly more successful is the attempt to prove the “logical falsity” of autonomy by dividing the latter into program autonomy and technical autonomy. The division itself is utterly absurd. Why should the specific methods of agitation among Jewish workers be classed under technical questions? What has technique to do with it, when it is a matter of peculiarities of language, mentality, conditions of life? How can you talk of independence in questions of program in connection, for example, with the demand for civil equality for the Jews? The Social-Democratic program only sets forth the basic demands, common to the entire proletariat, irrespective of occupational, local, national, or racial distinctions. The effect of these distinctions is that one and the same demand for complete equality of citizens before the law gives rise to agitation against one form of inequality in one locality and against another form of inequality in another locality or in relation to other groups of the proletariat, and so on. One and the same point in the program will be applied differently depending on differences in conditions of life, differences of culture, differences in the relation of social forces in different parts of the country, and so forth. Agitation on behalf of one and the same demand in the program will be carried on in different ways and in different languages taking into account all these differences. Consequently, autonomy in questions specifically concerning the proletariat of a given race, nation, or district implies that it is left to the discretion of the organisation concerned to determine the specific demands to be advanced in pursuance of the common program, and the methods of agitation to be employed. The party as a whole, its central institutions, lay down the common fundamental principles of program and tactics; as to the different methods of carrying out these principles in practice and agitating for them, they are laid down by the various party organisations subordinate to the centre, depending on local, racial, national, cultural, and other differences.

Is there anything unclear about this conception of autonomy? And is it not the sheerest scholasticism to make a division into program autonomy and technical autonomy?

Just see how the concept autonomy is “logically analysed” in the pamphlet we are examining. “From the total body of questions with which the Social-Democrats have to deal”, the pamphlet says in connection with the autonomy principle taken as the

basis in the 1898 Manifesto, “there are singled out [*sic!*] some questions, which, it is recognised, specifically concern the Jewish proletariat ... Where the realm of general questions begins, the autonomy of the Bund ends ... This gives rise to a duality in the position of the Bund in the party: in specific questions it acts as the Bund ... in general questions it loses its distinctive character and is put on a par with an ordinary committee of the party ...” The Social-Democratic program demands complete equality of all citizens before the law. *In pursuance* of that program the Jewish worker in Vilna puts forward one specific demand, and the Bashkir worker in Ufa an entirely different specific demand. Does that mean that “from the total body of questions” “some are *singled out*”? If the general demand for equality is embodied in a number of specific demands for the abolition of specific forms of inequality, is that a *singling out* of the specific from the general questions? The specific demands are not singled out from the general demands of the program, but are advanced *in pursuance* of them. What is singled out is what specifically concerns the Jew in Vilna as distinct from what specifically concerns the Bashkir in Ufa. The generalisation of their demands, the representation of their *common class interests* (and not of their specific occupational, racial, local, national, or other interests) is the affair of the whole party, of the party centre. That would surely seem clear enough! The reason the Bundists have muddled it is that, instead of logical analysis, they have again and again given us specimens of logical fallacies. They have entirely failed to grasp the relation between the Social-Democrats’ general and specific demands. They imagine that “from the total body of questions with which the Social-Democrats have to deal, some questions are singled out”, when actually *every* question dealt with in our program is a generalisation of a number of specific questions and demands; *every* point in the program is common to the *entire* proletariat, while at the same time it is subdivided into specific questions depending on the proletarians’ different occupations, their different conditions of life, differences of language, and so on and so forth. The Bundists are disturbed by the contradictoriness and duality of the position of the Bund, consisting, don’t you see, in the fact that in specific questions it acts as the Bund, while in general questions it loses its distinctive character. A little reflection would show them that such a “duality” exists in the position of *absolutely every* Social-Democratic worker, who in specific questions acts as a worker in a particular trade, a member of a particular nation, an inhabitant of a particular locality, while in general questions he “loses his distinctive character” and is put on a par with *every other* Social-Democrat. The autonomy of the Bund, under the rules of 1898, is of exactly the same nature as the autonomy of the Tula Committee; only the limits of this autonomy are somewhat different and somewhat wider in the former case than in the latter. And there is nothing but a crying logical fallacy in the following

argument, by which the Bund tries to refute this conclusion: “If the Bund is allowed independence in some questions of the *program*, on what grounds is it deprived of *all* independence in the other questions of the program?” This contrasting of specific and general questions as “some” and “*the others*” is an inimitable specimen of Bundist “logical analysis”! These people simply cannot understand that it is like contrasting the different colours, tastes, and fragrances of particular apples to the *number* of “other” apples. We make bold to inform you, gentlemen, that not only some, but every apple has its special taste, colour, and fragrance. Not only in “some” questions of the program, but *in all without exception*, you are allowed independence, gentlemen, but only as far as concerns their application to the specific features of the Jewish proletariat. “*Mein teurer Freund, ich rat’ Euch drum zuerst Collegium logicum!*”<sup>a</sup>

The second argument of the Bundists is an appeal to history, which is supposed to have brought forward the Bund as the sole representative of the Jewish proletariat.

In the first place, this is not true. The author of the pamphlet himself says that “the work of other organisations [besides the Bund] in this direction [i.e., among the Jewish proletariat] either yielded no results at all, or results too insignificant to merit attention”. Hence, on his own admission, there was such work, and consequently the Bund *was not* the *sole* representative of the Jewish proletariat; as regards the results of this work, no one, of course, will rely on the Bund’s opinion; and, lastly, it is a known fact that the Bund *interfered* with the work of other organisations among the Jewish proletariat (we have only to mention the well-known incident of its campaign against the Ekaterinoslav Party Committee for daring to issue a proclamation to the Jewish workers<sup>21</sup>), so that even if the results did indeed merit no attention, the Bund itself would be partly to blame.

Further, the measure of truth contained in the Bund’s historical reference does not in the least prove the soundness of its arguments. The facts which did take place and which the Bund has in mind speak against it, not for it. These facts are that the Bund existed and developed — during the five years since the First Congress — quite separately and independently from the other organisations of the party. In general, the actual ties between all party organisations during this period were very weak, but the ties between the Bund and the rest of the party were not only far weaker than those between the other organisations, but they kept growing weaker all the time. That the Bund itself *weakened* these ties is directly proved by the history of our party’s organisations abroad. In 1898, the Bund members abroad belonged to the one common party organisation; but by 1903 they had left it to form a completely separate and

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<sup>a</sup> “Hence, my dear friend, I would advise you to begin with college logic.”<sup>22</sup> — *Ed.*

independent organisation. The separateness and independence of the Bund is beyond question, as is also the fact that it has steadily become more pronounced.

What follows from this unquestionable fact? What follows in the opinion of the Bundists is that one must bow to this fact, slavishly submit to it, turn it into a principle, into the sole principle providing a sound basis for the position of the Bund, and legitimise this principle in the rules, which should recognise the Bund as the sole representative of the Jewish proletariat in the party. In our opinion, on the other hand, such a conclusion is the sheerest opportunism, “tail-ism”<sup>23</sup> of the worst kind. The conclusion to be drawn from the five years of disunity is not that this disunity should be legitimised, but that an end should be put to it once and for all. And will anybody still venture to deny that it really was disunity? *All* component parts of the party developed separately and independently during this period — are we perhaps to deduce from this the “principle” of federation between Siberia, the Caucasus, the Urals, the South, and the rest?? The Bundists themselves say that, as regards organisational unity of its components, the party virtually did not exist — and how can what evolved when the Party did not exist be taken as a pattern for the *restoration* of organisational unity? No, gentlemen, your reference to the history of the disunity that gave rise to isolation proves nothing whatever except that this isolation is abnormal. To deduce a “principle” of *organisation* from several years of *disorganisation* in the party is to act like those representatives of the historical school who, as Marx sarcastically observed, were prepared to defend the knout on the grounds that it was historical.

Hence, neither the “logical analysis” of autonomy nor the appeals to history can provide even the shadow of a “principle” justifying the isolation of the Bund. But the Bund’s third argument, which invokes the idea of a Jewish nation, is undoubtedly of the nature of a principle. Unfortunately, however, this Zionist idea is absolutely false and essentially reactionary. “The Jews have ceased to be a nation, for a nation without a territory is unthinkable”, says one of the most prominent of Marxist theoreticians, Karl Kautsky (see No. 42 of *Iskra* and the separate reprint from it *The Kishinev Massacre and the Jewish Question*, p. 3). And quite recently, examining the problem of nationalities in Austria, the same writer endeavoured to give a scientific definition of the concept nationality and established two principal criteria of a nationality: language and territory (*Neue Zeit*, 1903, No. 2). A French Jew, the radical Alfred Naquet, says practically the same thing, word for word, in his controversy with the anti-semites and the Zionists. “If it pleased Bernard Lazare”, he writes of the well-known Zionist, “to consider himself a citizen of a separate nation, that is his affair; but I declare that, although I was born a Jew ... I do not recognise Jewish nationality ... I belong to no other nation but the French ... Are the Jews a nation? Although they were one in the remote past, my reply

is a categorical *negative*. The concept nation implies certain conditions which do not exist in this case. A nation must have a territory on which to develop, and, in our time at least, until a world confederation has extended this basis, a nation must have a common language. And the Jews no longer have either a territory or a common language ... Like myself, Bernard Lazare probably did not know a word of Hebrew, and would have found it no easy matter, if Zionism had achieved its purpose, to make himself understood to his co-racials [*congénères*] from other parts of the world” (*La Petite République*, September 24, 1903). “German and French Jews are quite unlike Polish and Russian Jews. The characteristic features of the Jews include nothing that bears the imprint [*empreinte*] of nationality. If it were permissible to recognise the Jews as a nation, as Drumont does, it would be an artificial nation. The modern Jew is a product of the unnatural selection to which his forebears were subjected for nearly 18 centuries.” All that remains for the Bundists is to develop the theory of a separate Russian-Jewish nation, whose language is Yiddish and their territory the Pale of Settlement.

Absolutely untenable scientifically,<sup>a</sup> the idea that the Jews form a separate nation is reactionary politically. Irrefutable practical proof of that is furnished by generally known facts of recent history and of present-day political realities. All over Europe, the decline of medievalism and the development of political liberty went hand in hand with the political emancipation of the Jews, their abandonment of Yiddish for the language of the people among whom they lived, and, in general, their undeniable progressive assimilation with the surrounding population. Are we again to revert to the exceptionalist theories and proclaim that Russia will be the one exception, although the Jewish emancipation movement is far broader and deeper-rooted here, thanks to the awakening of a heroic class-consciousness among the Jewish proletariat? Can we possibly attribute to chance the fact that it is the reactionary forces all over Europe, and especially in Russia, who *oppose* the assimilation of the Jews and try to perpetuate their isolation?

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<sup>a</sup> Not only national, but even racial peculiarities are denied to the Jews by modern scientific investigators, who give prime prominence to the peculiarities of the *history* of the Jews. “Do the peculiarities of Jewry spring from its racial character?” Karl Kautsky asks, and replies that we do not even know with precision what race means. “There is no need to bring in the concept race, which provides no real answer but only poses new problems. It is enough to trace the history of the Jews to ascertain the reasons for their characteristics.” And such an expert in this history as Renan says: “The characteristic features of the Jews and their manner of life are far more a product of the social conditions [*nécessités sociales*] by which they have been influenced for centuries than a racial distinction [*phénomène de race*].”<sup>24</sup>

That is precisely what the Jewish problem *amounts to*: assimilation or isolation? — and the idea of a Jewish “nationality” is definitely reactionary not only when expounded by its consistent advocates (the Zionists), but likewise on the lips of those who try to combine it with the ideas of Social-Democracy (the Bundists). The idea of a Jewish nationality runs counter to the interests of the Jewish proletariat, for it fosters among them, directly or indirectly, a spirit hostile to assimilation, the spirit of the “ghetto”. “When the National Assembly of 1791 decreed the emancipation of the Jews”, writes Renan, “it was very little concerned with the question of race ... It is the business of the 19th century to abolish all ‘ghettos’, and I cannot compliment those who seek to restore them. The Jewish race has rendered the world the greatest services. Assimilated with the various nations, harmoniously blended with the various national units, it will render no lesser services in the future than in the past.” And Karl Kautsky, in particular reference to the Russian Jews, expresses himself even more vigorously. Hostility towards non-native sections of the population can only be eliminated “when the non-native sections of the population cease to be alien and blend with the general mass of the population. *That is the only possible solution of the Jewish problem, and we should support everything that makes for the ending of Jewish isolation.*” Yet the Bund is resisting this only possible solution, for it is helping, not to end but to increase and legitimise Jewish isolation, by propagating the idea of a Jewish “nation” and a plan of federating Jewish and non-Jewish proletarians. That is the basic mistake of “Bundism”, which consistent Jewish Social-Democrats must and will correct. This mistake drives the Bundists to actions unheard-of in the international Social-Democratic movement, such as stirring up distrust among Jewish towards non-Jewish proletarians, fostering suspicion of the latter and disseminating falsehoods about them. Here is proof, taken from this same pamphlet. “Such an absurdity [as that the organisation of the proletariat of a whole nationality should be denied representation on the central party bodies] could be openly advocated only [mark that!] in regard to the Jewish proletariat, which, owing to the peculiar historical fortunes of the Jewish people, still has to fight for equality [!!] in the world family of the proletariat.” We recently came across just such a trick in a Zionist leaflet, whose authors raved and fumed against *Iskra*, purporting to detect in its struggle with the Bund a refusal to recognise the “equality” of Jew and non-Jew. And now we find the Bundists repeating the tricks of the Zionists! This is disseminating an outright falsehood, for we have “advocated” “denying representation” not “only” to the Jews, but also to the Armenians, the Georgians and so on, and in the case of the Poles, too, we called for the closest union and fusion of the entire proletariat fighting against the tsarist autocracy. It was not for nothing that the PSP (Polish Socialist Party) raged and fulminated against us! To call a fight for the Zionist *idea* of a Jewish

nation, for the federal *principle* of party organisation, a “fight for the equality of the Jews in the world family of the proletariat” is to degrade the struggle from the plane of ideas and principles to that of suspicion, incitement and fanning of historically-evolved prejudices. It glaringly reveals a lack of real ideas and principles as weapons of struggle.

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We thus arrive at the conclusion that neither the logical, nor the historical, nor yet the nationalist arguments of the Bund will stand criticism. The period of disunity, which aggravated waverings among the Russian Social-Democrats and the isolation of the various organisations, had the same effect, to an even more marked degree, in the case of the Bundists. Instead of proclaiming war on this historically evolved isolation (further increased by the general disunity), they elevated it to a principle, seizing for this purpose on the sophistry that autonomy is inherently contradictory, and on the Zionist idea of a Jewish nation. Only if it frankly and resolutely admits its mistake and sets out to *move towards fusion* can the Bund turn away from the false path it has taken. And we are convinced that the finest adherents of Social-Democratic ideas among the Jewish proletariat will sooner or later compel the Bund to turn from the path of isolation to that of fusion. ■

# The Working Class & the National Question<sup>25</sup>

Russia is a motley country as far as her nationalities are concerned. Government policy, which is the policy of the landowners supported by the bourgeoisie, is steeped in Black-Hundred nationalism.

This policy is spearheaded against the *majority* of the peoples of Russia who constitute the *majority* of her population. And alongside this we have the bourgeois nationalism of other nations (Polish, Jewish, Ukrainian, Georgian, etc.), raising its head and trying *to divert* the working class from its great worldwide tasks by a national struggle or a struggle for national culture.

The national question must be clearly considered and solved by all class-conscious workers.

When the bourgeoisie was fighting for freedom together with the people, together with all those who labour, it stood for full freedom and equal rights for the nations. Advanced countries, Switzerland, Belgium, Norway and others, provide us with an example of how free nations under a really democratic system live together in peace or separate peacefully from each other.

Today the bourgeoisie fears the workers and is seeking an alliance with the Purishkeviches, with the reactionaries, and is betraying democracy, advocating oppression or unequal rights among nations and corrupting the workers with *nationalist* slogans.

In our times the proletariat alone upholds the real freedom of nations and the unity of workers of all nations.

For different nations to live together in peace and freedom or to separate and form different states (if that is more convenient for them), a full democracy, upheld by the working class, is essential. No privileges for any nation or any one language! Not even the slightest degree of oppression or the slightest injustice in respect of a national

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minority — such are the principles of working-class democracy.

The capitalists and landowners want, at all costs, to keep the workers of different nations apart while the powers that be live splendidly together as shareholders in profitable concerns involving millions (such as the Lena Goldfields); Orthodox Christians and Jews, Russians and Germans, Poles and Ukrainians, everyone who possesses *capital*, exploit the workers of all nations in company.

Class-conscious workers stand for *full unity* among the workers of all nations in every educational, trade union, political etc., workers' organisation. Let the Cadet gentlemen disgrace themselves by denying or belittling the importance of equal rights for Ukrainians. Let the bourgeoisie of all nations find comfort in lying phrases about national culture, national tasks, etc., etc.

The workers will not allow themselves to be disunited by sugary speeches about national culture, or “national-cultural autonomy”. The workers of all nations together, concertedly, uphold full freedom and complete equality of rights in organisations common to all — and that is the guarantee of genuine culture.

The workers of the whole world are building up their own internationalist culture, which the champions of freedom and the enemies of oppression have for long been preparing. To the old world, the world of national oppression, national bickering, and national isolation the workers counterpose a new world, a world of the unity of the working people of all nations, a world in which there is no place for any privileges or for the slightest degree of oppression of man by man. ■

# Resolution on the National Question<sup>26</sup>

The orgy of Black-Hundred nationalism, the growth of nationalist tendencies among the liberal bourgeoisie and the growth of nationalist tendencies among the upper classes of the oppressed nationalities, give prominence at the present time to the national question.

The state of affairs in the Social-Democratic movement (the attempts of the Caucasian Social-Democrats, the Bund and the liquidators to annul the party program,<sup>27</sup> etc.) compels the party to devote more attention than ever to this question.

This conference, taking its stand on the program of the RSDLP, and in order to organise correctly Social-Democratic agitation on the national question, advances the following propositions:

1. Insofar as national peace is in any way possible in a capitalist society based on exploitation, profit-making and strife, it is attainable only under a consistently and thoroughly democratic republican system of government which guarantees full equality of all nations and languages, which recognises no compulsory official language, which provides the people with schools where instruction is given in all the native languages, and the constitution of which contains a fundamental law that prohibits any privileges whatsoever to any one nation and any encroachment whatsoever upon the rights of a national minority. This particularly calls for wide regional autonomy and fully democratic local self-government, with the boundaries of the self-governing and autonomous regions determined by the local inhabitants themselves on the basis of their economic and social conditions, national make-up of the population, etc.

2. The division of the educational affairs of a single state according to nationalities is undoubtedly harmful from the standpoint of democracy in general, and of the interests of the proletarian class struggle in particular. It is precisely this division that is implied in the plan for “cultural-national” autonomy, or for “the creation of institutions

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Adopted by the 1913 conference of the central committee of the RSDLP.

that will guarantee freedom for national development” adopted in Russia by all the Jewish bourgeois parties and by the petty-bourgeois, opportunist elements among the different nations.

3. The interests of the working class demand the amalgamation of the workers of all the nationalities in a given state in united proletarian organisations — political, trade union, cooperative, educational, etc. This amalgamation of the workers of different nationalities in single organisations will alone enable the proletariat to wage a victorious struggle against international capital and reaction, and combat the propaganda and aspirations of the landowners, clergy and bourgeois nationalists of all nations, who usually cover up their anti-proletarian aspirations with the slogan of “national culture”. The world working-class movement is creating and daily developing more and more an international proletarian culture.

4. As regards the right of the nations oppressed by the tsarist monarchy to self-determination, i.e., the right to secede and form independent states, the Social-Democratic Party must unquestionably champion this right. This is dictated by the fundamental principles of international democracy in general, and specifically by the unprecedented national oppression of the majority of the inhabitants of Russia by the tsarist monarchy, which is a most reactionary and barbarous state compared with its neighbouring states in Europe and Asia. Furthermore, this is dictated by the struggle of the Great-Russian inhabitants themselves for freedom, for it will be impossible for them to create a democratic state if they do not eradicate Black-Hundred, Great-Russian nationalism, which is backed by the traditions of a number of bloody suppressions of national movements and systematically fostered not only by the tsarist monarchy and all the reactionary parties, but also by the Great-Russian bourgeois liberals, who toady to the monarchy, particularly in the period of counter-revolution.

5. The right of nations to self-determination (i.e., the constitutional guarantee of an absolutely free and democratic method of deciding the question of secession) must under no circumstances be confused with the expediency of a given nation’s secession. The Social-Democratic Party must decide the latter question exclusively on its merits in each particular case in conformity with the interests of social development as a whole and with the interests of the proletarian class struggle for socialism.

Social-Democrats must moreover bear in mind that the landowners, the clergy and the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nations often cover up with nationalist slogans their efforts to divide the workers and dupe them by doing deals behind their backs with the landowners and bourgeoisie of the ruling nation to the detriment of the masses of the working people of all nations.

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This conference places on the agenda of the party congress the question of the national program. It invites the Central Committee, the party press and the local organisations to discuss (in pamphlets, debates, etc.) the national question in fullest detail.

## ‘Cultural-National’ Autonomy<sup>28</sup>

The essence of the plan, or program, of what is called “cultural-national” autonomy (or: “the establishment of institutions that will guarantee freedom of national development”) is *separate schools for each nationality*.

The more often all avowed and tacit nationalists (including the Bundists) attempt to obscure this fact the more we must insist on it.

Every nation, irrespective of place of domicile of its individual members (irrespective of territory, hence the term “extra-territorial” autonomy) is a united officially recognised association conducting national-cultural affairs. The most important of these affairs is education. The determination of the composition of the nations by allowing every citizen to register freely, irrespective of place of domicile, as belonging to any national association, ensures absolute precision and absolute consistency in segregating the schools according to nationality.

Is such a division, be it asked, permissible from the point of view of democracy in general, and from the point of view of the interests of the proletarian class struggle in particular?

A clear grasp of the essence of the “cultural-national autonomy” program is sufficient to enable one to reply without hesitation — it is absolutely impermissible.

As long as different nations live in a single state they are bound to one another by millions and thousands of millions of economic, legal and social bonds. How can education be extricated from these bonds? Can it be “taken out of the jurisdiction” of the state, to quote the Bund formula, classical in its striking absurdity? If the various nations living in a single state are bound by economic ties, then any attempt to divide them permanently in “cultural” and particularly educational matters would be absurd and reactionary. On the contrary, efforts should be made to *unite* the nations in educational matters, so that the schools should be a preparation for what is actually done in real life. At the present time we see that the different nations are unequal in the rights they possess and in their level of development. Under these circumstances,

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segregating the schools according to nationality would *actually* and inevitably *worsen* the conditions of the more backward nations. In the Southern, former slave States of America, Negro children are still segregated in separate schools, whereas in the North, white and Negro children attend the same schools. In Russia a plan was recently proposed for the “nationalisation of Jewish schools”, i.e., the segregation of Jewish children from the children of other nationalities in separate schools. It is needless to add that this plan originated in the most reactionary, Purishkevich circles.

One cannot be a democrat and at the same time advocate the principle of segregating the schools according to nationality. Note: we are arguing at present from the general democratic (i.e., bourgeois-democratic) point of view.

From the point of view of the proletarian class struggle we must oppose segregating the schools according to nationality far more emphatically. Who does not know that the capitalists of all the nations in a given state are most closely and intimately united in joint-stock companies, cartels and trusts, in manufacturers' associations, etc., which are directed *against* the workers irrespective of their nationality? Who does not know that in *any* capitalist undertaking — from huge works, mines and factories and commercial enterprises down to capitalist farms — we *always*, without exception, see a larger variety of nationalities among the workers than in remote, peaceful and sleepy villages?

The urban workers, who are best acquainted with developed capitalism and perceive more profoundly the psychology of the class struggle — their whole life teaches them or they perhaps imbibe it with their mothers' milk — such workers instinctively and inevitably realise that segregating the schools according to nationality is not only a *harmful* scheme, but a downright fraudulent swindle *on the part of the capitalists*. The workers *can* be split up, divided and weakened by the advocacy of such an idea, and still more by the segregation of the ordinary peoples' schools according to nationality; while the capitalists, whose children are well provided with rich private schools and specially engaged tutors, *cannot in any way* be threatened by any division or weakening through “cultural-national autonomy”.

As a matter of fact, “cultural-national autonomy”, i.e., the absolutely pure and consistent segregating of education according to nationality, was invented not by the capitalists (*for the time being* they resort to cruder methods to divide the workers) but by the opportunist, philistine intelligentsia of Austria. There is *not a trace* of this brilliantly philistine and brilliantly nationalist idea in any of the democratic West-European countries with mixed populations. This idea of the despairing petty bourgeois could arise only in Eastern Europe, in backward, feudal, clerical, bureaucratic Austria, where *all* public and political life is hampered by wretched, petty squabbling (worse

still: cursing and brawling) over the question of languages. Since cat and dog can't agree, let us at least segregate all the nations once and for all absolutely clearly and consistently in "national curias" for educational purposes! — such is the psychology that engendered this foolish idea of "cultural-national autonomy". The proletariat, which is conscious of and cherishes its internationalism, will never accept this nonsense of refined nationalism.

It is no accident that in Russia this idea of "cultural-national autonomy" was accepted *only by all* the Jewish bourgeois parties, then (in 1907) by the conference of the *petty-bourgeois* Left-Narodnik parties of different nationalities, and lastly by the petty-bourgeois, opportunist elements of the *near-Marxist* groups, i.e., the Bundists and the liquidators (the latter were even too timid to do so straightforwardly and definitely). It is no accident that in the State Duma *only* the semi-liquidator Chkhenkeli, who is infected with nationalism, and the petty-bourgeois Kerensky, spoke in favour of "cultural-national autonomy".

In general, it is quite funny to read the liquidator and Bundist references to Austria on this question. First of all, why should the most backward of the multinational countries be taken as the *model*? Why not take the most advanced? This is very much in the style of the bad Russian liberals, the Cadets, who for models of a constitution turn mainly to such backward countries as Prussia and Austria, and not to advanced countries like France, Switzerland and America!

Secondly, after taking the Austrian model, the Russian nationalist philistines, i.e., the Bundists, liquidators, Left Narodniks, and so forth, have themselves changed it *for the worse*. In this country it is the Bundists (plus *all* the Jewish bourgeois parties, in whose wake the Bundists follow without always realising it) that mainly and primarily use this plan for "cultural-national autonomy" in their propaganda and agitation; and yet in Austria, the country where this idea of "cultural-national autonomy" originated, Otto Bauer, the father of the idea, devoted a special chapter of his book to proving that "cultural-national autonomy" *cannot* be applied to the Jews!

This proves more conclusively than lengthy speeches how inconsistent Otto Bauer is and how little he believes in his own idea, for he excludes the *only* extra-territorial (not having its own territory) nation from his plan for extra-territorial national autonomy.

This shows how Bundists borrow *old-fashioned* plans from Europe, multiply the mistakes of Europe tenfold and "develop" them to the point of absurdity.

The fact is — and this is the third point — that at their congress in Brünn (in 1899) the Austrian Social-Democrats *rejected* the program of "cultural-national autonomy" that was proposed to them. They merely adopted a compromise in the form of a

proposal for a union of the nationally delimited *regions* of the country. This compromise did *not* provide either for extra-territoriality or for segregating education according to nationality. In accordance with this compromise, in the most advanced (capitalistically) populated centres, towns, factory and mining districts, large country estates, etc., there are *no* separate schools for each nationality!

The Russian working class has been combating this reactionary, pernicious, petty-bourgeois nationalist idea of "cultural-national autonomy", and will continue to do so. ■

# The National Program of the RSDLP<sup>29</sup>

The conference of the Central Committee has adopted a resolution on the national question, which has been printed in the “Notification”, and has placed the question of a national program on the agenda of the congress.

Why and how the national question has, at the present time, been brought to the fore — in the entire policy of the counterrevolution, in the class-consciousness of the bourgeoisie and in the proletarian Social-Democratic Party of Russia — is shown in detail in the resolution itself. There is hardly any need to dwell on this in view of the clarity of the situation. This situation and the fundamentals of a national program for Social-Democracy have recently been dealt with in Marxist theoretical literature (the most prominent place being taken by Stalin’s article<sup>30</sup>). We therefore consider that it will be to the point if, in this article, we confine ourselves to, the presentation of the problem from a purely party standpoint and to explanations that cannot be made in the legal press, crushed as it is by the Stolypin-Maklakov oppression.

Social-Democracy in Russia is taking shape by drawing exclusively on the experience of older countries, i.e., of Europe, and on the theoretical expression of that experience, Marxism. The specific feature of our country and the specific features of the historical period of the establishment of Social-Democracy in our country are: first, in our country, as distinct from Europe, Social-Democracy began to take shape *before* the bourgeois revolution and continued taking shape *during* that revolution. Secondly, in our country the inevitable struggle to separate proletarian from general bourgeois and petty-bourgeois democracy — a struggle that is fundamentally the same as that experienced by every country — is being conducted under the conditions of a complete theoretical victory of Marxism in the West and in our country. The form taken by this struggle, therefore, is not so much that of a struggle for Marxism as a struggle for or against petty-bourgeois theories that are hidden behind “almost Marxist” phrases.

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That is how the matter stands, beginning with Economism (1895-1901) and “legal Marxism” (1895-1901, 1902). Only those who shrink from historical truth can forget the close, intimate connection and relationship between these trends and Menshevism (1903-07) and liquidationism (1908-13).

In the national question the old *Iskra*, which in 1901-03 worked on and completed a program for the RSDLP as well as laying the first and fundamental basis of Marxism in the theory and practice of the Russian working-class movement, had to struggle, in the same way as on other questions, against petty-bourgeois opportunism. This opportunism was expressed, first and foremost, in the nationalist tendencies and waverings of the Bund. The old *Iskra* conducted a stubborn struggle against Bund nationalism, and to forget this is tantamount to becoming a Forgetful John again, and cutting oneself off from the historical and ideological roots of the whole Social-Democratic workers' movement in Russia.

On the other hand, when the program of the RSDLP was finally adopted at the Second Congress in August 1903, there was a struggle unrecorded in the minutes of the congress because it took place in the *program commission*, which was visited by almost the entire congress — a struggle against the clumsy attempts of several Polish Social-Democrats to cast doubts on “the right of nations to self-determination”, i.e., attempts to deviate towards opportunism and nationalism from a quite different angle.

And today, 10 years later, the struggle goes on along those same two basic *lines*, which shows equally that there is a profound connection between this struggle and all the objective conditions affecting the national question in Russia.

At the Brünn Congress in Austria (1899) the program of “cultural-national autonomy” (defended by Kristan, Ellenbogen and others and expressed in the draft of the Southern Slavs) was *rejected*. *Territorial* national autonomy was adopted, and Social-Democratic propaganda for the obligatory union of all national regions was only a *compromise* with the idea of “cultural-national autonomy”. The chief theoreticians of this unfortunate idea themselves lay particular emphasis on its *inapplicability* to Jewry.

In Russia — *as usual* — people have been found who have made it their business to enlarge on a little opportunist error and develop it into a system of opportunist policy. In the same way as Bernstein in Germany brought into being the Right Constitutional-Democrats in Russia — Struve, Bulgakov, Tugan & Co. — so Otto Bauer's “forgetfulness of internationalism” (as the supercautious Kautsky calls it!) *gave rise* in Russia to the *complete* acceptance of “cultural-national autonomy” by all the Jewish bourgeois parties and a large number of petty-bourgeois trends (the Bund and a

conference of Socialist-Revolutionary national parties in 1907). Backward Russia serves, one might say, as an example of how the microbes of West-European opportunism produce whole *epidemics* on our savage soil.

In Russia people are fond of saying that Bernstein is “tolerated” in Europe, but they forget to add that nowhere in the world, with the exception of “holy” Mother Russia, has Bernsteinism engendered Struvism, or has “Bauerism” led to the justification, by Social-Democrats, of the refined nationalism of the Jewish bourgeoisie.

“Cultural-national autonomy” implies precisely the most refined and, therefore, the most harmful nationalism, it implies the corruption of the workers by means of the slogan of national culture and the propaganda of the profoundly harmful and even anti-democratic segregating of schools according to nationality. In short, this program undoubtedly contradicts the internationalism of the proletariat and is in accordance only with the ideals of the nationalist petty bourgeoisie.

But there is *one case* in which the Marxists are duty bound, if they do not want to betray democracy and the proletariat, to defend one special demand in the national question; that is, the *right* of nations to self-determination (§9 of the RSDLP program), i.e., the right to political secession. The conference resolution explains and motivates this demand in such detail that there is no place left for misunderstanding.

We shall, therefore, give only a brief description of those amazingly ignorant and opportunist objections that have been raised against this section of the program. In connection with this let us mention that *in the course of the 10 years’* existence of the program *not one single unit* of the RSDLP, not one single national organisation, not one single regional conference, not one local committee and not one delegate to a congress or conference, has attempted to raise the question of changing or annulling §9!

It is necessary to bear this in mind. It shows us at once whether there is a grain of seriousness or Party spirit in the objections raised to this point.

Take Mr. Semkovsky of the liquidators’ newspaper. With the casual air of a man who has liquidated a party, he announces: “For certain reasons we do not share Rosa Luxemburg’s proposal to remove §9 from the program altogether” (*Novaya Rabochaya Gazeta* No. 71).

So the reasons are a secret! But then, how can secrecy be avoided in face of such ignorance of the history of our program? Or when that same Mr. Semkovsky, incomparably casual (what do the party and the program matter!) makes an exception for Finland?

What are we to do ... if the Polish proletariat wants to carry on a joint struggle together with the whole proletariat of Russia within the framework of one state, and the reactionary

classes of Polish society, on the contrary, want to separate Poland from Russia and, through a referendum, obtain a majority of votes in favour of separation; are we, Russian Social-Democrats, to vote in a central parliament together with our Polish comrades *against* secession, or, in order not to infringe on the “right to self-determination”, vote *in favour* of secession?

What, indeed, are we to do when such naïve and so hopelessly confused questions are raised?

The *right* to self-determination, my dear Mr. Liquidator, certainly does *not* imply the solution of the problem by a central parliament, but by a parliament, a diet, or a referendum of the *seceding minority*. When Norway seceded from Sweden (1905) it was decided by Norway *alone* (a country half the size of Sweden).

Even a child could see that Mr. Semkovsky is hopelessly mixed up.

“The right to self-determination” implies a democratic system *of a type* in which there is not only democracy in general, but specifically one in which there *could not be an undemocratic* solution of the question of secession. Democracy, speaking generally, is compatible with militant and tyrannical nationalism. The proletariat demands a democracy that *rules out* the forcible retention of any one of the nations within the bounds of the state. “In order not to infringe on the right to self-determination”, therefore, we are duty bound *not* “to vote for secession”, as the wily Mr. Semkovsky assumes, but to vote for the right of the seceding region to decide the question *itself*.

It would seem that even with Mr. Semkovsky’s mental abilities it is not difficult to deduce that “the *right* to divorce” does not require that one should *vote* for divorce! But such is the fate of those who criticise §9 — they forget the ABC of logic.

At the time of Norway’s secession from Sweden, the Swedish proletariat, if they did not want to follow the nationalist petty bourgeoisie, were *duty bound to vote* and agitate against the annexation of Norway by force, as the Swedish priesthood and landed proprietors desired. This is obvious and not too difficult to understand. Swedish nationalist democrats could refrain from a type of agitation that the principle of the *right* to self-determination demands of the proletariat of *ruling, oppressor nations*.

“What are we to do if the reactionaries are in the majority?” asks Mr. Semkovsky. This is a question worthy of a third-form schoolboy. What is to be done about the *Russian* constitution if democratic voting gives the reactionaries a majority? Mr. Semkovsky asks idle, empty questions that have nothing to do with the matter in hand, they are the kind of questions that, as it is said, seven fools can ask more of than 70 wise men can answer.

When a democratic vote gives the reactionaries a majority, one of two things may, and usually does occur: either the decision of the reactionaries is implemented and its

harmful consequences send the masses more or less speedily over to the side of democracy and against the reactionaries; or the conflict between democracy and reaction is decided by a civil or other war, which is also quite possible (and no doubt even the Semkovskys have heard of this) under a democracy.

The recognition of the right to self-determination is, Mr. Semkovsky assures us, “playing into the hands of the most thorough-paced bourgeois nationalism”. This is childish nonsense since the recognition of the *right* does not exclude either propaganda and agitation *against* separation or the exposure of bourgeois nationalism, But it is absolutely indisputable that the denial of the *right* to secede is “playing into the hands” of the *most thorough-paced reactionary Great-Russian nationalism!*

This is the essence of Rosa Luxemburg’s amusing error for which she was ridiculed a long time ago by German and Russian (August 1903) Social-Democrats; in their fear of playing into the hands of the bourgeois nationalism of oppressed nations, people play into the hands not merely of the bourgeois but of the reactionary nationalism of the *oppressor* nation.

If Mr. Semkovsky had not been so virginally innocent in matters concerning party history and the party program he would have understood that it was his duty to refute Plekhanov, who *11 years ago*, in defending the draft program (which became the program in 1903) of the RSDLP in *Zarya*,<sup>31</sup> made a *special point* (page 38) of the recognition of the right to self-determination and wrote the following about it:

This demand, which is not obligatory for bourgeois democrats, even in theory, is obligatory for us as Social-Democrats. If we were to forget about it or were afraid to put it forward for fear of impinging on the national prejudices of our compatriots of Great-Russian origin, the battle-cry of world Social-Democracy, “Workers of all countries, unite!” would be a shameful lie upon our lips.

As long ago as the *Zarya* days, Plekhanov put forward the basic argument which was developed in detail in the conference resolution, an argument to which the Semkovskys have not attempted to draw attention for 11 years. In Russia there are 43% Great Russians, but Great Russian nationalism rules over the other 57% of the population and oppresses all nations. The National-Liberals (Struve & Co., the Progressists, etc.) have already joined forces with our national-reactionaries and the “first swallows” of *national* democracy have appeared (remember Mr. Peshekhonov’s appeal in August 1906 to be cautious in our attitude to the nationalist prejudices of the muzhik).

In Russia only the liquidators consider the bourgeois-democratic revolution to be over, and the concomitant of *such* a revolution all over the world always has been and still is national movements. In Russia in particular there are oppressed nations in

many of the border regions, which in neighbouring states enjoy greater liberty. Tsarism is more reactionary than the neighbouring states, constitutes the *greatest* barrier to free economic development, and does its utmost to foster Great-Russian nationalism. For a Marxist, of course, *all other conditions being equal*, big states are always preferable to small ones. But it would be ridiculous and reactionary even to suppose that conditions under the tsarist monarchy might be equal to those in any European country or any but a minority of Asian countries.

The denial of the right of nations to self-determination in present-day Russia is, therefore, undoubted opportunism and a refusal to fight against the reactionary Great-Russian nationalism that is still all-powerful. ■

# Once More on the Segregation of the Schools According to Nationality<sup>32</sup>

Marxists resolutely oppose nationalism in all its forms, from the crude reactionary nationalism of our ruling circles and of the Right Octobrist parties, down to the more or less refined and disguised nationalism of the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties.

Reactionary, or Black-Hundred, nationalism strives to safeguard the privileges of one nation, condemning all other nations to an inferior status, with fewer rights, or even with no rights at all. Not a single Marxist, and not even a single democrat, can treat this nationalism with anything else but the utmost hostility.

In words, bourgeois and bourgeois-democratic nationalists recognise the equality of nations, but in deeds they (often covertly, behind the backs of the people) stand for certain privileges for one of the nations, and always try to secure greater advantages for “their own” nation (i.e., for the bourgeoisie of their own nation); they strive to separate and segregate nations, to foster national exclusiveness, etc. By talking most of all about “national culture” and emphasising what separates one nation from the other, bourgeois nationalists *divide the workers* of the various nations and fool them with “nationalist slogans”.

The class-conscious workers combat *all* national oppression and *all* national privileges, but they do not confine themselves to that. They combat all, even the most refined, nationalism, and advocate not only the unity, but also the *amalgamation* of the workers of *all* nationalities in the struggle against reaction and against bourgeois nationalism in all its forms. Our task is not to segregate nations, but to unite the workers of all nations. Our banner does not carry the slogan “national culture” but *international* culture, which unites all the nations in a higher, socialist unity, and the way to which is already being paved by the international amalgamation of capital.

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## Once More on the Segregation of the Schools According to Nationality 47

The influence of petty-bourgeois, philistine nationalism has infected certain “would-be socialists”, who advocate what is called “cultural-educational autonomy”, i.e., the transfer of educational affairs (and matters of national culture in general) from the state to the individual nations. Naturally, Marxists combat this propaganda for the *segregation of nations*, they combat this refined nationalism, they combat the *segregating of the schools according to nationality*. When our Bundists, and later, the liquidators, wanted to support “cultural-national autonomy” in *direct opposition* to our program, they were condemned not only by the Bolsheviki, but also by the pro-party Mensheviki (Plekhanov).

Now Mr. An, in *Novaya Rabochaya Gazeta* (No. 103) is trying to defend a bad case by subterfuge, and by showering abuse upon us. We calmly ignore the abuse; it is merely a sign of the liquidators’ feebleness.

To have schools connected in the native languages — this, Mr. An assures us, is what is meant by segregating the schools according to the nationalities of the pupils; the *Pravda* people, he says, want to deprive the non-Russians of their national schools!

We can afford to laugh at this trick of Mr. An’s, for everybody knows that *Pravda* stands for the fullest equality of languages, and even for the abolition of an official language! Mr. An’s impotent rage is causing him to lose his head. This is dangerous, dear Mr. An!

The right of a nation to use its native language is explicitly and definitely recognised in §8 of the Marxist program.<sup>33</sup>

If Mr. An is right in stating that having schools conducted in the native languages means segregating the schools according to nationality, why did the Bundists in 1906, and the liquidators in 1912, “supplement” (or rather, *distort*) the program adopted in 1903 — at the very congress which *rejected* “cultural-national autonomy” — which *fully* recognises the right of a nation to use its *native language*?

Your subterfuge will fail, Mr. An, and you will not succeed in covering up with your noise, clamour and abuse the fact that the liquidators have *violated* this program, and that they have “adapted socialism to nationalism”, as Comrade Plekhanov expressed it.

We do not want to have the program violated. We do not want socialism to be adapted to nationalism. We stand for complete democracy, for the complete freedom and equality of languages, but give no support whatever to the proposal to “transfer educational affairs to the nations” or to “segregate schools according to nationality”.

The question at issue is that of segregating the schools according to nations [writes Mr. An] hence, these nations must exist in each locality, hindering each other’s development; and consequently, *they must be segregated* in the sphere of public education

as well.

The words we have emphasised clearly reveal how liquidationism is dragging Mr. An away from socialism towards nationalism. The *segregation* of nations within the limits of a single state is harmful, and we Marxists strive *to bring the nations together and to amalgamate them*. Our object is not to “segregate” nations, but to secure for them, through full democracy, an equality and coexistence as peaceful (relatively) as in Switzerland.<sup>a</sup>■

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<sup>a</sup> Mr. An boldly asserts that “there is no intermixing of nations even in the cantons of Switzerland”. Will he not blush if we mention four cantons: Berne, Fribourg, Graubünden and Valais?

# Critical Remarks on the National Question<sup>34</sup>

It is obvious that the national question has now become prominent among the problems of Russian public life. The aggressive nationalism of the reactionaries, the transition of counterrevolutionary bourgeois liberalism to nationalism (particularly Great-Russian, but also Polish, Jewish, Ukrainian, etc.), and lastly, the increase of nationalist vacillations among the different “national” (i.e., non-Great-Russian) social-democrats, who have gone to the length of violating the party program — all these make it incumbent on us to give more attention to the national question than we have done so far.

This article pursues a special object, namely, to examine, in their general bearing, precisely these program vacillations of Marxists and would-be Marxists, on the national question. In *Severnaya Pravda*<sup>35</sup> No. 29 (for September 5, 1913, “Liberals and Democrats on the Language Question”) I had occasion to speak of the opportunism of the liberals on the national question; this article of mine was attacked by the opportunist Jewish newspaper *Zeit*,<sup>36</sup> in an article by Mr. F. Liebman. From the other side, the program of the Russian Marxists on the national question has been criticised by the Ukrainian opportunist Mr. Lev Yurkevich (*Dzvin*<sup>37</sup> 1913, Nos. 7-8). Both these writers touched upon so many questions that to reply to them we are obliged to deal with the most diverse aspects of the subject. I think the most convenient thing would be to start with a reprint of the article from *Severnaya Pravda*.

## 1. Liberals & democrats on the language question

On several occasions the newspapers have mentioned the report of the governor of the Caucasus, a report that is noteworthy, not for its Black-Hundred spirit, but for its timid “liberalism”. Among other things, the governor objects to artificial Russification of non-Russian nationalities. Representatives of non-Russian nationalities in the Caucasus are *themselves* striving to teach their children Russian; an example of this is



*Above left:* Otto Bauer.  
*Above right:* Rosa Luxemburg  
(about 1907).  
*Bottom:* Joseph Stalin (1902).



the Armenian church schools, in which the teaching of Russian is not obligatory.

*Russkoye Slovo*<sup>38</sup> (No. 198), one of the most widely circulating liberal newspapers in Russia, points to this fact and draws the correct conclusion that the hostility towards the Russian language in Russia “stems exclusively from” the “artificial” (it should have said “forced”) implanting of that language.

“There is no reason to worry about the fate of the Russian language. It will itself win recognition throughout Russia”, says the newspaper. This is perfectly true, because the requirements of economic exchange will always compel the nationalities living in one state (as long as they wish to live together) to study the language of the majority. The more democratic the political system in Russia becomes, the more powerfully, rapidly and extensively capitalism will develop, the more urgently will the requirements of economic exchange impel various nationalities to study the language most convenient for general commercial relations.

The liberal newspaper, however, hastens to slap itself in the face and demonstrate its liberal inconsistency.

Even those who oppose Russification [it says] would hardly be likely to deny that in a country as huge as Russia there must be one single official language, and that this language can be only Russian.

Logic turned inside out! Tiny Switzerland has not lost anything, but has gained from having not *one single* official language, but three — German, French and Italian. In Switzerland 70% of the population are Germans (in Russia 43% are Great Russians), 22% French (in Russia 17% are Ukrainians) and 7% Italians (in Russia 6% are Poles and 4.5% Byelorussians). If Italians in Switzerland often speak French in their common parliament they do not do so because they are menaced by some savage police law (there are none such in Switzerland), but because the civilised citizens of a democratic state themselves prefer a language that is understood by a majority. The French language does not instil hatred in Italians because it is the language of a free civilised nation, a language that is not imposed by disgusting police measures.

Why should “huge” Russia, a much more varied and terribly backward country, *inhibit* her development by the retention of any kind of privilege for any one language? Should not the contrary be true, liberal gentlemen? Should not Russia, if she wants to overtake Europe, put an end to every kind of privilege as quickly as possible, as completely as possible and as vigorously as possible?

If all privileges disappear, if the imposition of any one language ceases, all Slavs will easily and rapidly learn to understand each other and will not be frightened by the “horrible” thought that speeches in different languages will be heard in the common parliament. The requirements of economic exchange will themselves *decide* which

language of the given country it is to the *advantage* of the majority to know in the interests of commercial relations. This decision will be all the firmer because it is adopted voluntarily by a population of various nationalities, and its adoption will be the more rapid and extensive the more consistent the democracy and, as a consequence of it, the more rapid the development of capitalism.

The liberals approach the language question in the same way as they approach all political questions — like hypocritical hucksters, holding out one hand (openly) to democracy and the other (behind their backs) to the feudalists and police. We are against privileges, shout the liberals, and under cover they haggle with the feudalists for first one, then another, privilege.

Such is the nature of *all* liberal-bourgeois nationalism — not only Great-Russian (it is the worst of them all because of its violent character and its kinship with the Purishkeviches), but Polish, Jewish, Ukrainian, Georgian and every other nationalism. Under the slogan of “national culture” the bourgeoisie of *all* nations, both in Austria and in Russia, are *in fact* pursuing the policy of splitting the workers, emasculating democracy and haggling with the feudalists over the sale of the people’s rights and the people’s liberty.

The slogan of working-class democracy is not “national culture” but the international culture of democracy and the worldwide working-class movement. Let the bourgeoisie deceive the people with various “positive” national programs. The class-conscious worker will answer the bourgeoisie — there is only one solution to the national problem (insofar as it can, in general, be solved in the capitalist world, the world of profit, squabbling and exploitation), and that solution is consistent democracy.

The proof — Switzerland in Western Europe, a country with an old culture and Finland in Eastern Europe, a country with a young culture.

The national program of working-class democracy is: absolutely no privileges for any one nation or any one language; the solution of the problem of the political self-determination of nations, that is, their separation as states by completely free, democratic methods; the promulgation of a law for the whole state by virtue of which any measure (rural, urban or communal, etc.), introducing any privilege of any kind for one of the nations and militating against the equality of nations or the rights of a national minority, shall be declared illegal and ineffective, and any citizen of the state shall have the right to demand that such a measure be annulled as unconstitutional, and that those who attempt to put it into effect be punished.

Working-class democracy contraposes to the nationalist wrangling of the various bourgeois parties over questions of language, etc., the demand for the unconditional unity and complete amalgamation of workers of *all* nationalities in *all* working-class

organisations — trade union, cooperative, consumers, educational and all others — in contradistinction to any kind of bourgeois nationalism. Only this type of unity and amalgamation can uphold democracy and defend the interests of the workers against capital — which is already international and is becoming more so — and promote the development of mankind towards a new way of life that is alien to all privileges and all exploitation.

## 2. 'National culture'

As the reader will see, the article in *Severnaya Pravda*, made use of a particular example, i.e., the problem of the official language, to illustrate the inconsistency and opportunism of the liberal bourgeoisie, which, in the national question, extends a hand to the feudalists and the police. Everybody will understand that, apart from the problem of an official language, the liberal bourgeoisie behaves just as treacherously, hypocritically and stupidly (even from the standpoint of the interests of liberalism) in a number of other related issues.

The conclusion to be drawn from this? It is that *all* liberal-bourgeois nationalism sows the greatest corruption among the workers and does immense harm to the cause of freedom and the proletarian class struggle. This bourgeois (and bourgeois-feudalist) tendency is all the more dangerous for its *being concealed* behind the slogan of “national culture”. It is under the guise of national culture — Great-Russian, Polish, Jewish, Ukrainian, and so forth — that the Black-Hundreds and the clericals, and also the bourgeoisie of *all* nations, are doing their dirty and reactionary work.

Such are the facts of the national life of today, if viewed from the Marxist angle, i.e., from the standpoint of the class struggle, and if the slogans are compared with the interests and policies of classes, and not with meaningless “general principles”, declamations and phrases.

The slogan of national culture is a bourgeois (and often also a Black-Hundred and clerical) fraud. Our slogan is: the international culture of democracy and of the world working-class movement.

Here the Bundist Mr. Liebman rushes into the fray and annihilates me with the following deadly tirade:

Anyone in the least familiar with the national question knows that international culture is not non-national culture (culture without a national form); non-national culture, which must not be Russian, Jewish, or Polish, but only pure culture, is nonsense; international ideas can appeal to the working class only when they are adapted to the language spoken by the worker, and to the concrete national conditions under which he lives; the worker should not be indifferent to the condition and development of his

national culture, because it is through it, and only through it, that he is able to participate in the “international culture of democracy and of the world working-class movement”.

This is well known, but V.I. turns a deaf ear to it all ...

Ponder over this typically Bundist argument, designed, if you please, to demolish the Marxist thesis that I advanced. With the air of supreme self-confidence of one who is “familiar with the national question” this Bundist passes off ordinary bourgeois views as “well-known” axioms.

It is true, my dear Bundist, that international culture is not non-national. Nobody said that it was. Nobody has proclaimed a “pure” culture, either Polish, Jewish, or Russian, etc., and your jumble of empty words is simply an attempt to distract the reader’s attention and to obscure the issue with tinkling words.

The *elements* of democratic and socialist culture are present, if only in rudimentary form, in *every* national culture, since in *every* nation there are toiling and exploited masses, whose conditions of life inevitably give rise to the ideology of democracy and socialism. But *every* nation also possesses a bourgeois culture (and most nations a reactionary and clerical culture as well) in the form, not merely of “elements”, but of the *dominant* culture. Therefore, the general “national culture” is the culture of the landlords, the clergy and the bourgeoisie. This fundamental and, for a Marxist, elementary truth, was kept in the background by the Bundist, who “drowned” it in his jumble of words, i.e., *instead* of revealing and clarifying the class gulf to the reader, he in fact obscured it. *In fact*, the Bundist acted like a bourgeois, whose every interest requires the spreading of a belief in a non-class national culture.

In advancing the slogan of “the international culture of democracy and of the world working-class movement”, we take *from each* national culture *only* its democratic and socialist elements; we take them *only* and *absolutely* in opposition to the bourgeois culture and the bourgeois nationalism of *each* nation. No democrat, and certainly no Marxist, denies that all languages should have equal status, or that it is necessary to polemicise with one’s “native” bourgeoisie in one’s native language and to advocate anti-clerical or anti-bourgeois ideas among one’s “native” peasantry and petty bourgeoisie. That goes without saying, but the Bundist uses these indisputable truths to obscure the point in dispute, i.e., the real issue.

The question is whether it is permissible for a Marxist, directly or indirectly, to advance the slogan of national culture, or whether he should *oppose* it by advocating, in all languages, the slogan of workers’ *internationalism* while “adapting” himself to all local and national features.

The significance of the “national culture” slogan is not determined by some petty intellectual’s promise, or good intention, to “interpret” it as “meaning the development

through it of an international culture". It would be puerile subjectivism to look at it in that way. The significance of the slogan of national culture is determined by the objective alignment of all classes in a given country, and in all countries of the world. The national culture of the bourgeoisie is a *fact* (and, I repeat, the bourgeoisie everywhere enters into deals with the landed proprietors and the clergy). Aggressive bourgeois nationalism, which drugs the minds of the workers, stultifies and disunites them in order that the bourgeoisie may lead them by the halter — such is the fundamental fact of the times.

Those who seek to serve the proletariat must unite the workers of all nations, and unswervingly fight bourgeois nationalism, *domestic* and foreign. The place of those who advocate the slogan of national culture is among the nationalist petty bourgeois, not among the Marxists.

Take a concrete example. Can a Great-Russian Marxist accept the slogan of national, Great-Russian, culture? No, he cannot. Anyone who does that should stand in the ranks of the nationalists, not of the Marxists. Our task is to fight the dominant, Black-Hundred and bourgeois national culture of the Great Russians, and to develop, exclusively in the internationalist spirit and in the closest alliance with the workers of other countries, the rudiments also existing in the history of our democratic and working-class movement. Fight your own Great-Russian landlords and bourgeoisie, fight their "culture" in the name of internationalism, and in so fighting, "adapt" yourself to the special features of the Purishkeviches and Struves — that is your task, not preaching or tolerating the slogan of national culture.

The same applies to the most oppressed and persecuted nation — the Jews. Jewish national culture is the slogan of the rabbis and the bourgeoisie, the slogan of our enemies. But there are other elements in Jewish culture and in Jewish history as a whole. Of the ten and a half million Jews in the world, somewhat over a half live in Galicia and Russia, backward and semi-barbarous countries, where the Jews are *forcibly* kept in the status of a caste. The other half lives in the civilised world, and there the Jews do not live as a segregated caste. There the great world-progressive features of Jewish culture stand clearly revealed: its internationalism, its identification with the advanced movements of the epoch (the percentage of Jews in the democratic and proletarian movements is everywhere higher than the percentage of Jews among the population).

Whoever, directly or indirectly, puts forward the slogan of Jewish "national culture" is (whatever his good intentions may be) an enemy of the proletariat, a supporter of all that is *outmoded* and connected with *caste* among the Jewish people; he is an accomplice of the rabbis and the bourgeoisie. On the other hand, those Jewish Marxists who

mingle with the Russian, Lithuanian, Ukrainian and other workers in international Marxist organisations, and make their contribution (both in Russian and in Yiddish) towards creating the international culture of the working-class movement — those Jews, despite the separatism of the Bund, uphold the best traditions of Jewry by fighting the slogan of “national culture”.

Bourgeois nationalism and proletarian internationalism — these are the two irreconcilably hostile slogans that correspond to the two great class camps throughout the capitalist world, and express the *two* policies (nay, the two world outlooks) in the national question. In advocating the slogan of national culture and building up on it an entire plan and practical program of what they call “cultural-national autonomy”, the Bundists are *in effect* instruments of bourgeois nationalism among the workers.

### 3. The nationalist bogey of ‘assimilation’

The question of assimilation, i.e., of the shedding of national features, and absorption by another nation, strikingly illustrates the consequences of the nationalist vacillations of the Bundists and their fellow-thinkers.

Mr. Liebman, who faithfully conveys and repeats the stock arguments, or rather, tricks, of the Bundists, has qualified as “the *old assimilation story*” the demand for the unity and amalgamation of the workers of all nationalities in a given country in united workers’ organisations (see the concluding part of the article in *Severnaya Pravda*).

“Consequently”, says Mr. F. Liebman, commenting on the concluding part of the article in *Severnaya Pravda*, “if asked what nationality he belongs to, the worker must answer: I am a Social-Democrat.”

Our Bundist considers this the acme of wit. As a matter of fact, he gives himself away completely by *such* witticisms and outcries about “assimilation”, *levelled against* a consistently democratic and *Marxist* slogan.

Developing capitalism knows two historical tendencies in the national question. The first is the awakening of national life and national movements, the struggle against all national oppression, and the creation of national states. The second is the development and growing frequency of international intercourse in every form, the breakdown of national barriers, the creation of the international unity of capital, of economic life in general, of politics, science, etc.

Both tendencies are a universal law of capitalism. The former predominates in the beginning of its development, the latter characterises a mature capitalism that is moving towards its transformation into socialist society. The Marxists’ national program takes both tendencies into account, and advocates, firstly, the equality of nations and languages and the impermissibility of all *privileges* in this respect (and also the right of nations to

self-determination, with which we shall deal separately later); secondly, the principle of internationalism and uncompromising struggle against contamination of the proletariat with bourgeois nationalism, even of the most refined kind.

The question arises: what does our Bundist mean when he cries out to heaven against “assimilation”? He *could not* have meant the oppression of nations, or the *privileges* enjoyed by a particular nation, because the word “assimilation” here does not fit at all, because all Marxists, individually, and as an official, united whole, have quite definitely and unambiguously condemned the slightest violence against and oppression and inequality of nations, and finally because this general Marxist idea, which the Bundist has attacked, is expressed in the *Severnaya Pravda* article in the most emphatic manner.

No, evasion is impossible here. In condemning “assimilation” Mr. Liebman had in mind, *not* violence, *not* inequality, and *not* privileges. Is there anything real left in the concept of assimilation, after all violence and all inequality have been eliminated?

Yes, there undoubtedly is. What is left is capitalism’s world-historical tendency to break down national barriers, obliterate national distinctions, and to *assimilate* nations — a tendency which manifests itself more and more powerfully with every passing decade, and is one of the greatest driving forces transforming capitalism into socialism.

Whoever does not recognise and champion the equality of nations and languages, and does not fight against all national oppression or inequality, is not a Marxist; he is not even a democrat. That is beyond doubt. But it is also beyond doubt that the pseudo-Marxist who heaps abuse upon a Marxist of another nation for being an “assimilator” is simply a *nationalist philistine*. In this unhandsome category of people are all the Bundists and (as we shall shortly see) Ukrainian nationalist-socialists such as L. Yurkevich, Dontsov and Co.

To, show concretely how reactionary the views held by these nationalist philistines are, we shall cite facts of three kinds.

It is the Jewish nationalists in Russia in general, and the Bundists in particular, who vociferate most about Russian orthodox Marxists being “assimilators”. And yet, as the aforementioned figures show, out of the ten and a half million Jews all over the world, *about half* that number live in the *civilised* world, where conditions favouring “assimilation” are *strongest*, whereas the unhappy, downtrodden, disfranchised Jews in Russia and Galicia, who are crushed under the heel of the Purishkeviches (Russian and Polish), live where conditions for “assimilation” *least* prevail, where there is most segregation, and even a “Pale of Settlement” a *numerus clausus* and other charming features of the Purishkevich regime.

The Jews in the civilised world are not a nation, they have in the main become

assimilated, say Karl Kautsky and Otto Bauer. The Jews in Galicia and in Russia are not a nation; unfortunately (through *no* fault of their own but through that of the Purishkeviches), they are still a *caste* here. Such is the incontrovertible judgement of people who are undoubtedly familiar with the history of Jewry and take the above-cited facts into consideration.

What do these facts prove? It is that only Jewish reactionary philistines, who want to turn back the wheel of history, and make it proceed, not from the conditions prevailing in Russia and Galicia to those prevailing in Paris and New York, but in the reverse direction — only they can clamour against “assimilation”.

The best Jews, those who are celebrated in world history, and have given the world foremost leaders of democracy and socialism, have never clamoured against assimilation. It is only those who contemplate the “rear aspect” of Jewry with reverential awe that clamour against assimilation.

A rough idea of the scale which the general process of assimilation of nations is assuming under the present conditions of advanced capitalism may be obtained, for example, from the immigration statistics of the United States of America. During the decade between 1891-1900, Europe sent 3,700,000 people there, and during the nine years between 1901 and 1909, 7,200,000. The 1906 census in the United States recorded over 10 million foreigners. New York State, in which, according to the same census, there were over 78,000 Austrians, 136,000 Englishmen, 20,000 Frenchmen, 480,000 Germans, 37,000 Hungarians, 425,000 Irish, 182,000 Italians, 70,000 Poles, 166,000 people from Russia (mostly Jews), 43,000 Swedes, etc., grinds down national distinctions. And what is taking place on a grand, international scale in New York is also to be seen in *every* big city and industrial township.

No one unobsessed by nationalist prejudices can fail to perceive that this process of assimilation of nations by capitalism means the greatest historical progress, the breakdown of hidebound national conservatism in the various backwoods, especially in backward countries like Russia.

Take Russia and the attitude of Great Russians towards the Ukrainians. Naturally, every democrat, not to mention Marxists, will strongly oppose the incredible humiliation of Ukrainians, and demand complete equality for them. But it would be a downright betrayal of socialism and a silly policy *even* from the standpoint of the bourgeois “national aims” of the Ukrainians to *weaken* the ties and the alliance between the Ukrainian and Great-Russian proletariat that now exist within the confines of a single state.

Mr. Lev Yurkevich, who calls himself a “Marxist” (poor Marx!), is an example of that silly policy. In 1906, Sokolovsky (Basok) and Lukashevich (Tuchapsky) asserted,

Mr. Yurkevich writes, that the Ukrainian proletariat had become completely Russified and needed no separate organisation. Without quoting a single fact *bearing on the direct issue*, Mr. Yurkevich falls upon both for saying this and cries out hysterically — quite in the spirit of the basest, most stupid and most reactionary nationalism — that this is “national passivity”, “national renunciation”, that these men have “split [!] the Ukrainian Marxists”, and so forth. Today, despite the “growth of Ukrainian national consciousness among the workers”, the *minority* of the workers are “nationally conscious” while the majority, Mr. Yurkevich assures us, “are still under the influence of Russian culture”. And it is our duty, this nationalist philistine exclaims, “not to follow the masses, but to lead them, to explain to them their national aims (*natsionalna sprava*)”. (*Dzvin*, p. 89)

This argument of Mr. Yurkevich’s is wholly bourgeois-nationalistic. But even from the point of view of the bourgeois nationalists, some of whom stand for complete equality and autonomy for the Ukraine, while others stand for an independent Ukrainian state, this argument will not wash. The Ukrainians’ striving for liberation is opposed by the Great-Russian and Polish landlord class and by the bourgeoisie of these two nations. What social force is capable of standing up to these classes? The first decade of the 20th century provided an actual reply to this question: that force is none other than the working class, which rallies the democratic peasantry behind it. By striving to divide, and thereby weaken, the genuinely democratic force, whose victory would make national oppression impossible, Mr. Yurkevich is betraying, not only the interests of democracy in general, but also the interests of his own country, the Ukraine. Given united action by the Great-Russian and Ukrainian proletarians, a free Ukraine is *possible*; without such unity, it is out of the question.

But Marxists do not confine themselves to the bourgeois-national standpoint. For several decades a well-defined process of accelerated economic development has been going on in the south, i.e., the Ukraine, attracting hundreds of thousands of peasants and workers from Great Russia to the capitalist farms, mines, and cities. The “assimilation” — within these limits — of the Great-Russian and Ukrainian proletariat is an indisputable fact. *And this* fact is *undoubtedly* progressive. Capitalism is replacing the ignorant, conservative, settled muzhik of the Great-Russian or Ukrainian backwoods with a mobile proletariat whose conditions of life break down specifically national narrow-mindedness, both Great-Russian and Ukrainian. Even if we assume that, in time, there will be a state frontier between Great Russia and the Ukraine, the historically progressive nature of the “assimilation” of the Great-Russian and Ukrainian workers will be as undoubted as the progressive nature of the grinding down of nations in America. The freer the Ukraine and Great Russia become, the *more extensive*

*and more rapid* will be the development of capitalism, which will still more powerfully attract the workers, the working masses of *all* nations from all regions of the state and from all the neighbouring states (should Russia become a neighbouring state in relation to the Ukraine) to the cities, the mines, and the factories.

Mr. Lev Yurkevich acts like a real bourgeois, and a short-sighted, narrow-minded, obtuse bourgeois at that, i.e., like a philistine, when he dismisses the benefits to be gained from the intercourse, amalgamation and assimilation of the *proletariat* of the two nations, for the sake of the momentary success of the Ukrainian national cause (*sprava*). The national cause comes first and the proletarian cause second, the bourgeois nationalists say, with the Yurkeviches, Dontsovs and similar would-be Marxists repeating it after them. The proletarian cause must come first, we say, because it not only protects the lasting and fundamental interests of labour and of humanity, but also those of democracy; and without democracy neither an autonomous nor an independent Ukraine is conceivable.

Another point to be noted in Mr. Yurkevich's argument, which is so extraordinarily rich in nationalist gems, is this: the minority of Ukrainian workers are nationally conscious, he says; "the majority are still under the influence of Russian culture" (*bilshist perebuwaye shche pid vplyvom rositskoi kultury*).

Contraposing Ukrainian culture as a whole to Great-Russian culture as a whole, when speaking of the proletariat, is a gross betrayal of the proletariat's interests for the benefit of bourgeois nationalism.

There are two nations in every modern nation — we say to all nationalist-socialists. There are two national cultures in every national culture. There is the Great-Russian culture of the Purishkeviches, Guchkovs and Struves — but there is also the Great-Russian culture typified in the names of Chernyshevsky and Plekhanov. There are *the same two* cultures in the Ukraine as there are in Germany, in France, in England, among the Jews, and so forth. If the majority of the Ukrainian workers are under the influence of Great-Russian culture, we also know definitely that the ideas of Great-Russian democracy and social-democracy operate parallel with the Great-Russian clerical and bourgeois culture. In fighting the latter kind of "culture", the Ukrainian *Marxist* will always bring the former into focus, and say to his workers: "We must snatch at, make use of, and develop to the utmost every opportunity for intercourse with the Great-Russian class-conscious workers, with their literature and with their range of ideas; the fundamental interests of *both* the Ukrainian and the Great-Russian working-class movements demand it."

If a Ukrainian Marxist allows himself to be swayed by his *quite legitimate and natural* hatred of the Great-Russian oppressors *to such a degree* that he transfers even

a particle of this hatred, even if it be only estrangement, to the proletarian culture and proletarian cause of the Great-Russian workers, then such a Marxist will get bogged down in bourgeois nationalism. Similarly, the Great-Russian Marxists will be bogged down, not only in bourgeois, but also in Black-Hundred nationalism, if he loses sight, even for a moment, of the demand for complete equality for the Ukrainians, or of their *right* to form an independent state.

The Great-Russian and Ukrainian workers must work together, and, as long as they live in a single state, act in the closest organisational unity and concert, towards a common or international culture of the proletarian movement, displaying absolute tolerance in the question of the language in which propaganda is conducted, and in the purely local or purely national *details* of that propaganda. This is the imperative demand of Marxism. All advocacy of the segregation of the workers of one nation from those of another, all attacks upon Marxist “assimilation”, or attempts, where the proletariat is concerned, to contrapose one national culture as a whole to another allegedly integral national culture, and so forth, is *bourgeois* nationalism, against which it is essential to wage a ruthless struggle.

#### 4. ‘Cultural-national autonomy’

The question of the “national culture” slogan is of enormous importance to Marxists, not only because it determines the ideological content of all our propaganda and agitation on the national question, as distinct from bourgeois propaganda, but also because the entire program of the much-discussed cultural-national autonomy is based on this slogan.

The main and fundamental flaw in this program is that it aims at introducing the most refined, most absolute and most extreme nationalism. The gist of this program is that every citizen registers as belonging to a particular nation, and every nation constitutes a legal entity with the right to impose compulsory taxation on its members, with national parliaments (diets) and national secretaries of state (ministers).

Such an idea, applied to the national question, resembles Proudhon’s idea, as applied to capitalism. Not abolishing capitalism and its basis — commodity production — but *purging* that basis of abuses, of excrescences, and so forth; not abolishing exchange and exchange value, but, on the contrary, making it “constitutional”, universal, absolute, “*fair*”, and free of fluctuations, crises and abuses — such was Proudhon’s idea.

Just as Proudhon was petty-bourgeois, and his theory converted exchange and commodity production into an absolute category and exalted them as the acme of perfection, so is the theory and program of “cultural-national autonomy” petty

bourgeois, for it converts bourgeois nationalism into an absolute category, exalts it as the acme of perfection, and purges it of violence, injustice, etc.

Marxism cannot be reconciled with nationalism, be it even of the “most just”, “purest”, most refined and civilised brand. In place of all forms of nationalism Marxism advances internationalism, the amalgamation of all nations in the higher unity, a unity that is growing before our eyes with every mile of railway line that is built, with every international trust, and every workers’ association that is formed (an association that is international in its economic activities as well as in its ideas and aims).

The principle of nationality is historically inevitable in bourgeois society and, taking this society into due account, the Marxist fully recognises the historical legitimacy of national movements. But to prevent this recognition from becoming an apologia of nationalism, it must be strictly limited to what is progressive in such movements, in order that this recognition may not lead to bourgeois ideology obscuring proletarian consciousness.

The awakening of the masses from feudal lethargy, and their struggle against all national oppression, for the sovereignty of the people, of the nation, are progressive. Hence, it is the Marxist’s *bounden* duty to stand for the most resolute and consistent democratism on all aspects of the national question. This task is largely a negative one. But this is the limit the proletariat can go to in supporting nationalism, for beyond that begins the “positive” activity of the *bourgeoisie* striving to *fortify* nationalism.

To throw off the feudal yoke, all national oppression, and all privileges enjoyed by any particular nation or language, is the imperative duty of the proletariat as a democratic force, and is certainly in the interests of the proletarian class struggle, which is obscured and retarded by bickering on the national question. But to go *beyond* these strictly limited and definite historical limits in helping bourgeois nationalism means betraying the proletariat and siding with the bourgeoisie. There is a borderline here, which is often very slight and which the Bundists and Ukrainian nationalist-socialists completely lose sight of.

Combat all national oppression? Yes, of course! Fight *for* any kind of national development, *for* “national culture” in general? — Of course not. The economic development of capitalist society presents us with examples of immature national movements all over the world, examples of the formation of big nations out of a number of small ones, or to the detriment of some of the small ones, and also examples of the assimilation of nations. The development of nationality in general is the principle of bourgeois nationalism; hence the exclusiveness of bourgeois nationalism, hence the endless national bickering. The proletariat, however, far from undertaking to uphold the national development of every nation, on the contrary, warns the masses against

such illusions, stands for the fullest freedom of capitalist intercourse and welcomes every kind of assimilation of nations, except that which is founded on force or privilege.

Consolidating nationalism within a certain “justly” delimited sphere, “constitutionalising” nationalism, and securing the separation of all nations from one another by means of a special state institution — such is the ideological foundation and content of cultural-national autonomy. This idea is thoroughly bourgeois and thoroughly false. The proletariat cannot support any consecration of nationalism; on the contrary, it supports everything that helps to obliterate national distinctions and remove national barriers; it supports everything that makes the ties between nationalities closer and closer, or tends to merge nations. To act differently means siding with reactionary nationalist philistinism.

When, at their Congress in Brünn<sup>39</sup> (in 1899), the Austrian Social-Democrats discussed the plan for cultural-national autonomy, practically no attention was paid to a theoretical appraisal of that plan. It is, however, noteworthy that the following two arguments were levelled against this program: (1) it would tend to strengthen clericalism; (2) “its result would be the perpetuation of chauvinism, its introduction into every small community, into every small group” (p. 92 of the official report of the Brünn Congress, in German. A Russian translation was published by the Jewish nationalist party, the JSLP<sup>40</sup>).

There can be no doubt that “national culture”, in the ordinary sense of the term, i.e., schools, etc., is at present under the predominant influence of the clergy and the bourgeois chauvinists in all countries in the world. When the Bundists, in advocating “cultural-national” autonomy, say that the constituting of nations will keep the class struggle within them *clean* of all extraneous considerations, then that is manifest and ridiculous sophistry. It is primarily in the economic and political sphere that a serious class struggle is waged in any capitalist society. To separate the sphere of education *from this* is, firstly, absurdly utopian, because schools (like “national culture” in general) cannot be separated from economics and politics; secondly, it is the economic and political life of a capitalist country that *necessitates* at every step the smashing of the absurd and outmoded national barriers and prejudices, whereas separation of the school system and the like, would only perpetuate, intensify and strengthen “pure” clericalism and “pure” bourgeois chauvinism.

On the boards of joint-stock companies we find capitalists of different nations sitting together in complete harmony. At the factories workers of different nations work side by side. In any really serious and profound political issue sides are taken according to classes, not nations. Withdrawing school education and the like from state control and placing it under the control of the nations is in effect an attempt to

*separate* from economics, which unites the nations, the most highly, so to speak, ideological sphere of social life, the sphere in which “pure” national culture or the national cultivation of clericalism and chauvinism has the freest play.

In practice, the plan for “extraterritorial” or “cultural-national” autonomy could mean only one thing: *the division of educational affairs according to nationality*, i.e., the introduction of national curias in school affairs. Sufficient thought to the *real* significance of the famous Bund plan will enable one to realise how utterly reactionary it is even from the standpoint of democracy, let alone from that of the proletarian class struggle for socialism.

A single instance and a single scheme for the “nationalisation” of the school system will make this point abundantly clear. In the United States of America the division of the states into northern and southern holds to this day in all departments of life; the former possess the greatest traditions of freedom and of struggle against the slaveowners; the latter possess the greatest traditions of slaveownership, survivals of persecution of the Negroes, who are economically oppressed and culturally backward (44% of Negroes are illiterate, and 6% of whites), and so forth. In the northern states Negro children attend the same schools as white children do. In the south there are separate “national”, or racial, whichever you please, schools for Negro children. I think that this is the sole instance of actual “nationalisation” of schools.

In Eastern Europe there exists a country where things like the Beilis case are still possible, and Jews are condemned by the Purishkeviches to a condition worse than that of the Negroes. In that country a scheme for *nationalising Jewish schools* was recently mooted in the ministry. Happily, this reactionary utopia is no more likely to be realised than the utopia of the Austrian petty bourgeoisie, who have despaired of achieving consistent democracy or of putting an end to national bickering, and have invented for the nations school-education *compartments* to keep bickering *over the distribution* of schools . . . but have “constituted” themselves for an *eternal* bickering of one “national culture” with another.

In Austria, the idea of cultural-national autonomy has remained largely a flight of literary fancy, which the Austrian Social-Democrats themselves have not taken seriously. In Russia, however, it has been incorporated in the programs of all the Jewish bourgeois parties, and of several petty-bourgeois, opportunist elements in the different nations — for example, the Bundists, the liquidators in the Caucasus, and the conference of Russian national parties of the Left-Narodnik trend. (This conference, we will mention parenthetically, took place in 1907, its decision being adopted *with abstention* on the part of the Russian Socialist-Revolutionaries and the PSP, the Polish social-patriots. Abstention from voting is a method surprisingly characteristic of the Socialist-

Revolutionaries and PSP, when they want to show their attitude towards a most important question of principle in the sphere of the national program!)

In Austria it was Otto Bauer, the principal theoretician of “cultural-national autonomy”, who devoted a special chapter of his book to prove that such a program cannot possibly be proposed for the Jews. In Russia, however, it is precisely among the Jews that all the bourgeois parties — and the Bund which echoes them — have adopted this program.<sup>a</sup> What does this go to show? It goes to show that history, through the political practice of another state, has exposed the absurdity of Bauer’s invention, in exactly the same way as the Russian Bernsteinians (Struve, Tugan-Baranovsky, Berdayev and Co.), through their rapid evolution from Marxism to liberalism, have exposed the real ideological content of the German Bernsteinism.

Neither the Austrian nor the Russian Social-Democrats have incorporated “cultural-national” autonomy in their program. However, the Jewish bourgeois parties in a most backward country, and a number of petty-bourgeois, so-called socialist groups *have adopted* it in order to spread ideas of bourgeois nationalism among the working class in a refined form. This fact speaks for itself.



Since we have had to touch upon the Austrian program on the national question, we must reassert a truth which is often distorted by the Bundists. At the Brünn Congress a *pure* program of “cultural-national autonomy” *was* presented. This was the program of the South-Slav Social-Democrats, §2 of which reads: “Every nation living in Austria, irrespective of the territory occupied by its members, constitutes an autonomous group which manages all its national (language and cultural) affairs quite independently.” This program was supported, not only by Kristan but by the influential Ellenbogen. But it was withdrawn; not a single vote was cast for it. A *territorialist* program was

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<sup>a</sup> That the Bundists often vehemently deny that *all* the Jewish bourgeois parties have accepted “cultural-national autonomy”, is understandable. This fact only too glaringly exposes the actual role being played by the Bund. When Mr. Manin, a Bundist, tried, in *Luch*,<sup>41</sup> to repeat his denial, he was fully exposed by N. Skop (see *Prosveshcheniye* No. 3). But when Mr. Lev Yurkevich, in *Dzvin* (1913, Nos. 7-8, p. 92), quotes from *Prosveshcheniye* (No. 3, p. 78) N. Sk.’s statement that “the Bundists together with all the Jewish bourgeois parties and groups have long been advocating cultural-national autonomy” and *distorts* this statement by *dropping* the word “Bundists” and *substituting* the words “national rights” for the words “cultural-national autonomy”, one can only raise one’s hands in amazement! Mr. Lev Yurkevich is not only a nationalist, not only an astonishing ignoramus in matters concerning the history of the Social-Democrats and their program, but a *downright falsifier of quotations* for the benefit of the Bund. The affairs of the Bund and the Yurkeviches must be in a bad way indeed!

adopted, i.e., one that did *not* create *any* national groups “irrespective of the territory occupied by the members of the nation”.

Clause 3 of the adopted program reads: “The self-governing *regions* of one and the same nation shall jointly form a nationally united association, which shall manage its national affairs on an absolutely autonomous basis” (cf. *Prosveshcheniye*, 1913, No. 4, p. 28<sup>42</sup>). Clearly, this compromise program is wrong too. An example will illustrate this. The German colonists’ community in Saratov Gubernia, plus the German working-class suburb of Riga or Lodz, plus the German housing estate near St. Petersburg, etc., would constitute a “nationally united association” of Germans in Russia. Obviously the Social-Democrats cannot *demand* such a thing or *enforce* such an association, although of course they do not in the least deny *freedom* of every kind of association, including associations of any communities of any nationality in a given state. The segregation, by a law of the state, of Germans, etc., in different localities and of different classes in Russia into a single German-national association may be practised by anybody — priests, bourgeois or philistines, but not by Social-Democrats.

## 5. The equality of nations & the rights of national minorities

When they discuss the national question, opportunists in Russia are given to citing the example of Austria. In my article in *Severnaya Pravda* (No. 10, *Prosveshcheniye*, pp. 96-98), which the opportunists have attacked (Mr. Semkovsky in *Novaya Rabochaya Gazeta*,<sup>43</sup> and Mr. Liebman in *Zeit*), I asserted that, insofar as that is at all possible under capitalism, there was only one solution of the national question, viz., through consistent democracy. In proof of this, I referred, among other things, to Switzerland.

This has not been to the liking of the two opportunists mentioned above, who are trying to refute it or belittle its significance. Kautsky, we are told, said that Switzerland is an exception; Switzerland, if you please, has a special kind of decentralisation, a special history, special geographical conditions, unique distribution of a population that speak different languages, etc., etc.

All these are nothing more than attempts to *evade* the issue. To be sure, Switzerland is an exception in that she is not a single-nation state. But Austria and Russia are also exceptions (or are backward, as Kautsky adds). To be sure, it was only her special, unique historical and social conditions that ensured Switzerland *greater* democracy than most of her European neighbours.

But where does all this come in, if we are speaking of the *model* to be adopted? In the whole world, under present-day conditions, countries in which any particular institution has been founded on *consistent* democratic principles are the exception. Does this prevent us, in our program, from upholding consistent democracy in all institutions?

Switzerland's special features lie in her history, her geographical and other conditions. Russia's special features lie in the strength of her proletariat, which has no precedent in the epoch of bourgeois revolutions, and in her shocking general backwardness, which objectively necessitates an exceptionally rapid and resolute advance, under the threat of all sorts of drawbacks and reverses.

We are evolving a national program from the proletarian standpoint; since when has it been recommended that the worst examples, rather than the best, be taken as a model?

At all events, does it not remain an indisputable and undisputed fact that national peace under capitalism has been achieved (insofar as it is achievable) *exclusively* in countries where consistent democracy prevails?

Since this is indisputable, the opportunists' persistent references to Austria instead of Switzerland are nothing but a typical Cadet device, for the Cadets always copy the worst European constitutions rather than the best.

In Switzerland there are *three* official languages, but bills submitted to a referendum are printed in *five* languages, that is to say, in two Romansh dialects, in addition to the three official languages. According to the 1900 census, these two dialects are spoken by 38,651 out of the 3,315,443 inhabitants of Switzerland, i.e., by a little over 1%. In the army, commissioned and non-commissioned officers "are given the fullest freedom to speak to the men in their native language". In the cantons of Graubünden and Wallis (each with a population of a little over a hundred thousand) both dialects enjoy complete equality.<sup>a</sup>

The question is: should we advocate and support this, the living *experience* of an advanced country, or borrow from the Austrians *inventions* like "extraterritorial autonomy", which have not yet been tried out anywhere in the world (and not yet been adopted by the Austrians themselves)?

To advocate this invention is to advocate the division of school education according to nationality, and that is a downright harmful idea. The experience of Switzerland proves, however, that the greatest (relative) degree of national peace *can be, and has been, ensured in practice* where you have a consistent (again relative) democracy throughout the state.

"In Switzerland", say people who have studied this question, "there is *no national question* in the East-European sense of the term. The very phrase (national question) is unknown there ..." "Switzerland left the struggle between nationalities a long way behind, in 1797-1803."<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> See René Henry, *La Suisse et la question des langues*, Berne, 1907.

<sup>b</sup> See Ed. Blocher, *Die Nationalitäten in der Schweiz*, Berlin, 1910.

This means that the epoch of the great French Revolution, which provided the most democratic solution of the current problems of the transition from feudalism to capitalism, *succeeded* incidentally, *en passant*, in “*solving*” the national question.

Let the Semkovskys, Liebman, and other opportunists now try to assert that this “exclusively Swiss” solution is *inapplicable* to any uyezd or even part of an uyezd in Russia, where out of a population of only 200,000 forty thousand speak *two dialects* and want to have *complete equality* of language in their area!

Advocacy of complete equality of nations and languages distinguishes only the consistently democratic elements in each nation (i.e., only the proletarians), and *unites* them, not according to nationality, but in a profound and earnest desire to improve the entire system of state. On the contrary, advocacy of “cultural-national autonomy”, despite the pious wishes of individuals and groups, *divides the nations* and in fact draws the workers and the bourgeoisie of any one nation closer together (the adoption of this “cultural-national autonomy” by all the Jewish bourgeois parties).

Guaranteeing the rights of a national minority is inseparably linked up with the principle of complete equality. In my article in *Severnaya Pravda* this principle was expressed in almost the same terms as in the later, official and more accurate decision of the conference of Marxists. That decision demands “the incorporation in the constitution of a fundamental law which shall declare null and void all privileges enjoyed by any one nation and all infringements of the rights of a national minority”.

Mr. Liebman tries to ridicule this formula and asks: “Who knows what the rights of a national minority are?” Do these rights, he wants to know, include the right of the minority to have “its own program” for the national schools? How large must the national minority be to have the right to have its own judges, officials, and schools with instruction in its own language? Mr. Liebman wants it to be inferred from these questions that a “*positive*” national program is essential.

Actually, these questions clearly show what reactionary ideas our Bundist tries to smuggle through under cover of a dispute on supposedly minor details and particulars.

“Its own program” in its national schools! ... Marxists, my dear nationalist-socialist, have a *general* school program which demands, for example, an absolutely secular school. As far as Marxists are concerned, no *departure* from this general program is anywhere or at any time permissible in a democratic state (the question of introducing any “local” subjects, languages, and so forth into it being decided by the local inhabitants). However, from the principle of “taking educational affairs out of the hands of the state” and placing them under the control of the nations, it ensues that we, the workers, must allow the “nations” in our democratic state to spend the people’s money on clerical schools! Without being aware of the fact, Mr. Liebman has clearly demonstrated

the reactionary nature of “cultural-national autonomy”!

“How large must a national minority be?” This is not defined even in the Austrian program, of which the Bundists are enamoured. It says (more briefly and less clearly than our program does): “The rights of the national minorities are protected by a special law to be passed by the Imperial Parliament” (§4 of the Brünn program).

Why has nobody asked the Austrian Social-Democrats the question: what exactly is that law, and exactly which rights and of which minority is it to protect?

That is because all sensible people understand that it is inappropriate and impossible to define particulars in a program. A program lays down only fundamental principles. In this case the fundamental principle is implied with the Austrians, and directly expressed in the decision of the latest conference of Russian Marxists. That principle is: no national privileges and no national inequality.

Let us take a concrete example to make the point clear to the Bundist. According to the school census of January 18, 1911, St. Petersburg elementary schools under the Ministry of Public “Education” were attended by 48,076 pupils. Of these, 396, i.e., less than 1%, were Jews. The other figures are: Rumanian pupils — 2, Georgians — 1, Armenians — 3, etc.<sup>44</sup> Is it possible to draw up a “positive” national program that will cover this diversity of relationships and conditions? (And St. Petersburg is, of course, far from being the city with the most mixed population in Russia.) Even such specialists in national “subtleties” as the Bundists would hardly be able to draw up such a program.

And yet, if the constitution of the country contained a fundamental law rendering null and void every measure that infringed the rights of a minority, any citizen would be able to demand the rescinding of orders prohibiting, for example, the hiring, at state expense, of special teachers of Hebrew, Jewish history, and the like, or the provision of state-owned premises for lectures for Jewish, Armenian, or Rumanian children, or even for the one Georgian child. At all events, it is by no means impossible to meet, on the basis of equality, all the reasonable and just wishes of the national minorities, and nobody will say that advocacy of equality is harmful. On the other hand, it would certainly be harmful to advocate division of schools according to nationality, to advocate, for example, special schools for Jewish children in St. Petersburg, and it would be utterly impossible to set up national schools for *every* national minority, for one, two or three children.

Furthermore, it is impossible, in any countrywide law, to define how large a national minority must be to be entitled to special schools, or to special teachers for supplementary subjects, etc.

On the other hand, a countrywide law establishing equality can be worked out in detail and developed through special regulations and the decisions of regional diets,

and town, zemstvo, village commune and other authorities.

## 6. Centralisation & autonomy

In his rejoinder, Mr. Liebman writes:

Take our Lithuania, the Baltic province, Poland, Volhynia, South Russia, etc. — everywhere you will find a *mixed* population; there is not a single city that does not have a large national minority. However far decentralisation is carried out, different nationalities will always be found living together in different places (chiefly in urban communities), and it is democratism that surrenders a national minority to the national majority. But, as we know, V.I. is opposed to the federal state structure and the boundless decentralisation that exist in the Swiss Federation. The question is: what was his point in citing the example of Switzerland?

My object in citing the example of Switzerland has already been explained above. I have also explained that the problem of protecting the rights of a national minority can be solved *only* by a countrywide law promulgated in a consistently democratic state that does not depart from the principle of equality. But in the passage quoted above, Mr. Liebman repeats still another of the most common (and most fallacious) arguments (or sceptical remarks) which are usually made against the Marxist national program, and which, therefore, deserve examination.

Marxists are, of course, opposed to federation and decentralisation, for the simple reason that capitalism requires for its development the largest and most centralised possible states. *Other conditions being equal*, the class-conscious proletariat will always stand for the larger state. It will always fight against medieval particularism, and will always welcome the closest possible economic amalgamation of large territories in which the proletariat's struggle against the bourgeoisie can develop on a broad basis.

Capitalism's broad and rapid development of the productive forces *calls* for large, politically compact and united territories, since only here can the bourgeois class — together with its inevitable antipode, the proletarian class — unite and sweep away all the old, medieval, caste, parochial, petty-national, religious and other barriers.

The right of nations to self-determination, i.e., the right to secede and form independent national states, will be dealt with elsewhere. But while, and insofar as, different nations constitute a single state, Marxists will never, under any circumstances, advocate either the federal principle or decentralisation. The great centralised state is a tremendous historical step forward from medieval disunity to the future socialist unity of the whole world, and only *via* such a state (*inseparably* connected with capitalism), can there be any road to socialism.

It would, however, be inexcusable to forget that in advocating centralism we

advocate exclusively *democratic* centralism. On this point all the philistines in general, and the nationalist philistines in particular (including the late Dragomanov), have so confused the issue that we are obliged again and again to spend time clarifying it.

Far from precluding local self-government, with *autonomy* for regions having special economic and social conditions, a distinct national composition of the population, and so forth, democratic centralism necessarily demands *both*. In Russia centralism is constantly confused with tyranny and bureaucracy. This confusion has naturally arisen from the history of Russia, but even so it is quite inexcusable for a Marxist to yield to it.

This can best be explained by a concrete example.

In her lengthy article “The National Question and Autonomy”<sup>a</sup> Rosa Luxemburg, among many other curious errors (which we shall deal with below), commits the exceptionally curious one of trying to *restrict* the demand for autonomy to Poland alone.

But first let us see *how* she defines autonomy.

Rosa Luxemburg admits — and being a Marxist she is of course bound to admit — that all the major and important economic and political questions of capitalist society must be dealt with exclusively by the central parliament of the whole country concerned, not by the autonomous diets of the individual regions. These questions include tariff policy, laws governing commerce and industry, transport and means of communication (railways, post, telegraph, telephone, etc.), the army, the taxation system, civil<sup>b</sup> and criminal law, the general principles of education (for example, the law on purely secular schools, on universal education, on the minimum program, on democratic school management, etc.), the labour protection laws, and political liberties (right of association), etc., etc.

The autonomous diets — on the basis of the general laws of the country — should deal with questions of purely local, regional, or national significance. Amplifying this idea in great — not to say excessive — detail, Rosa Luxemburg mentions, for example, the construction of local railways (No. 12, p. 149) and local highways (No. 14-15, p. 376), etc.

Obviously, one cannot conceive of a modern, truly democratic state that did *not* grant such autonomy to every region having any appreciably distinct economic and social features, populations of a specific national composition, etc. The principle of

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<sup>a</sup> *Przegląd Socjaldemokratyczny*,<sup>45</sup> Kraków, 1908 and 1909.

<sup>b</sup> In elaborating her ideas Rosa Luxemburg goes into details, mentioning, for example — and quite rightly — divorce laws (No. 12, p. 162 of the above-mentioned journal).

centralism, which is essential for the development of capitalism, is not violated by this (local and regional) autonomy, but on the contrary is applied by it *democratically*, not bureaucratically. The broad, free and rapid development of capitalism would be impossible, or at least greatly impeded, by the *absence* of such autonomy, which *facilitates* the concentration of capital, the development of the productive forces, the unity of the bourgeoisie and the unity of the proletariat on a *countrywide* scale; for bureaucratic interference in *purely* local (regional, national, and other) questions is one of the greatest obstacles to economic and political development in general, and an obstacle to *centralism* in serious, important and fundamental matters in particular.

One cannot help smiling, therefore, when reading how our magnificent Rosa Luxemburg tries to prove, with a very serious air and “purely Marxist” phrases, that the demand for autonomy is applicable *only* to Poland and *only* by way of exception! Of course, there is not a grain of “parochial” patriotism in this; we have here only “practical” considerations ... in the case of Lithuania, for example.

Rosa Luxemburg takes four gubernias — Vilna, Kovno, Grodno and Suvalki — assuring her readers (and herself) that these are inhabited “mainly” by Lithuanians; and by adding the inhabitants of these gubernias together she finds that Lithuanians constitute 23% of the total population, and if Zhmuds are added, they constitute 31% — less than a third. The natural inference is that the idea of autonomy for Lithuania is “arbitrary and artificial” (No. 10, p. 807).

The reader who is familiar with the commonly known defects of our Russian official statistics will quickly see Rosa Luxemburg’s mistake. Why take Grodno Gubernia where the Lithuanians constitute only 0.2%, *one-fifth of 1%* of the population? Why take the whole Vilna Gubernia and not its Troki Uyezd alone, where the Lithuanians constitute the *majority* of the population? Why take the whole Suvalki Gubernia and put the number of Lithuanians at 52% of the population, and not the Lithuanian uyezds of that gubernia, i.e., five out of the seven, in which Lithuanians constitute 72% of the population?

It is ridiculous to talk about the conditions and demands of modern capitalism while at the same time taking not the “modern”, not the “capitalist”, but the medieval, feudal and official-bureaucratic administrative divisions of Russia, and in their crudest form at that (gubernias instead of uyezds). Plainly, there can be no question of any serious local reform in Russia until these divisions are abolished and superseded by a *really* “modern” division that really meets the requirements, *not* of the Treasury, *not* of the bureaucracy, *not* of routine, *not* of the landlords, *not* of the priests, but of capitalism; and one of the modern requirements of capitalism is undoubtedly the greatest possible national uniformity of the population, for nationality and language

identity are an important factor making for the complete conquest of the home market and for complete freedom of economic intercourse.

Oddly enough, this obvious mistake of Rosa Luxemburg's is repeated by the Bundist Medem, who sets out to prove, not that Poland's specific features are "exceptional", but that the principle of national-territorial autonomy is unsuitable (the Bundists stand for national extraterritorial autonomy!). Our Bundists and liquidators collect from all over the world all the errors and all the opportunist vacillations of social-democrats of different countries and different nations and appropriate to themselves the *worst* they can find in world social-democracy. A scrapbook of Bundist and liquidator writings could, taken together, serve as a model social-democratic *museum of bad taste*.

Regional autonomy, Medem tells us didactically, is good for a region or a "territory", but not for Lettish, Estonian, or other areas (*okrugs*), which have populations ranging from half a million to two million and areas equal to a gubernia. "*That would not be autonomy, but simply a zemstvo ... Over this zemstvo it would be necessary to establish real autonomy*" ... and the author goes on to condemn the "break-up" of the old gubernias and uyezds.<sup>a</sup>

As a matter of fact, the preservation of the medieval, feudal, official administrative divisions means the "breakup" and mutilation of the conditions of modern capitalism. Only people imbued with the spirit of these divisions can, with the learned air of the expert, speculate on the contraposition of "zemstvo" and "autonomy", calling for the stereotyped application of "autonomy" to large regions and of the zemstvo to small ones. Modern capitalism does not demand these bureaucratic stereotypes at all. Why national areas with populations, not only of half a million, but even of 50,000, should not be able to enjoy autonomy; why such areas should not be able to unite in the most diverse ways with neighbouring areas of different dimensions into a single autonomous "territory" if that is convenient or necessary for economic intercourse — these things remain the secret of the Bundist Medem.

We would mention that the Brünn Social-Democratic national program is based entirely on national-territorial autonomy; it proposes that Austria should be divided into "nationally distinct" areas "instead of the historical crown lands" (Clause 2 of the Brünn program). We would not go as far as that. A uniform national population is undoubtedly one of the most reliable factors making for free, broad and really modern commercial intercourse. It is beyond doubt that not a single Marxist, and not even a

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<sup>a</sup> V. Medem, "A Contribution to the Presentation of the National Question in Russia", *Vestnik Yevropy*,<sup>46</sup> 1912, Nos. 8 and 9.

single firm democrat, will stand up for the Austrian crown lands and the Russian gubernias and uyezds (the latter are not as bad as the Austrian crown lands, but they are very bad nevertheless), or challenge the necessity of replacing these obsolete divisions by others that will conform as far as possible with the national composition of the population. Lastly, it is beyond doubt that in order to eliminate all national oppression it is very important to create autonomous areas, however small, with entirely homogeneous populations, towards which members of the respective nationalities scattered all over the country, or even all over the world, could gravitate, and with which they could enter into relations and free associations of every kind. All this is indisputable, and can be argued against only from the hidebound, bureaucratic point of view.

The national composition of the population, however, is *one* of the very important economic factors, *but not the sole and not the most* important factor. Towns, for example, play an *extremely important* economic role under capitalism, and everywhere, in Poland, in Lithuania, in the Ukraine, in Great Russia, and elsewhere, the towns are marked by mixed populations. To cut the towns off from the villages and areas that economically gravitate towards them, for the sake of the “national” factor, would be absurd and impossible. That is why Marxists must not take their stand entirely and exclusively on the “national-territorial” principle.

The solution of the problem proposed by the last conference of Russian Marxists is far more correct than the Austrian. On this question, the conference advanced the following proposition:

... must provide for wide regional autonomy [not for Poland alone, of course, but for all the regions of Russia]<sup>a</sup> and fully democratic local self-government, and the boundaries of the self-governing and autonomous regions must be determined [not by the boundaries of the present gubernias, uyezds, etc., but] by the local inhabitants themselves on the basis of their economic and social conditions, national make-up of the population, etc.

Here the national composition of the population is placed on *the same level* as the other conditions (economic first, then social, etc.) which must serve as a basis for determining the new boundaries that will meet the needs of modern capitalism, not of bureaucracy and Asiatic barbarism. The local population alone can “assess” those conditions with full precision, and on that basis the central parliament of the country will determine the boundaries of the autonomous regions and the powers of autonomous diets.

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<sup>a</sup> Interpolations in square brackets (within passages quoted by Lenin) are by Lenin, unless otherwise indicated.— *Ed.*

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We have still to examine the question of the right of nations to self-determination. On this question a whole collection of opportunists of all nationalities — the liquidator Semkovsky, the Bundist Liebman and the Ukrainian nationalist-socialist Lev Yurkevich — have set to work to “popularise” the errors of Rosa Luxemburg. This question, which has been so utterly confused by this whole “collection”, will be dealt with in our next article.<sup>47</sup> ■

# The Right of Nations to Self-Determination<sup>48</sup>

Clause 9 of the Russian Marxists' Program, which deals with the right of nations to self-determination has (as we have already pointed out in *Prosveshcheniye*) given rise lately to a crusade on the part of the opportunists. The Russian liquidator Semkovsky, in the St. Petersburg liquidationist newspaper, and the Bundist Liebman and the Ukrainian nationalist-socialist Yurkevich in their respective periodicals have violently attacked this clause and treated it with supreme contempt. There is no doubt that this campaign of a motley array of opportunists against our Marxist Program is closely connected with present-day nationalist vacillations in general. Hence we consider a detailed examination of this question timely. We would mention, in passing, that none of the opportunists named above has offered a single argument of his own; they all merely repeat what Rosa Luxemburg said in her lengthy Polish article of 1908-09, "The National Question and Autonomy". In our exposition we shall deal mainly with the "original" arguments of this last-named author.

## 1. What is meant by the self-determination of nations?

Naturally, this is the first question that arises when any attempt is made at a Marxist examination of what is known as self-determination. What should be understood by that term? Should the answer be sought in legal definitions deduced from all sorts of "general concepts" of law? Or is it rather to be sought in a historico-economic study of the national movements?

It is not surprising that the Semkovskys, Liebman and Yurkeviches did not even think of raising this question, and shrugged it off by scoffing at the "obscurity" of the Marxist Program, apparently unaware, in their simplicity, that the self-determination of nations is dealt with, not only in the Russian Program of 1903, but in the resolution of the London International Congress of 1896 (with which I shall deal in detail in the

proper place). Far more surprising is the fact that Rosa Luxemburg, who declaims a great deal about the supposedly abstract and metaphysical nature of the clause in question, should herself succumb to the sin of abstraction and metaphysics. It is Rosa Luxemburg herself who is continually lapsing into generalities about self-determination (to the extent even of philosophising amusingly on the question of how the will of the nation is to be ascertained), without anywhere clearly and precisely asking herself whether the gist of the matter lies in legal definitions or in the experience of the national movements throughout the world.

A precise formulation of this question, which no Marxist can avoid, would at once destroy nine-tenths of Rosa Luxemburg's arguments. This is not the first time that national movements have arisen in Russia, nor are they peculiar to that country alone. Throughout the world, the period of the final victory of capitalism over feudalism has been linked up with national movements. For the complete victory of commodity production, the bourgeoisie must capture the home market, and there must be politically united territories whose population speak a single language, with all obstacles to the development of that language and to its consolidation in literature eliminated. Therein is the economic foundation of national movements. Language is the most important means of human intercourse. Unity and unimpeded development of language are the most important conditions for genuinely free and extensive commerce on a scale commensurate with modern capitalism, for a free and broad grouping of the population in all its various classes and, lastly, for the establishment of a close connection between the market and each and every proprietor, big or little, and between seller and buyer.

Therefore, the tendency of every national movement is towards the formation of *national states*, under which these requirements of modern capitalism are best satisfied. The most profound economic factors drive towards this goal, and, therefore, for the whole of Western Europe, nay, for the entire civilised world, the national state is *typical* and normal for the capitalist period.

Consequently, if we want to grasp the meaning of self-determination of nations, not by juggling with legal definitions, or "inventing" abstract definitions, but by examining the historico-economic conditions of the national movements, we must inevitably reach the conclusion that the self-determination of nations means the political separation of these nations from alien national bodies, and the formation of an independent national state.

Later on we shall see still other reasons why it would be wrong to interpret the right to self-determination as anything but the right to existence as a separate state. At present, we must deal with Rosa Luxemburg's efforts to "dismiss" the inescapable conclusion that profound economic factors underlie the urge towards a national state.

Rosa Luxemburg is quite familiar with Kautsky's pamphlet *Nationality and Internationality* (Supplement to *Die Neue Zeit* No. 1, 1907-08; Russian translation in the journal *Nauchnaya Mysl*,<sup>49</sup> Riga, 1908.) She is aware that, after carefully analysing the question of the national state, in §4 of that pamphlet, Kautsky arrived at the conclusion that Otto Bauer "underestimates the strength of the urge towards a national state" (p. 23 of the pamphlet). Rosa Luxemburg herself quotes the following words of Kautsky's: "The national state is the form *most suited* to present-day conditions, [i.e., capitalist, civilised, economically progressive preconditions, as distinguished from medieval, pe-capitalist, etc]; in which the state can best fulfil its tasks" (i.e., the tasks of securing the freest, widest and speediest development of capitalism). To this we must add Kautsky's still more precise concluding remark that states of mixed national composition (known as multinational states, as distinct from national states) are "always those whose internal constitution has for some reason or other remained abnormal or underdeveloped" (backward). Needless to say, Kautsky speaks of abnormality exclusively in the sense of lack of conformity with what is best adapted to the requirements of a developing capitalism.

The question now is: How did Rosa Luxemburg treat these historico-economic conclusions of Kautsky's? Are they right or wrong? Is Kautsky right in his historico-economic theory, or is Bauer, whose theory is basically psychological? What is the connection between Bauer's undoubted "national opportunism", his defence of cultural-national autonomy, his nationalistic infatuation ("an occasional emphasis on the national aspect", as Kautsky put it), his "enormous exaggeration of the national aspect and complete neglect of the international aspect" (Kautsky) — and his underestimation of the strength of the urge to create a national state?

Rosa Luxemburg has not even raised this question. She has not noticed the connection. She has not considered the *sum total* of Bauer's theoretical views. She has not even drawn a line between the historico-economic and the psychological theories of the national question. She confines herself to the following remarks in criticism of Kautsky:

This "best" national state is only an abstraction, which can easily be developed and defended theoretically, but which does not correspond to reality. [*Przegląd Socjaldemokratyczny*, 1908, No. 6, p. 499.]

And in corroboration of this emphatic statement there follow arguments to the effect that the "right to self-determination" of small nations is made illusory by the development of the great capitalist powers and by imperialism. "Can one seriously speak", Rosa Luxemburg exclaims, "about the 'self-determination' of the formally independent Montenegrins, Bulgarians, Rumanians, Serbs, Greeks, partly even the

Swiss, whose independence is itself a result of the political struggle and the diplomatic game of the ‘concert of Europe’?!” (p. 500) The state that best suits these conditions is “not a national state, as Kautsky believes, but a predatory one”. Some dozens of figures are quoted relating to the size of British, French and other colonial possessions.

After reading such arguments, one cannot help marvelling at the author’s ability to misunderstand *the how and the why of things*. To teach Kautsky, with a serious mien, that small states are economically dependent on big ones, that a struggle is raging among the bourgeois states for the predatory suppression of other nations, and that imperialism and colonies exist — all this is a ridiculous and puerile attempt to be clever, for none of this has the slightest bearing on the subject. Not only small states, but even Russia, for example, is entirely dependent, economically, on the power of the imperialist finance capital of the “rich” bourgeois countries. Not only the miniature Balkan states, but even 19th-century America was, economically, a colony of Europe, as Marx pointed out in *Capital*.<sup>50</sup> Kautsky, like any Marxist, is, of course, well aware of this, but that has nothing whatever to do with the question of national movements and the national state.

For the question of the political self-determination of nations and their independence as states in bourgeois society, Rosa Luxemburg has substituted the question of their economic independence. This is just as intelligent as if someone, in discussing the programmatic demand for the supremacy of parliament, i.e., the assembly of people’s representatives, in a bourgeois state, were to expound the perfectly correct conviction that big capital dominates in a bourgeois country, whatever the regime in it.

There is no doubt that the greater part of Asia, the most densely populated continent, consists either of colonies of the “great powers”, or of states that are extremely dependent and oppressed as nations. But does this commonly-known circumstance in any way shake the undoubted fact that in Asia itself the conditions for the most complete development of commodity production and the freest, widest and speediest growth of capitalism have been created only in Japan, i.e., only in an independent national state? The latter is a bourgeois state, and for that reason has itself begun to oppress other nations and to enslave colonies. We cannot say whether Asia will have had time to develop into a system of independent national states, like Europe, before the collapse of capitalism, but it remains an undisputed fact that capitalism, having awakened Asia, has called forth national movements everywhere in that continent, too; that the tendency of these movements is towards the creation of national states in Asia; that it is such states that ensure the best conditions for the development of capitalism. The example of Asia speaks *in favour* of Kautsky and *against* Rosa Luxemburg.

The example of the Balkan states likewise contradicts her, for anyone can now see that the best conditions for the development of capitalism in the Balkans are created precisely in proportion to the creation of independent national states in that peninsula.

Therefore, Rosa Luxemburg notwithstanding, the example of the whole of progressive and civilised mankind, the example of the Balkans and that of Asia prove that Kautsky's proposition is absolutely correct: the national state is the rule and the "norm" of capitalism; the multinational state represents backwardness, or is an exception. From the standpoint of national relations, the best conditions for the development of capitalism are undoubtedly provided by the national state. This does not mean, of course, that such a state, which is based on bourgeois relations, can eliminate the exploitation and oppression of nations. It only means that Marxists cannot lose sight of the powerful *economic* factors that give rise to the urge to create national states. It means that "self-determination of nations" in the Marxists' program *cannot*, from a historico-economic point of view, have any other meaning than political self-determination, state independence, and the formation of a national state.

The conditions under which the bourgeois-democratic demand for a "national state" should be supported from a Marxist, i.e., class-proletarian, point of view will be dealt with in detail below. For the present, we shall confine ourselves to the definition of the *concept* of "self-determination", and only note that Rosa Luxemburg *knows* what this concept means ("national state"), whereas her opportunist partisans, the Liebmanns, the Semkovskys, the Yurkeviches, *do not even know that!*

## 2. The historically concrete presentation of the question

The categorical requirement of Marxist theory in investigating any social question is that it be examined within *definite* historical limits, and, if it refers to a particular country (e.g., the national program for a given country), that account be taken of the specific features distinguishing that country from others in the same historical epoch.

What does this categorical requirement of Marxism imply in its application to the question under discussion?

First of all, it implies that a clear distinction must be drawn between the two periods of capitalism, which differ radically from each other as far as the national movement is concerned. On the one hand, there is the period of the collapse of feudalism and absolutism, the period of the formation of the bourgeois-democratic society and state, when the national movements for the first time become mass movements and in one way or another draw *all* classes of the population into politics through the press, participation in representative institutions, etc. On the other hand, there is the period of fully formed capitalist states with a long-established constitutional

regime and a highly developed antagonism between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie — a period that may be called the eve of capitalism's downfall.

The typical features of the first period are: the awakening of national movements and the drawing of the peasants, the most numerous and the most sluggish section of the population, into these movements, in connection with the struggle for political liberty in general, and for the rights of the nation in particular. Typical features of the second period are: the absence of mass bourgeois-democratic movements and the fact that developed capitalism, in bringing closer together nations that have already been fully drawn into commercial intercourse, and causing them to intermingle to an increasing degree, brings the antagonism between internationally united capital and the international working-class movement into the forefront.

Of course, the two periods are not walled off from each other; they are connected by numerous transitional links, the various countries differing from each other in the rapidity of their national development, in the national makeup and distribution of their population, and so on. There can be no question of the Marxists of any country drawing up their national program without taking into account all these general historical and concrete state conditions.

It is here that we come up against the weakest point in Rosa Luxemburg's arguments. With extraordinary zeal, she embellishes her article with a collection of hard words directed against §9 of our program, which she declares to be "sweeping", "a platitude", "a metaphysical phrase", and so on without end. It would be natural to expect an author who so admirably condemns metaphysics (in the Marxist sense, i.e., anti-dialectics) and empty abstractions to set us an example of how to make a concrete historical analysis of the question. The question at issue is the national program of the Marxists of a definite country — Russia, in a definite period — the beginning of the twentieth century. But does Rosa Luxemburg raise the question as to *what historical* period Russia is passing through, or *what are the concrete features* of the national question and the national movements of that *particular* country in that *particular* period?

No, she does not! *She says absolutely nothing about it!* In her work you will not find even the shadow of an analysis of how the national question stands in *Russia* in the present historical period, or of the specific features of *Russia* in this particular respect!

We are told that the national question in the Balkans is presented differently from that in Ireland; that Marx appraised the Polish and Czech national movements in the concrete conditions of 1848 in such and such a way (a page of excerpts from Marx); that Engels appraised the struggle of the forest cantons of Switzerland against Austria and the Battle of Morgarten which took place in 1315 in such and such a way (a page of

quotations from Engels with the appropriate comments from Kautsky); that Lassalle regarded the peasant war in Germany of the 16th century as reactionary, etc.

It cannot be said that these remarks and quotations have any novelty about them, but at all events it is interesting for the reader to be occasionally reminded just how Marx, Engels and Lassalle approached the analysis of concrete historical problems in individual countries. And a perusal of these instructive quotations from Marx and Engels reveals most strikingly the ridiculous position Rosa Luxemburg has placed herself in. She preaches eloquently and angrily the need for a concrete historical analysis of the national question in different countries at different times, but she *does not make the least* attempt to determine *what* historical stage in the development of capitalism *Russia* is passing through at the beginning of the 20th century, or what the *specific features* of the national question in this country are. Rosa Luxemburg gives examples of how *others* have treated the question in a Marxist fashion, as if deliberately stressing how often the road to hell is paved with good intentions and how often good counsel covers up unwillingness or inability to follow such advice in practice.

Here is one of her edifying comparisons. In protesting against the demand for the independence of Poland, Rosa Luxemburg refers to a pamphlet she wrote in 1898, proving the rapid “industrial development of Poland”, with the latter’s manufactured goods being marketed in Russia. Needless to say, no conclusion whatever can be drawn from this on the question of the *right* to self-determination; it only proves the disappearance of the old Poland of the landed gentry, etc. But Rosa Luxemburg always passes on imperceptibly to the conclusion that among the factors that unite Russia and Poland, the purely economic factors of modern capitalist relations now predominate.

Then our Rosa proceeds to the question of autonomy, and though her article is entitled “The National Question and Autonomy” *in general*, she begins to argue that the Kingdom of Poland has an *exclusive* right to autonomy (see *Prosveshcheniye*, 1913, No. 12). To support Poland’s right to autonomy, Rosa Luxemburg evidently judges the state system of Russia by her economic, political and sociological characteristics and everyday life — a totality of features which, taken together, produce the concept of “Asiatic despotism”. (*Przeglad* No. 129, p. 137.)

It is generally known that this kind of state system possesses great stability whenever completely patriarchal and pro-capitalist features predominate in the economic system and where commodity production and class differentiation are scarcely developed. However, if in a country whose state system is distinctly *pre-capitalist* in character there exists a nationally demarcated region where capitalism is *rapidly* developing, then the more rapidly that capitalism develops, the greater will be the antagonism between it and the *pre-capitalist* state system, and the more likely will be the separation

of the progressive region from the whole — with which it is connected, not by “modern capitalistic”, but by “Asiatically despotism” ties.

Thus, Rosa Luxemburg does not get her arguments to hang together even on the question of the social structure of the government in Russia with regard to bourgeois Poland; as for the concrete, historical, specific features of the national movements in Russia — she does not even raise that question.

That is a point we must now deal with.

### 3. The concrete features of the national question in Russia & Russia’s bourgeois-democratic reformation

Despite the elasticity of the principle of “the right of nations to self-determination”, which is a mere platitude, and, obviously, equally applicable, not only to the nations inhabiting Russia, but also to the nations inhabiting Germany and Austria, Switzerland and Sweden, America and Australia, we do not find it in the programs of any of the present-day socialist parties ... [*Przegląd*, No. 6, p. 483.]

This is how Rosa Luxemburg opens her attack upon §9 of the Marxist program. In trying to foist on us the conception that this clause in the program is a “mere platitude”, Rosa Luxemburg herself falls victim to this error, alleging with amusing boldness that this point is, “obviously, equally applicable” to Russia, Germany, etc.

Obviously, we shall reply, Rosa Luxemburg has decided to make her article a collection of errors in logic that could be used for schoolboy exercises. For Rosa Luxemburg’s tirade is sheer nonsense and a mockery of the historically concrete presentation of the question.

If one interprets the Marxist program in Marxist fashion, not in a childish way, one will without difficulty grasp the fact that it refers to bourgeois-democratic national movements. That being the case, it is “obvious” that this program “sweepingly”, and as a “mere platitude”, etc., covers *all* instances of bourgeois-democratic national movements. No less obvious to Rosa Luxemburg, if she gave the slightest thought to it, is the conclusion that our program refers *only* to cases where such a movement is actually in existence.

Had she given thought to these obvious considerations, Rosa Luxemburg would have easily perceived what nonsense she was talking. In accusing *us* of uttering a “platitude” she has used *against us* the argument that no mention is made of the right to self-determination in the programs of countries where there are *no* bourgeois-democratic national movements. A remarkably clever argument!

A comparison of the political and economic development of various countries, as well as of their Marxist programs, is of tremendous importance from the standpoint

of Marxism, for there can be no doubt that all modern states are of a common capitalist nature and are therefore subject to a common law of development. But such a comparison must be drawn in a sensible way. The elementary condition for comparison is to find out whether the historical periods of development of the countries concerned are at all *comparable*. For instance, only absolute ignoramuses (such as Prince Y. Trubetskoi in *Russkaya Mysl*) are capable of “comparing” the Russian Marxists’ agrarian program with the programs of Western Europe, since our program replies to questions that concern the *bourgeois-democratic* agrarian reform, whereas in the Western countries no such question arises.

The same applies to the national question. In most Western countries it was settled long ago. It is ridiculous to seek an answer to non-existent questions in the programs of Western Europe. In this respect Rosa Luxemburg has lost sight of the most important thing — the difference between countries where bourgeois-democratic reforms have long been completed, and those where they have not.

The crux of the matter lies in this difference, Rosa Luxemburg’s completed regard of it transforms her verbose article into a collection of empty and meaningless platitudes.

The epoch of bourgeois-democratic revolutions in Western, continental Europe embraces a fairly definite period, approximately between 1789 and 1871. This was precisely the period of national movements and the creation of national states. When this period drew to a close, Western Europe had been transformed into a settled system of bourgeois states, which, as a general rule, were nationally uniform states. Therefore, to seek the right to self-determination in the programs of West-European socialists at this time of day is to betray one’s ignorance of the ABC of Marxism.

In Eastern Europe and Asia the period of bourgeois-democratic revolutions did not begin until 1905. The revolutions in Russia, Persia, Turkey and China, the Balkan wars — such is the chain of world events of *our* period in our “Orient”. And only a blind man could fail to see in this chain of events the awakening of a *whole series* of bourgeois-democratic national movements which strive to create nationally independent and nationally uniform states. It is precisely and solely because Russia and the neighbouring countries are passing through this period that we must have a clause in our program on the right of nations to self-determination.

But let us continue the quotation from Rosa Luxemburg’s article a little more. She writes:

In particular, the program of a party which is operating in a state with an extremely varied national composition, and for which the national question is a matter of first-rate importance — the program of the Austrian Social-Democratic Party — does not contain the principle of the right of nations to self-determination. [*Ibid.*]

Thus, an attempt is made to convince the reader by the example of Austria “in particular”. Let us examine this example in the light of concrete historical facts and see just how sound it is.

In the first place, let us pose the fundamental question of the completion of the bourgeois-democratic revolution. In Austria, this revolution began in 1848 and was over in 1867. Since then, a more or less fully established bourgeois constitution has dominated, for nearly half a century, and on its basis a legal workers’ party is legally functioning.

Therefore, in the internal conditions of Austria’s development (i.e., from the standpoint of the development of capitalism in Austria in general, and among its various nations in particular), there are *no* factors that produce leaps and bounds, a concomitant of which might be the formation of nationally independent states. In assuming, by her comparison, that Russia is in an analogous position in this respect, Rosa Luxemburg not only makes a fundamentally erroneous and anti-historical assumption, but also involuntarily slips into liquidationism.

Secondly, the profound difference in the relations between the nationalities in Austria and those in Russia is particularly important for the question we are concerned with. Not only was Austria for a long time a state in which the Germans preponderated, but the Austrian Germans laid claim to hegemony in the German nation as a whole. This “claim” as Rosa Luxemburg (who is seemingly so averse to commonplaces, platitudes, abstractions ...) will perhaps be kind enough to remember, was shattered in the war of 1866. The German nation predominating in Austria found itself *outside the pale* of the independent German state which finally took shape in 1871. On the other hand, the Hungarians’ attempt to create an independent national state collapsed under the blows of the Russian serf army as far back as 1849.

A very peculiar situation was thus created — a striving on the part of the Hungarians and then of the Czechs, not for separation from Austria, but, on the contrary, for the preservation of Austria’s integrity, precisely in order to preserve national independence, which might have been completely crushed by more rapacious and powerful neighbours! Owing to this peculiar situation, Austria assumed the form of a dual state, and she is now being transformed into a triple state (Germans, Hungarians, Slavs).

Is there anything like this in Russia? Is there in our country a striving of the “subject peoples” for unity with the Great Russians in face of the danger of *worse* national oppression?

One need only pose this question in order to see that the comparison between Russia and Austria on the question of self-determination of nations is meaningless, platitudinous and ignorant.

The peculiar conditions in Russia with regard to the national question are just the reverse of those we see in Austria. Russia is a state with a single national centre — Great Russia. The Great Russians occupy a vast, unbroken stretch of territory, and number about 70 million. The specific features of this national state are: first, that “subject peoples” (which, on the whole, comprise the majority of the entire population — 57%) inhabit the border regions; secondly, the oppression of these subject peoples is much stronger here than in the neighbouring states (and not even in the European states alone); thirdly, in a number of cases the oppressed nationalities inhabiting the border regions have compatriots across the border, who enjoy greater national independence (suffice it to mention the Finns, the Swedes, the Poles, the Ukrainians and the Rumanians along the western and southern frontiers of the state); fourthly, the development of capitalism and the general level of culture are often higher in the non-Russian border regions than in the centre. Lastly, it is in the neighbouring Asian states that we see the beginning of a phase of bourgeois revolutions and national movements which are spreading to some of the kindred nationalities within the borders of Russia.

Thus, it is precisely the special concrete, historical features of the national question in Russia that make the recognition of the right of nations to self-determination in the present period a matter of special urgency in our country.

Incidentally, even from the purely factual angle, Rosa Luxemburg’s assertion that the Austrian Social-Democrat’s program does not contain any recognition of the right of nations to self-determination is incorrect. We need only open the minutes of the Brünn Congress, which adopted the national program,<sup>51</sup> to find the statements by the Ruthenian Social-Democrat Hankiewicz on behalf of the entire Ukrainian (Ruthenian) delegation (p. 85 of the minutes) and by the Polish Social-Democrat Reger on behalf of the entire Polish delegation (p. 108), to the effect that one of the aspirations of the Austrian Social-Democrats of both the above-mentioned nations is to secure national unity, and the freedom and independence of their nations. Hence, while the Austrian Social-Democrats did not include the right of nations to self-determination directly in their program, they did nevertheless allow the demand for national independence to be advanced by *sections* of the party. In effect, this means, of course, the recognition of the right of nations to self-determination! Thus, Rosa Luxemburg’s reference to Austria speaks against Rosa Luxemburg in *all* respects.

#### 4. ‘Practicality’ in the national question

Rosa Luxemburg’s argument that §9 of our Program contains nothing “practical” has been seized upon by the opportunists. Rosa Luxemburg is so delighted with this argument that in some parts of her article this “slogan” is repeated eight times on a

single page.

She writes: §9 “gives no practical lead on the day-by-day policy of the proletariat, no practical solution of national problems”.

Let us examine this argument, which elsewhere is formulated in such a way that it makes §9 look quite meaningless, or else commits us to support all national aspirations.

What does the demand for “practicality” in the national question mean?

It means one of three things: support for all national aspirations; the answer “yes” or “no” to the question of secession by any nation; or that national demands are in general immediately “practicable”.

Let us examine all three possible meanings of the demand for “practicality”.

The bourgeoisie, which naturally assumes the leadership at the start of every national movement, says that support for all national aspirations is practical. However, the proletariat’s policy in the national question (as in all others) supports the bourgeoisie only in a certain direction, but it never coincides with the bourgeoisie’s policy. The working class supports the bourgeoisie only in order to secure national peace (which the bourgeoisie cannot bring about completely and which can be achieved only with *complete* democracy), in order to secure equal rights and to create the best conditions for the class struggle. Therefore, it is *in opposition to the practicality* of the bourgeoisie that the proletarians advance their *principles* in the national question; they always give the bourgeoisie *only conditional* support. What every bourgeoisie is out for in the national question is either privileges for its *own* nation, or exceptional advantages for it; this is called being “practical”. The proletariat is opposed to all privileges, to all exclusiveness. To demand that it should be “practical” means following the lead of the bourgeoisie, falling into opportunism.

The demand for a “yes” or “no” reply to the question of secession in the case of every nation may seem a very “practical” one. In reality it is absurd; it is metaphysical in theory, while in practice it leads to subordinating the proletariat to the bourgeoisie’s policy. The bourgeoisie always places its national demands in the forefront, and does so in categorical fashion. With the proletariat, however, these demands are subordinated to the interests of the class struggle. Theoretically, you cannot say in advance whether the bourgeois-democratic revolution will end in a given nation seceding from another nation, or in its equality with the latter; *in either case*, the important thing for the proletariat is to ensure the development of its class. For the bourgeoisie it is important to hamper this development by pushing the aims of its “own” nation before those of the proletariat. That is why the proletariat confines itself, so to speak, to the negative demand for recognition of the *right* to self-determination, without giving guarantees to any nation, and without undertaking to give *anything at the expense* of another

nation.

This may not be “practical”, but it is in effect the best guarantee for the achievement of the most democratic of all possible solutions. The proletariat needs *only* such guarantees, whereas the bourgeoisie of every nation requires guarantees for *its own* interest, regardless of the position of (or the possible disadvantages to) other nations.

The bourgeoisie is most of all interested in the “feasibility” of a given demand — hence the invariable policy of coming to terms with the bourgeoisie of other nations, to the detriment of the proletariat. For the proletariat, however, the important thing is to strengthen its class against the bourgeoisie and to educate the masses in the spirit of consistent democracy and socialism.

This may not be “practical” as far as the opportunists are concerned, but it is the only real guarantee, the guarantee of the greater national equality and peace, despite the feudal landlords and the *nationalist* bourgeoisie.

The whole task of the proletarians in the national question is “unpractical” from the standpoint of the *nationalist* bourgeoisie of every nation, because the proletarians, opposed as they are to nationalism of every kind, demand “abstract” equality; they demand, as a matter of principle, that there should be no privileges, however slight. Failing to grasp this, Rosa Luxemburg, by her misguided eulogy of practicality, has opened the door wide for the opportunists, and especially for opportunist concessions to Great-Russian nationalism.

Why Great-Russian? Because the Great Russians in Russia are an oppressor nation, and opportunism in the national question will of course find expression among oppressed nations otherwise than among oppressor nations.

On the plea that its demands are “practical”, the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nations will call upon the proletariat to support its aspirations unconditionally. The most practical procedure is to say a plain “yes” in favour of the secession of a *particular* nation rather than in favour of all nations having the *right* to secede!

The proletariat is opposed to such practicality. While recognising equality and equal rights to a national state, it values above all and places foremost the alliance of the proletarians of all nations, and assesses any national demand, any national separation, *from the angle* of the workers’ class struggle. This call for practicality is in fact merely a call for uncritical acceptance of bourgeois aspirations.

By supporting the right to secession, we are told, you are supporting the bourgeois nationalism of the oppressed nations. This is what Rosa Luxemburg says, and she is echoed by Semkovsky, the opportunist, who incidentally is the only representative of liquidationist ideas on this question, in the liquidationist newspaper!

Our reply to this is: No, it is to the bourgeoisie that a “practical” solution of this

question is important. To the workers the important thing is to distinguish the *principles* of the two trends. *Insofar as* the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation fights the oppressor, we are always, in every case, and more strongly than anyone else, *in favour*, for we are the staunchest and the most consistent enemies of oppression. But insofar as the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation stands for *its own* bourgeois nationalism, we stand against. We fight against the privileges and violence of the oppressor nation, and do not in any way condone strivings for privileges on the part of the oppressed nation.

If, in our political agitation, we fail to advance and advocate the slogan of the *right* to secession, we shall play into the hands, not only of the bourgeoisie, but also of the feudal landlords and the absolutism of the *oppressor* nation. Kautsky long ago used this argument against Rosa Luxemburg, and the argument is indisputable. When, in her anxiety not to “assist” the nationalist bourgeoisie of Poland, Rosa Luxemburg rejects the *right* to secession in the program of the Marxists *in Russia*, she is *in fact* assisting the Great-Russian Black Hundreds. She is in fact assisting opportunist tolerance of the privileges (and worse than privileges) of the Great Russians.

Carried away by the struggle against nationalism in Poland, Rosa Luxemburg has forgotten the nationalism of the Great Russians, although it is *this* nationalism that is the most formidable at the present time. It is a nationalism that is more feudal than bourgeois, and is the principal obstacle to democracy and to the proletarian struggle. The bourgeois nationalism of *any* oppressed nation has a general democratic content that is directed *against* oppression, and it is this content that we *unconditionally* support. At the same time we strictly distinguish it from the tendency towards national exclusiveness; we fight against the tendency of the Polish bourgeois to oppress the Jews, etc., etc.

This is “unpractical” from the standpoint of the bourgeois and the philistine, but it is the only policy in the national question that is practical, based on principles, and really promotes democracy, liberty and proletarian unity.

The recognition of the right to secession for all; the appraisal of each concrete question of secession from the point of view of removing all inequality, all privileges, and all exclusiveness.

Let us consider the position of an oppressor nation. Can a nation be free if it oppresses other nations? It cannot. The interests of the freedom of the Great-Russian population<sup>a</sup> require a struggle against such oppression. The long, centuries-old history of the suppression of the movements of the oppressed nations, and the systematic

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<sup>a</sup> A certain L.VI.<sup>52</sup> in Paris considers this word un-Marxist. This L.VI. is amusingly “*superklug*” (too clever by half). And “this too-clever-by-half” L.VI. apparently intends to write an essay on the deletion of the words “population”, “nation”, etc., from our minimum program (having in mind the class struggle!).

propaganda in favour of such suppression coming from the “upper” classes have created enormous obstacles to the cause of freedom of the Great-Russian people itself, in the form of prejudices, etc.

The Great-Russian Black Hundreds deliberately foster these prejudices and encourage them. The Great-Russian bourgeoisie tolerates or condones them. The Great-Russian proletariat cannot achieve *its own* aims or clear the road to its freedom without systematically countering these prejudices.

In Russia, the creation of an independent national state remains, for the time being, the privilege of the Great-Russian nation alone. We, the Great-Russian proletarians, who defend no privileges whatever, do not defend this privilege either. We are fighting on the ground of a definite state; we unite the workers of all nations living in this state; we cannot vouch for any particular path of national development, for we are marching to our class goal along *all* possible paths.

However, we cannot move towards that goal unless we combat all nationalism, and uphold the equality of the various nations. Whether the Ukraine, for example, is destined to form an independent state is a matter that will be determined by a thousand unpredictable factors. Without attempting idle “*guesses*”, we firmly uphold something that is beyond doubt: the right of the Ukraine to form such a state. We respect this right; we do not uphold the privileges of Great Russians with regard to Ukrainians; we *educate* the masses in the spirit of recognition of that right, in the spirit of rejecting *state* privileges for any nation.

In the leaps which all nations have made in the period of bourgeois revolutions, clashes and struggles over the right to a national state are possible and probable. We proletarians declare in advance that we are *opposed* to Great-Russian privileges, and this is what guides our entire propaganda and agitation.

In her quest for “practicality” Rosa Luxemburg has lost sight of the *principal* practical task both of the Great-Russian proletariat and of the proletariat of other nationalities: that of day-by-day agitation and propaganda against all state and national privileges, and for the right, the equal right of all nations, to their national state. This (at present) is our principal task in the national question, for only in this way can we defend the interests of democracy and the alliance of all proletarians of all nations on an equal footing.

This propaganda may be “unpractical” from the point of view of the Great-Russian oppressors, as well as from the point of view of the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nations (both demand a *definite* “yes” or “no”, and accuse the Social-Democrats of being “vague”). In reality it is this propaganda, and this propaganda alone, that ensures the genuinely democratic, the genuinely socialist education of the masses. This is the

only propaganda to ensure the greatest chances of national peace in Russia, should she remain a multinational state, and the most peaceful (and for the proletarian class struggle, harmless) division into separate national states, should the question of such a division arise.

To explain this policy — the only proletarian policy — in the national question more concretely, we shall examine the attitude of Great-Russian liberalism towards the “self-determination of nations”, and the example of Norway’s secession from Sweden.

## 5. The liberal bourgeoisie & the socialist opportunists in the national question

We have seen that the following argument is one of Rosa Luxemburg’s “trump cards” in her struggle against the program of the Marxists in Russia: recognition of the right to self-determination is tantamount to supporting the bourgeois nationalism of the oppressed nations. On the other hand, she says, if we take this right to mean no more than combating all violence against other nations, there is no need for a special clause in the program, for social-democrats are, in general, opposed to all national oppression and inequality.

The first argument, as Kautsky irrefutably proved nearly 20 years ago, is a case of blaming other people for one’s own nationalism; in her fear of the nationalism of the bourgeoisie of oppressed nations, Rosa Luxemburg is *actually* playing into the hands of the Black-Hundred nationalism of the Great Russians! Her second argument is actually a timid evasion of the question whether or not recognition of national equality includes recognition of the right to secession. If it does, then Rosa Luxemburg admits that, in principle, §9 of our Program is correct. If it does not, then she does not recognise national equality. Shuffling and evasions will not help matters here!

However, the best way to test these and all similar arguments is to study the attitude of the *various classes* of society towards this question. For the Marxist this test is obligatory. We must proceed from what is objective; we must examine the relations between the classes on this point. In failing to do so, Rosa Luxemburg is guilty of those very sins of metaphysics, abstractions, platitudes, and sweeping statements, etc., of which she vainly tries to accuse her opponents.

We are discussing the Program of the Marxists *in Russia*, i.e., of the Marxists of all the nationalities in Russia. Should we not examine the position of the *ruling* classes of Russia?

The position of the “bureaucracy” (we beg pardon for this inaccurate term) and of the feudal landlords of our united-nobility type is well known. They definitely reject

both the equality of nationalities and the right to self-determination. Theirs is the old motto of the days of serfdom: autocracy, orthodoxy, and the national essence — the last term applying only to the Great-Russian nation. Even the Ukrainians are declared to be an “alien” people and their very language is being suppressed.

Let us glance at the Russian bourgeoisie, which was “called upon” to take part — a very modest part, it is true, but nevertheless some part — in the government, under the “June Third” legislative and administrative system. It will not need many words to prove that the Octobrists are following the Rights in this question. Unfortunately, some Marxists pay much less attention to the stand of the Great-Russian liberal bourgeoisie, the Progressists and the Cadets. Yet he who fails to study that stand and give it careful thought will inevitably flounder in abstractions and groundless statements in discussing the question of the right of nations to self-determination.

Skilled though it is in the art of diplomatically evading direct answers to “unpleasant” questions, *Rech*, the principal organ of the Constitutional-Democratic Party, was compelled, in its controversy with *Pravda* last year, to make certain valuable admissions. The trouble started over the All-Ukraine Students’ Congress held in Lvov in the summer of 1913.<sup>53</sup> Mr. Mogilyansky, the “Ukrainian expert” or Ukrainian correspondent of *Rech*, wrote an article in which he poured vitriolic abuse (“ravings”, “adventurism”, etc.) on the idea that the Ukraine should secede, an idea which Dontsov, a nationalist-socialist, had advocated and the above-mentioned congress approved.

While in no way identifying itself with Mr. Dontsov, and declaring explicitly that he was a nationalist-socialist and that many Ukrainian Marxists did not agree with him, *Rabochaya Pravda* stated that the *tone* of *Rech*, or, rather, the *way it formulated the question in principle*, was improper and reprehensible for a Great-Russian democrat, or for anyone desiring to pass as a democrat. Let *Rech* repudiate the Dontsovs if it likes, but, *from the standpoint of principle*, a Great-Russian organ of democracy, which it claims to be, cannot be oblivious of the *freedom* to secede, the *right* to secede.

A few months later, *Rech*, No. 331, published an “explanation” from Mr. Mogilyansky, who had learned from the Ukrainian newspaper *Shlyakhi*,<sup>54</sup> published in Lvov, of Mr. Dontsov’s reply, in which, incidentally, Dontsov stated that “the chauvinist attacks in *Rech* have been properly sullied [branded?] only in the Russian Social-Democratic press”. This “explanation” consisted of the thrice-repeated statement that “criticism of Mr. Dontsov’s recipes” “has nothing in common with the repudiation of the right of nations to self-determination”.

It must be said [wrote Mr. Mogilyansky] that even “the right of nations to self-determination” is not a fetish [mark this!] beyond criticism: unwholesome conditions in the life of nations may give rise to unwholesome tendencies in national self-

determination, and the fact that these are brought to light does not mean that the right of nations to self-determination has been rejected.

As you see, this liberal's talk of a "fetish" was quite in keeping with Rosa Luxemburg's. It was obvious that Mr. Mogilyansky was trying to evade a direct reply to the question whether or not he recognised the right to political self-determination, i.e., to secession.

The newspaper *Proletarskaya Pravda*, issue No. 4, for December 11, 1913, also put this question *point-blank* to Mr. Mogilyansky and to the Constitutional-Democratic Party.

Thereupon *Rech* (No. 340) published an unsigned, i.e., official, editorial statement replying to this question. This reply boils down to the following three points:

1) §11 of the Constitutional-Democratic Party's program speaks bluntly, precisely and clearly of the "right of nations to free *cultural* self-determination".

2) *Rech* affirms that *Proletarskaya Pravda* "hopelessly confuses" self-determination with separatism, with the secession of a given nation.

3) "Actually, the Cadets have never pledged themselves to advocate the right of 'nations to secede' from the Russian state." (See the article "National-Liberalism and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination", in *Proletarskaya Pravda*, No. 12, December 20, 1913.)

Let us first consider the second point in the *Rech* statement. How strikingly it shows to the Semkovskys, Liebman, Yurkevich and other opportunists that the hue and cry they have raised about the alleged "vagueness", or "indefiniteness", of the term "self-determination" is *in fact*, i.e., from the standpoint of objective class relationships and the class struggle in Russia, *simply a rehash* of the liberal-monarchist bourgeoisie's utterances!

*Proletarskaya Pravda* put the following *three* questions to the enlightened "Constitutional-Democratic" gentlemen of *Rech*: (1) Do they deny that, throughout the entire history of international democracy, and especially since the middle of the 19th century, self-determination of nations has been understood to mean precisely political self-determination, the right to form an independent national state? (2) Do they deny that the well-known resolution adopted by the International Socialist Congress in London in 1896 has the "same meaning? And (3) do they deny that Plekhanov, in writing about self-determination as far back as 1902, meant precisely political self-determination? When *Proletarskaya Pravda* posed these three questions, *the Cadets fell silent!*

Not a word did they utter in reply, for they had nothing to say. They had to admit tacitly that *Proletarskaya Pravda* was absolutely right.

The liberals' outcries that the term "self-determination" is vague and that the Social-Democrats "hopelessly confuse" it with separatism are nothing more than

attempts to *confuse* the issue, and evade recognition of a universally established democratic principle. If the Semkovskys, Liebman and Yurkeviches were not so ignorant, they would be ashamed to address the workers in a *liberal* vein.

But to proceed. *Proletarskaya Pravda* compelled *Rech* to admit that, in the program of the Constitutional Democrats, the term “cultural” self-determination means in effect the *repudiation of political* self-determination.

“Actually, the Cadets have never pledged themselves to advocate the right of ‘nations to secede’ from the Russian state” — it was not without reason that *Proletarskaya Pravda* recommended to *Novoye Vremya* and *Zemshchina* these words from *Rech* as an example of our Cadets’ “loyalty”. In its issue No. 13563, *Novoye Vremya*, which never, of course, misses an opportunity of mentioning “the Yids” and taking digs at the Cadets, nevertheless stated:

What, to the Social-Democrats, is an axiom of political wisdom [i.e., recognition of the right of nations to self-determination, to secede], is today beginning to cause disagreement even among the Cadets.

By declaring that they “have never pledged themselves to advocate the right of nations to secede from the Russian state”, the Cadets have, in principle, taken exactly the same stand as *Novoye Vremya*. This is precisely one of the fundamentals of Cadet *national-liberalism*, of their kinship with the Purishkeviches, and of their dependence, political, ideological and practical, on the latter. *Proletarskaya Pravda* wrote: “The Cadets have studied history and know only too well what — to put it mildly — pogrom-like actions the practice of the ancient right of the Purishkeviches to ‘grab ’em and hold ’em’<sup>55</sup> has often led to.” Although perfectly aware of the feudal source and nature of the Purishkeviches’ omnipotence, the Cadets are, nevertheless, taking their stand *on the basis* of the relationships and frontiers created by that very class. Knowing full well that there is much in the relationships and frontiers created or fixed by this class that is un-European and anti-European (we would say Asiatic if this did not sound undeservedly slighting to the Japanese and Chinese), the Cadets, nevertheless, accept them as the utmost limit.

Thus, they are adjusting themselves to the Purishkeviches, cringing to them, fearing to jeopardise their position, protecting them from the people’s movement, from the democracy. As *Proletarskaya Pravda* wrote: “In effect, this means adapting oneself to the interests of the feudal-minded landlords and to the worst nationalist prejudices of the dominant nation, instead of systematically combating those prejudices.”

Being men who are familiar with history and claim to be democrats, the Cadets do not even attempt to assert that the democratic movement, which is today characteristic of both Eastern Europe and Asia and is striving to change both on the model of the

civilised capitalist countries, is bound to leave intact the boundaries fixed by the feudal epoch, the epoch of the omnipotence of the Purishkeviches and the disfranchisement of wide strata of the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie.

The fact that the question raised in the controversy between *Proletarskaya Pravda* and *Rech* was not merely a literary question, but one that involved a real political issue of the day, was proved, among other things, by the last conference of the Constitutional-Democratic Party held on March 23-25, 1914; in the official report of this conference in *Rech* (No. 83, of March 26, 1914) we read:

A particularly lively discussion also took place on national problems. The Kiev deputies, who were supported by N.V. Nekrasov and A.M. Kolyubakin, pointed out that the national question was becoming a key issue, which would have to be faced up to more resolutely than hitherto. F.F. Kokoshkin pointed out, however [this “however” is like Shchedrin’s “but” — “the ears never grow higher than the forehead, never!”] that both the program and past political experience demanded that ‘elastic formulas’ of ‘political self-determination of nationalities’ should be handled very carefully.

This most remarkable line of reasoning at the Cadet conference deserves serious attention from all Marxists and all democrats. (We will note in parentheses that *Kievskaya Mysl*, which is evidently very well informed and no doubt presents Mr. Kokoshkin’s ideas correctly, added that, of course, as a warning to his opponents, he laid special stress on the danger of the “disintegration” of the state.)

The official report in *Rech* is composed with consummate diplomatic skill designed to lift the veil as little as possible and to conceal as much as possible. Yet, in the main, what took place at the Cadet conference is quite clear. The liberal-bourgeois delegates, who were familiar with the state of affairs in the Ukraine, and the “left” Cadets raised the question *precisely of the political* self-determination of nations. Otherwise, there would have been no need for Mr. Kokoshkin to urge that this “formula” should be “handled carefully”.

The Cadet program, which was of course known to the delegates at the Cadet conference, speaks of “cultural”, *not* of political self-determination. Hence, Mr. Kokoshkin was *defending* the program *against* the Ukrainian delegates, and *against* the left Cadets; he was defending “cultural” self-determination *as opposed* to “political” self-determination. It is perfectly clear that in opposing “political” self-determination, in playing up the danger of the “disintegration of the state”, and in calling the formula “political self-determination” an “*elastic*” one (quite in keeping with Rosa Luxemburg!), Mr. Kokoshkin was defending Great-Russian national-liberalism against the more “left” or more democratic elements of the Constitutional-Democratic Party and also against the Ukrainian bourgeoisie.

Mr. Kokoshkin won the day at the Cadet conference, as is evident from the treacherous little word “however” in the *Rech* report; Great-Russian national-liberalism has triumphed among the Cadets. Will not this victory help to clear the minds of those misguided individuals among the Marxists in Russia who, like the Cadets, have also begun to fear the “elastic formulas of political self-determination of nationalities”?

Let us, “however”, examine the substance of Mr. Kokoshkin’s line of thought. By referring to “past political experience” (i.e., evidently, the experience of 1905, when the Great-Russian bourgeoisie took alarm for its national privileges and scared the Cadet Party with its fears), and also by playing up the danger of the “disintegration of the state”, Mr. Kokoshkin showed that he understood perfectly well that political self-determination can mean nothing else but the right to secede and form an independent national state. The question is — how should Mr. Kokoshkin’s fears be appraised in the light of democracy in general, and the proletarian class struggle in particular?

Mr. Kokoshkin would have us believe that recognition of the right to secession increases the danger of the “disintegration of the state”. This is the viewpoint of Constable Mymretsov, whose motto was “grab ’em and hold ’em”. From the viewpoint of democracy in general, the very opposite is the case: recognition of the right to secession *reduces* the danger of the “disintegration of the state”.

Mr. Kokoshkin argues exactly like the nationalists do. At their last congress they attacked the Ukrainian “Mazepists”. The Ukrainian movement, Mr. Savenko and Co. exclaimed, threatens to weaken the ties between the Ukraine and Russia, since Austrian Ukrainophilism is strengthening the Ukrainians’ ties with Austria! It remains unexplained why Russia cannot try to “strengthen” her ties with the Ukrainians *through the same method* that the Savenkos blame Austria for using, i.e., by granting the Ukrainians freedom to use their own language, self-government and an autonomous diet.

The arguments of the Savenkos and Kokoshkins are exactly alike, and from the purely logical point of view they are equally ridiculous and absurd. Is it not clear that the more liberty the Ukrainian nationality enjoys in any particular country, the stronger its ties with that country will be? One would think that this truism could not be disputed without totally abandoning all the premises of democracy. Can there be greater freedom of nationality, as such, than the freedom to secede, the freedom to form an independent national state?

To clear up this question, which has been so confused by the liberals (and by those who are so misguided as to echo them), we shall cite a very simple example. Let us take the question of divorce. In her article Rosa Luxemburg writes that the centralised democratic state, while conceding autonomy to its constituent parts, should retain the

most important branches of legislation, including legislation on divorce, under the jurisdiction of the central parliament. The concern that the central authority of the democratic state should retain the power to allow divorce can be readily understood. The reactionaries are opposed to freedom of divorce; they say that it must be “handled carefully”, and loudly declare that it means the “disintegration of the family”. The democrats, however, believe that the reactionaries are hypocrites, and that they are actually defending the omnipotence of the police and the bureaucracy, the privileges of one of the sexes, and the worst kind of oppression of women. They believe that in actual fact freedom of divorce will not cause the “disintegration” of family ties, but, on the contrary, will strengthen them on a democratic basis, which is the only possible and durable basis in civilised society.

To accuse those who support freedom of self-determination, i.e., freedom to secede, of encouraging separatism, is as foolish and hypocritical as accusing those who advocate freedom of divorce of encouraging the destruction of family ties. Just as in bourgeois society the defenders of privilege and corruption, on which bourgeois marriage rests, oppose freedom of divorce, so, in the capitalist state, repudiation of the right to self-determination, i.e., the right of nations to secede, means nothing more than defence of the privileges of the dominant nation and police methods of administration, to the detriment of democratic methods.

No doubt, the political chicanery arising from all the relationships existing in capitalist society sometimes leads members of parliament and journalists to indulge in frivolous and even nonsensical twaddle about one or another nation seceding. But only reactionaries can allow themselves to be frightened (or pretend to be frightened) by such talk. Those who stand by democratic principles, i.e., who insist that questions of state be decided by the mass of the population, know very well that there is a “tremendous distance”<sup>56</sup> between what the politicians prate about and what the people decide. From their daily experience the masses know perfectly well the value of geographical and economic ties and the advantages of a big market and a big state. They will, therefore, resort to secession only when national oppression and national friction make joint life absolutely intolerable and hinder any and all economic intercourse. In that case, the interests of capitalist development and of the freedom of the class struggle will be best served by secession.

Thus, from whatever angle we approach Mr. Kokoshkin’s arguments, they prove to be the height of absurdity and a mockery of the principles of democracy. And yet there is a modicum of logic in these arguments, the logic of the class interests of the Great-Russian bourgeoisie. Like most members of the Constitutional-Democratic Party, Mr. Kokoshkin is a lackey of the moneybags of that bourgeoisie. He defends its

privileges in general, and its *state* privileges in particular. He defends them hand in hand and shoulder to shoulder with Purishkevich, the only difference being that Purishkevich puts more faith in the feudalist cudgel, while Kokoshkin and Co. realise that this cudgel was badly damaged in 1905, and rely more on bourgeois methods of fooling the masses, such as frightening the petty bourgeoisie and the peasants with the spectre of the “disintegration of the state”, and deluding them with phrases about blending “people’s freedom” with historical tradition, etc.

The liberals’ hostility to the principle of political self-determination of nations can have one, and only one, real class meaning: national-liberalism, defence of the state privileges of the Great-Russian bourgeoisie. And the opportunists among the Marxists in Russia, who today, under the Third of June regime, are against the right of nations to self-determination — the liquidator Semkovsky, the Bundist Liebman, the Ukrainian petty-bourgeois Yurkevich — are *actually* following in the wake of the national-liberals, and corrupting the working class with national-liberal ideas.

The interests of the working class and of its struggle against capitalism demand complete solidarity and the closest unity of the workers of all nations; they demand resistance to the nationalist policy of the bourgeoisie of every nationality. Hence, Social-Democrats would be deviating from proletarian policy and subordinating the workers to the policy of the bourgeoisie if they were to repudiate the right of nations to self-determination, i.e., the right of an oppressed nation to secede, or if they were to support all the national demands of the bourgeoisie of oppressed nations. It makes no difference to the hired worker whether he is exploited chiefly by the Great-Russian bourgeoisie rather than the non-Russian bourgeoisie, or by the Polish bourgeoisie rather than the Jewish bourgeoisie, etc. The hired worker who has come to understand his class interests is equally indifferent to the state privileges of the Great-Russian capitalists and to the promises of the Polish or Ukrainian capitalists to set up an earthly paradise when they obtain state privileges. Capitalism is developing and will continue to develop, anyway, both in integral states with a mixed population and in separate national states.

In any case the hired worker will be an object of exploitation. Successful struggle against exploitation requires that the proletariat be free of nationalism, and be absolutely neutral, so to speak, in the fight for supremacy that is going on among the bourgeoisie of the various nations. If the proletariat of any one nation gives the slightest support to the privileges of its “own” national bourgeoisie, that will inevitably rouse distrust among the proletariat of another nation; it will weaken the international class solidarity of the workers and divide them, to the delight of the bourgeoisie. Repudiation of the right to self-determination or to secession inevitably means, in practice, support for

the privileges of the dominant nation.

We will get even more striking confirmation of this if we take the concrete case of Norway's secession from Sweden.

## 6. Norway's secession from Sweden

Rosa Luxemburg cites precisely this example, and discusses it as follows:

The latest event in the history of federative relations, the secession of Norway from Sweden — which at the time was hastily seized upon by the social-patriotic Polish press (see the Cracow *Naprzód*<sup>57</sup>) as a gratifying sign of the strength and progressive nature of the tendency towards state secession — at once provided striking proof that federalism and its concomitant, separation, are in no way an expression of progress or democracy. After the so-called Norwegian “revolution”, which meant that the Swedish king was deposed and compelled to leave Norway, the Norwegians coolly proceeded to choose another king, formally rejecting, by a national referendum, the proposal to establish a republic. That which superficial admirers of all national movements and of all semblance of independence proclaimed to be a “revolution” was simply a manifestation of peasant and petty-bourgeois particularism, the desire to have a king “of their own”, for their money instead of one imposed upon them by the Swedish aristocracy, and was, consequently, a movement that had absolutely nothing in common with revolution. At the same time, the dissolution of the union between Sweden and Norway showed once more to what extent, in this case also, the federation which had existed until then was only an expression of purely dynastic interests and, therefore, merely a form of monarchism and reaction. (*Przegląd*)

That is literally all that Rosa Luxemburg has to say on this score! Admittedly, it would have been difficult for her to have revealed the hopelessness of her position more saliently than she has done in this particular instance.

The question was, and is: do the social-democrats in a mixed national state need a program that recognises the right to self-determination or secession?

What does the example of Norway, cited by Rosa Luxemburg, tell us on this point?

Our author twists and turns, exercises her wit and rails at *Naprzód*, but she does not answer the question! Rosa Luxemburg speaks about everything under the sun so as to *avoid saying a single word* about the actual point at issue!

Undoubtedly, in wishing to have a king of their own for their money, and in rejecting, in a national referendum, the proposal to establish a republic, the Norwegian petty bourgeoisie displayed exceedingly bad philistine qualities. Undoubtedly, *Naprzód* displayed equally bad and equally philistine qualities in failing to notice this.

But what has all this to do with the case?

The question under discussion was the right of nations to self-determination and the attitude to be adopted by the socialist proletariat towards this right! Why, then, does not Rosa Luxemburg answer this question instead of beating about the bush?

To a mouse there is no stronger beast than the cat, it is said. To Rosa Luxemburg there is evidently no stronger beast than the “Fracy”. “Fracy” is the popular term for the “Polish Socialist Party”, its so-called revolutionary section, and the Cracow newspaper *Naprzód* shares the views of that “section”. Rosa Luxemburg is so blinded by her fight against the nationalism of that “section” that she loses sight of everything except *Naprzód*.

If *Naprzód* says “yes”, Rosa Luxemburg considers it her sacred duty to say an immediate “no”, without stopping to think that by so doing she does not reveal independence of *Naprzód*, but, on the contrary, her ludicrous dependence on the “Fracy” and her inability to see things from a viewpoint any deeper and broader than that of the Cracow anthill. *Naprzód*, of course, is a wretched and by no means Marxist organ; but that should not prevent us from properly analysing the example of Norway, once we have chosen it.

To analyse this example in Marxist fashion, we must deal, not with the vices of the awfully terrible “Fracy” but, first, with the concrete historical features of the secession of Norway from Sweden, and secondly, with the tasks which confronted the *proletariat* of both countries in connection with this secession.

The geographic, economic and language ties between Norway and Sweden are as intimate as those between the Great Russians and many other Slav nations. But the union between Norway and Sweden was not a voluntary one, and in dragging in the question of “federation” Rosa Luxemburg was talking at random, simply because she did not know what to say. Norway was *ceded* to Sweden by the monarchs during the Napoleonic wars, against the will of the Norwegians; and the Swedes had to bring troops into Norway to subdue her.

Despite the very extensive autonomy which Norway enjoyed (she had her own parliament, etc.), there was constant friction between Norway and Sweden for many decades after the union, and the Norwegians strove hard to throw off the yoke of the Swedish aristocracy. At last, in August 1905, they succeeded: the Norwegian parliament resolved that the Swedish king was no longer king of Norway, and in the referendum held later among the Norwegian people, the overwhelming majority (about 200,000 as against a few hundred) voted for complete separation from Sweden. After a short period of indecision, the Swedes resigned themselves to the fact of secession.

This example shows us on what grounds cases of the secession of nations are practicable, and actually occur, under modern economic and political relationships,

and the *form* secession sometimes assumes under conditions of political freedom and democracy.

No social-democrat will deny — unless he would profess indifference to questions of political freedom and democracy (in which case he is naturally no longer a social-democrat) — that this example *virtually* proves that it is the *bounden* duty of class-conscious workers to conduct systematic propaganda and prepare the ground for the settlement of conflicts that may arise over the secession of nations, not in the “Russian way”, but *only in the way* they were settled in 1905 between Norway and Sweden. This is exactly what is meant by the demand in the program for the recognition of the right of nations to self-determination. But Rosa Luxemburg tried to get around a fact that was repugnant to her theory by violently attacking the philistinism of the Norwegian philistines and the Cracow *Naprzód*; for she understood perfectly well that this historical fact *completely refutes* her phrases about the right of nations to self-determination being a “utopia”, or like the right “to eat off gold plates”, etc. Such phrases only express a smug and opportunist belief in the immutability of the present alignment of forces among the nationalities of Eastern Europe.

To proceed. In the question of the self-determination of nations, as in every other question, we are interested, first and foremost, in the self-determination of the proletariat within a given nation. Rosa Luxemburg modestly evaded this question too, for she realised that an analysis of it on the basis of the example of Norway, which she herself had chosen, would be disastrous to her “theory”.

What position did the Norwegian and Swedish proletariat take, and indeed had to take, in the conflict over secession? *After* Norway seceded, the class-conscious workers of Norway would naturally have voted for a republic,<sup>a</sup> and if some socialists voted otherwise it only goes to show how much dense, philistine opportunism there sometimes is in the European socialist movement. There can be no two opinions about that, and we mention the point only because Rosa Luxemburg is trying to obscure the issue by speaking *off the mark*. We do not know whether the Norwegian socialist program made it obligatory for Norwegian Social-Democrats to hold particular views on the question of secession. We will assume that it did not, and that the Norwegian socialists left it an open question as to what extent the autonomy of Norway gave sufficient scope to wage the class struggle freely, or to what extent the eternal friction and conflicts with the Swedish aristocracy hindered freedom of economic life.

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<sup>a</sup> Since the majority of the Norwegian nation was in favour of a monarchy while the proletariat wanted a republic, the Norwegian proletariat was, generally speaking, confronted with the alternative: either revolution, if conditions were ripe for it, or submission to the will of the majority and prolonged propaganda and agitation work.

But it cannot be disputed that the Norwegian proletariat had to oppose this aristocracy and support Norwegian peasant democracy (with all its philistine limitations).

And the Swedish proletariat? It is common knowledge that the Swedish landed proprietors, abetted by the Swedish clergy, advocated war against Norway. Inasmuch as Norway was much weaker than Sweden, had already experienced a Swedish invasion, and the Swedish aristocracy carries enormous weight in its own country, this advocacy of war presented a grave danger. We may be sure that the Swedish Kokoshkins spent much time and energy in trying to corrupt the minds of the Swedish people by appeals to “handle” the “elastic formulas of political self-determination of nations carefully” by painting horrific pictures of the danger of the “disintegration of the state” and by assuring them that “people’s freedom” was compatible with the traditions of the Swedish aristocracy. There cannot be the slightest doubt that the Swedish Social-Democrats would have betrayed the cause of socialism and democracy if they had not fought with all their might to combat both the landlord and the “Kokoshkin” ideology and policy, and if they had failed to demand, *not only* equality of nations in general (to which the Kokoshkins also subscribe), but also the right of nations to self-determination, Norway’s freedom to secede.

The close alliance between the Norwegian and Swedish workers, their complete fraternal class solidarity, *gained* from the Swedish workers’ recognition of the right of the Norwegians to secede. This convinced the Norwegian workers that the Swedish workers were not infected with Swedish nationalism, and that they placed fraternity with the Norwegian proletarians above the privileges of the Swedish bourgeoisie and aristocracy. The dissolution of the ties imposed upon Norway by the monarchs of Europe and the Swedish aristocracy strengthened the ties between the Norwegian and Swedish workers. The Swedish workers have proved that in spite of *all* the vicissitudes of bourgeois policy — bourgeois relations may quite possibly bring about a repetition of the forcible subjection of the Norwegians to the Swedes! — they will be able to preserve and defend the complete equality and class solidarity of the workers of both nations in the struggle against both the Swedish and the Norwegian bourgeoisie.

Incidentally, this reveals how groundless and even frivolous are the attempts sometimes made by the “Fracy” to “use” our disagreements with Rosa Luxemburg against Polish Social-Democracy. The “Fracy” are not a proletarian or a socialist party, but a petty-bourgeois nationalist party, something like Polish Social-Revolutionaries. There never has been, nor could there be, any question of unity between the Russian Social-Democrats and this party. On the other hand, no Russian Social-Democrat has ever “repented” of the close relations and unity that have been established with the Polish Social-Democrats. The Polish Social-Democrats have rendered a great historical

service by creating the first really Marxist, proletarian party in Poland, a country imbued with nationalist aspirations and passions. Yet the service the Polish Social-Democrats have rendered is a great one, not because Rosa Luxemburg has talked a lot of nonsense about §9 of the Russian Marxists' Program, but despite that sad circumstance.

The question of the "right to self-determination" is of course not so important to the Polish Social-Democrats as it is to the Russian. It is quite understandable that in their zeal (sometimes a little excessive, perhaps) to combat the nationalistically blinded petty bourgeoisie of Poland the Polish Social-Democrats should overdo things. No Russian Marxist has ever thought of blaming the Polish Social-Democrats for being opposed to the secession of Poland. These Social-Democrats err only when, like Rosa Luxemburg, they try to deny the necessity of including the recognition of the right to self-determination in the Program of the *Russian* Marxists.

Virtually, this is like attempting to apply relationships, understandable by Cracow standards, to all the peoples and nations inhabiting Russia, including the Great Russians. It means being "Polish nationalists the wrong way round", not Russian, not international social-democrats.

For international social-democracy stands for the recognition of the right of nations to self-determination. This is what we shall now proceed to discuss.

## 7. The resolution of the London Congress, 1896

This resolution reads:

This Congress declares that it stands for the full right of all nations to self-determination [*Selbstbestimmungsrecht*] and expresses its sympathy for the workers of every country now suffering under the yoke of military, national or other absolutism. This Congress calls upon the workers of all these countries to join the ranks of the class-conscious [*Klassenbewusste* — those who understand their class interests] workers of the whole world in order jointly to fight for the defeat of international capitalism and for the achievement of the aims of international Social-Democracy.<sup>a</sup>

As we have already pointed out, our opportunists — Semkovsky, Liebman and Yurkevich — are simply unaware of this resolution. But Rosa Luxemburg knows it and quotes the full text, which contains the same expression as that contained in our

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<sup>a</sup> See the official German report of the London Congress: *Verhandlungen und Beschlüsse des internationalen sozialistischen Arbeiterund Gewerkschafts-Kongresses zu London, vom 27 Juli bis 1 August 1896*, Berlin, 1896, S. 18. A Russian pamphlet has been published containing the decisions of international congresses in which the word "self-determination" is wrongly translated as "autonomy".

program, viz., “self-determination”.

How does Rosa Luxemburg remove this obstacle from the path of her “original” theory?

Oh, quite simply ... the whole emphasis lies in the second part of the resolution ... its declarative character ... one can refer to it only by mistake!

The feebleness and utter confusion of our author are simply amazing. Usually it is only the opportunists who talk about the consistent democratic and socialist points in the program being mere declarations, and cravenly avoid an open debate on them. It is apparently not without reason that Rosa Luxemburg has this time found herself in the deplorable company of the Semkovskys, Liebmanns and Yurkeviches. Rosa Luxemburg does not venture to state openly whether she regards the above resolution as correct or erroneous. She shifts and shuffles as if counting on the inattentive or ill-informed reader, who forgets the first part of the resolution by the time he has started reading the second, or who has never heard of the discussion that took place in the socialist press *prior* to the London Congress.

Rosa Luxemburg is greatly mistaken, however, if she imagines that, in the sight of the class-conscious workers of Russia, she can get away with trampling upon the resolution of the International on such an important fundamental issue, without even deigning to analyse it critically.

Rosa Luxemburg’s point of view was voiced during the discussions which took place prior to the London Congress, mainly in the columns of *Die Neue Zeit*, organ of the German Marxists; *in essence this point of view was defeated in the International!* That is the crux of the matter, which the Russian reader must particularly bear in mind.

The debate turned on the question of Poland’s independence. Three points of view were put forward:

1. That of the “Fracy”, in whose name Haecker spoke. They wanted the International to include in its *own* program a demand for the independence of Poland. The motion was not carried and this point of view was defeated in the International.

2. Rosa Luxemburg’s point of view, viz., the Polish socialists should not demand independence for Poland. This point of view entirely precluded the proclamation of the right of nations to self-determination. It was likewise defeated in the International.

3. The point of view which was elaborated at the time by K. Kautsky, who opposed Rosa Luxemburg and proved that her materialism was extremely “one-sided”; according to Kautsky, the International could not at the time make the independence of Poland a point in its program; but the Polish socialists were fully entitled to put forward such a demand. From the socialists’ point of view it was undoubtedly a mistake to ignore

the tasks of national liberation in a situation where national oppression existed.

The International's resolution reproduces the most essential and fundamental propositions in this point of view: on the one hand, the absolutely direct, unequivocal recognition of the full right of all nations to self-determination; on the other hand, the equally unambiguous appeal to the workers for *international* unity in their class struggle.

We think that this resolution is absolutely correct, and that, to the countries of Eastern Europe and Asia at the beginning of the 20th century, it is this resolution, with both its parts being taken as an integral whole, that gives the only correct lead to the proletarian class policy in the national question.

Let us deal with the three above-mentioned viewpoints in somewhat greater detail.

As is known, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels considered it the bounden duty of the whole of West-European democracy, and still more of social-democracy, to give active support to the demand for Polish independence. For the period of the 1840s and 1860s, the period of the bourgeois revolutions in Austria and Germany, and the period of the "Peasant Reform" in Russia,<sup>58</sup> this point of view was quite correct and the only one that was consistently democratic and proletarian. So long as the masses of the people in Russia and in most of the Slav countries were still sunk in torpor, so long as *there were no* independent, mass, democratic movements in those countries, the liberation movement of the *gentry* in Poland assumed an immense and paramount importance from the point of view, not only of Russian, not only of Slav, but of European democracy as a whole.<sup>a,59</sup>

But while Marx's standpoint was quite correct for the forties, fifties and sixties or for the third quarter of the 19th century, it has ceased to be correct by the 20th century. Independent democratic movements, and even an independent proletarian movement, have arisen in most Slav countries, even in Russia, one of the most backward Slav countries. Aristocratic Poland has disappeared, yielding place to capitalist Poland. Under such circumstances Poland could not but lose her *exceptional* revolutionary importance.

The attempt of the PSP (the Polish Socialist Party, the present-day "Fracy") in 1896

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<sup>a</sup> It would be a very interesting piece of historical research to compare the position of a noble Polish rebel in 1863 with that of the all-Russia revolutionary democrat, Chernyshevsky, who (like Marx), was able to appreciate the importance of the Polish movement, and with that of the Ukrainian petty bourgeois Dragomanov, who appeared much later and expressed the views of a peasant, so ignorant and sluggish, and so attached to his dung heap, that his legitimate hatred of the Polish gentry blinded him to the significance which their struggle had for all-Russia democracy. (Cf. Dragomanov, *Historical Poland and Great-Russian Democracy*.) Dragomanov richly deserved the fervent kisses which were subsequently bestowed on him by Mr. P.B. Struve, who by that time had become a national-liberal.

to “establish” for all time the point of view Marx had held in a *different epoch* was an attempt to use the *letter* of Marxism against the spirit of Marxism. The Polish Social-Democrats were therefore quite right in attacking the extreme nationalism of the Polish petty bourgeoisie and pointing out that the national question was of secondary importance to Polish workers, in creating for the first time a purely proletarian party in Poland and proclaiming the extremely important principle that the Polish and the Russian workers must maintain the closest alliance in their class struggle.

But did this mean that at the beginning of the 20th century the International could regard the principle of political self-determination of nations, or the right to secede, as unnecessary to Eastern Europe and Asia? This would have been the height of absurdity, and (theoretically) tantamount to admitting that the bourgeois-democratic reform of the Turkish, Russian and Chinese states had been consummated; indeed it would have been tantamount (in practice) to opportunism towards absolutism.

No. At a time when bourgeois-democratic revolutions in Eastern Europe and Asia have begun, in this period of the awakening and intensification of national movements and of the formation of independent proletarian parties, the task of these parties with regard to national policy must be twofold: recognition of the right of all nations to self-determination, since bourgeois-democratic reform is not yet completed and since working-class democracy consistently, seriously and sincerely (and not in a liberal, Kokoshkin fashion) fights for equal rights for nations; then, a close, unbreakable alliance in the class struggle of the proletarians of all nations in a given state, throughout all the changes in its history, irrespective of any reshaping of the frontiers of the individual states by the bourgeoisie.

It is this twofold task of the proletariat that the 1896 resolution of the International formulates. That is the substance, the underlying principle, of the resolution adopted by the Conference of Russian Marxists held in the summer of 1913. Some people profess to see a “contradiction” in the fact that while point 4 of this resolution, which recognises the right to self-determination and secession, seems to “concede” the maximum to nationalism (in reality, the recognition of the *right of all* nations to self-determination implies the maximum of *democracy* and the minimum of nationalism), point 5 warns the workers against the nationalist slogans of the bourgeoisie of any nation and demands the unity and amalgamation of the workers of all nations in internationally united proletarian organisations. But this is a “contradiction” only for extremely shallow minds, which, for instance, cannot grasp why the unity and class solidarity of the Swedish and the Norwegian proletariat *gained* when the Swedish workers upheld Norway’s freedom to secede and form an independent state.

## 8. The utopian Karl Marx & the practical Rosa Luxemburg

Calling Polish independence a “utopia” and repeating this *ad nauseam*, Rosa Luxemburg exclaims ironically: Why not raise the demand for the independence of Ireland?

The “practical” Rosa Luxemburg evidently does not know what Karl Marx’s attitude to the question of Irish independence was. It is worth while dwelling upon this, so as to show how a *concrete* demand for national independence was analysed from a genuinely Marxist, not opportunist, standpoint.

It was Marx’s custom to “sound out” his socialist acquaintances, as he expressed it, to test their intelligence and the strength of their convictions.<sup>60</sup> After making the acquaintance of Lopatin, Marx wrote to Engels on July 5, 1870, expressing a highly flattering opinion of the young Russian socialist but adding at the same time:

*Poland* is his weak point. On this point he speaks quite like an Englishman — say, an English Chartist of the old school — about Ireland.<sup>61</sup>

Marx questions a socialist belonging to an oppressor nation about his attitude to the oppressed nation and at once reveals a defect *common* to the socialists of the dominant nations (the English and the Russian): failure to understand their socialist duties towards the downtrodden nations, their echoing of the prejudices acquired from the bourgeoisie of the “dominant nation”.

Before passing on to Marx’s positive declarations on Ireland, we must point out that in general the attitude of Marx and Engels to the national question was strictly critical, and that they recognised its historically conditioned importance. Thus, Engels wrote to Marx on May 23, 1851, that the study of history was leading him to pessimistic conclusions in regard to Poland, that the importance of Poland was temporary — only until the agrarian revolution in Russia. The role of the Poles in history was one of “bold (hotheaded) foolishness”. “And one cannot point to a single instance in which Poland has successfully represented progress, even in relation to Russia, or done anything at all of historical importance.” Russia contains more of civilisation, education, industry and the bourgeoisie than “the Poland of the indolent gentry”. “What are Warsaw and Cracow compared to St. Petersburg, Moscow, Odessa!” Engels had no faith in the success of the Polish gentry’s insurrections.

But all these thoughts, showing the deep insight of genius, by no means prevented Engels and Marx from treating the Polish movement with the most profound and ardent sympathy 12 years later, when Russia was still dormant and Poland was seething.

When drafting the Address of the International in 1864, Marx wrote to Engels (on November 4, 1864) that he had to combat Mazzini’s nationalism, and went on to say: “Inasmuch as international politics occurred in the Address, I spoke of countries, not of nationalities, and denounced Russia, not the *minores gentium*.” Marx had no doubt as to

the subordinate position of the national question as compared with the “labour question”. But his theory is as far from ignoring national movements as heaven is from earth.

Then came 1866. Marx wrote to Engels about the “Proudhonist clique” in Paris which “declares nationalities to be an absurdity, attacks Bismarck and Garibaldi. As polemics against chauvinism their doings are useful and explicable. But as believers in Proudhon (Lafargue and Longuet, two very good friends of mine here, also belong to them), who think all Europe must and will sit quietly on their hind quarters until the gentlemen in France abolish poverty and ignorance — they are grotesque.” (Letter of June 7, 1866.)

Yesterday [Marx wrote on June 20, 1866] there was a discussion in the International Council on the present war ... The discussion wound up, as was to be foreseen, with “the question of nationality” in general and the attitude we take towards it ... The representatives of “Young France” (*non-workers*) came out with the announcement that all nationalities and even nations were “antiquated prejudices”. Proudhonised Stirnerism ... The whole world waits until the French are ripe for a social revolution ... The English laughed very much when I began my speech by saying that our friend Lafargue and others, who had done away with nationalities, had spoken “French” to us, i.e., a language which nine-tenths of the audience did not understand. I also suggested that by the negation of nationalities he appeared, quite unconsciously, to understand their absorption by the model French nation.

The conclusion that follows from all these critical remarks of Marx’s is clear: the working class should be the last to make a fetish of the national question, since the development of capitalism does not necessarily awaken *all* nations to independent life. But to brush aside the mass national movements once they have started, and to refuse to support what is progressive in them means, in effect, pandering to *nationalistic* prejudices, that is, recognising “one’s own nation” as a model nation (or, we would add, one possessing the exclusive privilege of forming a state).<sup>a</sup>

But let us return to the question of Ireland.

Marx’s position on this question is most clearly expressed in the following extracts from his letters:

“I have done my best to bring about this demonstration of the English workers in favour of Fenianism ... I used to think the separation of Ireland from England impossible. I now think it inevitable, although after the separation there may come

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<sup>a</sup> Cf. also Marx’s letter to Engels of June 3, 1867: “... I have learned with real pleasure from the Paris letters to *The Times* about the pro-Polish exclamations of the Parisians against Russia ... Mr. Proudhon and his little doctrinaire clique are not the French people.”

federation.” This is what Marx wrote to Engels on November 2, 1867.

In his letter of November 30 of the same year he added:

... what shall we advise the *English* workers? In my opinion they must make the *Repeal of the Union* [Ireland with England, i.e., the separation of Ireland from England] (in short, the affair of 1783, only democratised and adapted to the conditions of the time) an article of their *pronunziamento*. This is the only legal and therefore only possible form of Irish emancipation which can be admitted in the program of an *English* party. Experience must show later whether a mere personal union can continue to subsist between the two countries ...

... What the Irish need is:

- (1) Self-government and independence from England;
- (2) An agrarian revolution ...

Marx attached great importance to the Irish question and delivered hour-and-a-half lectures on this subject at the German Workers' Union (letter of December 17, 1867).

In a letter dated November 20, 1868, Engels spoke of “the hatred towards the Irish found among the English workers”, and almost a year later (October 24, 1869), returning to this subject, he wrote:

*Il n'y a qu'un pas* [it is only one step] from Ireland to Russia ... Irish history shows what a misfortune it is for one nation to have subjugated another. All the abominations of the English have their origin in the Irish Pale. I have still to plough my way through the Cromwellian period, but this much seems certain to me, that things would have taken another turn in England, too, but for the necessity of military rule in Ireland and the creation of a new aristocracy there.

Let us note, in passing, Marx's letter to Engels of August 18, 1869:

The Polish workers in Posen have brought a strike to a victorious end with the help of their colleagues in Berlin. This struggle against Monsieur le Capital — even in the lower form of the strike — is a more serious way of getting rid of national prejudices than peace declamations from the lips of bourgeois gentlemen.

The policy on the Irish question pursued by Marx in the International may be seen from the following:

On November 18, 1869, Marx wrote to Engels that he had spoken for an hour and a quarter at the Council of the International on the question of the attitude of the British Ministry to the Irish Amnesty, and had proposed the following resolution:

Resolved,

- that in his reply to the Irish demands for the release of the imprisoned Irish patriots Mr. Gladstone deliberately insults the Irish nation;
- that he clogs political amnesty with conditions alike degrading to the victims of

misgovernment and the people they belong to;

that having, in the teeth of his responsible position, publicly and enthusiastically cheered on the American slaveholders' rebellion, he now steps in to preach to the Irish people the doctrine of passive obedience;

that his whole proceedings with reference to the Irish Amnesty question are the true and genuine offspring of that "*policy of conquest*", by the fiery denunciation of which Mr. Gladstone ousted his Tory rivals from office;

that the General Council of the International Workingmen's Association express their admiration of the spirited, firm and high-souled manner in which the Irish people carry on their Amnesty movement;

that this resolution be communicated to all branches of, and workingmen's bodies connected with, the International Workingmen's Association in Europe and America.

On December 10, 1869, Marx wrote that his paper on the Irish question to be read at the Council of the International would be couched as follows.

Quite apart from all phrases about "international" and "humane" justice for Ireland — which are taken for granted in the International Council — *it is in the direct and absolute interest of the English working class to get rid of their present connection with Ireland.* And this is my fullest conviction, and for reasons which in part I can *not* tell the English workers themselves. For a long time I believed that it would be possible to overthrow the Irish regime by English working-class ascendancy. I always expressed this point of view in the *New York Tribune* [an American paper to which Marx contributed for a long time]. Deeper study has now convinced me of the opposite. The English working class will *never accomplish anything* until it has got rid of Ireland ... The English reaction in England had its roots in the subjugation of Ireland. (Marx's italics.)

Marx's policy on the Irish question should now be quite clear to our readers.

Marx, the "utopian", was so "unpractical" that he stood for the separation of Ireland, which half a century later has not yet been achieved.

What gave rise to Marx's policy, and was it not mistaken?

At first Marx thought that Ireland would not be liberated by the national movement of the oppressed nation, but by the working-class movement of the oppressor nation. Marx did not make an absolute of the national movement, knowing, as he did, that only the victory of the working class can bring about the complete liberation of all nationalities. It is impossible to estimate beforehand all the possible relations between the bourgeois liberation movements of the oppressed nations and the proletarian emancipation movement of the oppressor nation (the very problem which today makes the national question in Russia so difficult).

However, it so happened that the English working class fell under the influence of

the liberals for a fairly long time, became an appendage to the liberals, and by adopting a liberal-labour policy left itself leaderless. The bourgeois liberation movement in Ireland grew stronger and assumed revolutionary forms. Marx reconsidered his view and corrected it. "What a misfortune it is for a nation to have subjugated another." The English working class will never be free until Ireland is freed from the English yoke. Reaction in England is strengthened and fostered by the enslavement of Ireland (just as reaction in Russia is fostered by her enslavement of a number of nations!).

And, in proposing in the International a resolution of sympathy with "the Irish nation", "the Irish people" (the clever L.VI. would probably have berated poor Marx for forgetting about the class struggle!), Marx advocated the *separation* of Ireland from England, "although after the separation there may come federation".

What were the theoretical grounds for Marx's conclusion? In England the bourgeois revolution had been consummated long ago. But it had not yet been consummated in Ireland. It is being consummated only now, after the lapse of half a century, by the reforms of the English Liberals. If capitalism had been overthrown in England as quickly as Marx had at first expected, there would have been no room for a bourgeois-democratic and general national movement in Ireland. But since it had arisen, Marx advised the English workers to support it, give it a revolutionary impetus and see it through in the interests of *their own* liberty.

The economic ties between Ireland and England in the 1860s were, of course, even closer than Russia's present ties with Poland, the Ukraine, etc. The "unpracticality" and "impracticability" of the separation of Ireland (if only owing to geographical conditions and England's immense colonial power) were quite obvious. Though, in principle, an enemy of federalism, Marx in this instance granted the possibility of federation, as well,<sup>a</sup> *if only* the emancipation of Ireland was achieved in a revolutionary, not reformist way, through a movement of the mass of the people of Ireland supported by the working class of England. There can be no doubt that only such a solution of the historical problem would have been in the best interests of the proletariat and most conducive to rapid social progress.

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<sup>a</sup> By the way, it is not difficult to see why, from a social-democratic point of view, the right to "self-determination" means *neither* federation *nor* autonomy (although, speaking in the abstract, both come under the category of "self-determination"). The right to federation is simply meaningless, since federation implies a bilateral contract. It goes without saying that Marxists cannot include the defence of federalism in general in their program. As far as autonomy is concerned, Marxists defend, not the "right" to autonomy, but autonomy *itself*, as a general universal principle of a democratic state with a mixed national composition, and a great variety of geographical and other conditions. Consequently, the recognition of the "right of nations to autonomy" is as absurd as that of the "right of nations to federation".

Things turned out differently. Both the Irish people and the English proletariat proved weak. Only now, through the sordid deals between the English Liberals and the Irish bourgeoisie, is the Irish problem *being solved* (the example of Ulster shows with what difficulty) through the land reform (with compensation) and Home Rule (not yet introduced). Well then? Does it follow that Marx and Engels were “utopians”, that they put forward “impracticable” national demands, or that they allowed themselves to be influenced by the Irish petty-bourgeois nationalists (for there is no doubt about the petty-bourgeois nature of the Fenian movement), etc.?

No. In the Irish question, too, Marx and Engels pursued a consistently proletarian policy, which really educated the masses in a spirit of democracy and socialism. Only such a policy could have saved both Ireland and England half a century of delay in introducing the necessary reforms, and prevented these reforms from being mutilated by the Liberals to please the reactionaries.

The policy of Marx and Engels on the Irish question serves as a splendid example of the attitude the proletariat of the oppressor nations should adopt towards national movements, an example which has lost none of its immense *practical* importance. It serves as a warning against that “servile haste” with which the philistines of all countries, colours and languages hurry to label as “utopian” the idea of altering the frontiers of states that were established by the violence and privileges of the landlords and bourgeoisie of one nation.

If the Irish and English proletariat had not accepted Marx’s policy and had not made the secession of Ireland their slogan, this would have been the worst sort of opportunism, a neglect of their duties as democrats and socialists, and a concession to *English* reaction and the *English* bourgeoisie.

## 9. The 1903 program & its liquidators

The minutes of the 1903 Congress, at which the program of the Russian Marxists was adopted, have become a great rarity, and the vast majority of the active members of the working-class movement today are unacquainted with the motives underlying the various points (the more so since not all the literature relating to it enjoys the blessings of legality ...). It is therefore necessary to analyse the debate that took place at the 1903 Congress on the question under discussion.

Let us state first of all that however meagre the Russian Social-Democratic literature on the “right of nations to self-determination” may be, it nevertheless shows clearly that this right has always been understood to mean the right to secession. The Semkovskys, Liebman and Yurkeviches who doubt this and declare that §9 is “vague”, etc., do so only because of their sheer ignorance or carelessness. As far back as 1902,

Plekhanov, in *Zarya*, defended “the right to self-determination” in the draft program, and wrote that this demand, while not obligatory upon bourgeois democrats, was “obligatory upon Social-Democrats”. “If we were to forget it or hesitate to advance it,” Plekhanov wrote, “for fear of offending the national prejudices of our fellow-countrymen of Great-Russian nationality, the call ... ‘workers of all countries, unite!’ would be a shameful lie on our lips ...”<sup>62</sup>

This is a very apt description of the fundamental argument in favour of the point under consideration; so apt that it is not surprising that the “anythingarian” critics of our program have been timidly avoiding it. The abandonment of this point, no matter for what motives, is *actually* a “shameful” concession to *Great-Russian* nationalism. But why Great-Russian, when it is a question of the right of *all* nations to self-determination? Because it refers to secession *from* the Great Russians. The interests of the *unity of the proletarians*, the interests of their class solidarity call for recognition of the right of *nations to secede* — that is what Plekhanov admitted 12 years ago in the words quoted above. Had our opportunists given thought to this they would probably not have talked so much nonsense about self-determination.

At the 1903 Congress, which adopted the draft program that Plekhanov advocated, the main work was done by the *Program Commission*. Unfortunately no minutes of its proceedings were kept; they would have been particularly interesting on this point, for it was *only* in the commission that the representatives of the Polish Social-Democrats, Warszawski and Hanecki, tried to defend their views and to dispute “recognition of the right to self-determination”. Any reader who goes to the trouble of comparing their arguments (set forth in the speech by Warszawski and the statement by him and Hanecki, pp. 134-36 and 388-90 of the congress minutes) with those which Rosa Luxemburg advanced in her Polish article, which we have analysed, will find them identical.

How were these arguments treated by the Program Commission of the Second Congress, where Plekhanov, more than anyone else, spoke against the Polish Marxists? They were mercilessly ridiculed! The absurdity of proposing to the Marxists of *Russia* that they should reject the recognition of the right of nations to self-determination was demonstrated so plainly and clearly that the Polish Marxists *did not even venture to repeat their arguments at the plenary meeting of the congress!* They left the congress, convinced of the hopelessness of their case at the supreme assembly of Marxists — Great-Russian, Jewish, Georgian, and Armenian.

Needless to say, this historic episode is of very great importance to everyone seriously interested in *his own* program. The fact that the Polish Marxists’ arguments were completely defeated at the Program Commission of the Congress, and that the Polish Marxists gave up the attempt to defend their views at the plenary meeting of the

Congress is very significant. No wonder Rosa Luxemburg maintained a “modest” silence about it in her article in 1908 — the recollection of the Congress must have been too unpleasant! She also kept quiet about the ridiculously inept proposal made by Warszawski and Hanecki in 1903, on behalf of all Polish Marxists, to “amend” §9 of the Program, a proposal, which neither Rosa Luxemburg nor the other Polish Social-Democrats have ventured (or will ever venture) to repeat.

But although Rosa Luxemburg, concealing her defeat in 1903, has maintained silence over these facts, those who take an interest in the history of their party will make it their business to ascertain them and give thought to their significance.

On leaving the 1903 Congress, Rosa Luxemburg’s friends submitted the following statement:

We propose that Clause 7 [now Clause 9] of the draft program read as follows: §7.

*Institutions guaranteeing full freedom of cultural development to all nations incorporated in the state* [p. 390 of the minutes].

Thus, the Polish Marxists at that time put forward views on the national question that were so vague that *instead* of self-determination they practically proposed the notorious “cultural-national autonomy”, only under another name!

This sounds almost incredible, but unfortunately it is a fact. At the Congress itself, attended though it was by five Bundists with five votes and three Caucasians with six votes, without counting Kostrov’s consultative voice, *not a single vote* was cast for the *rejection* of the clause about self-determination. Three votes were cast for the proposal to add “cultural-national autonomy” to this clause (in favour of Goldblatt’s formula: “the establishment of institutions guaranteeing the nations full freedom of cultural development”) and four votes for Lieber’s formula (the right of nations to freedom in their cultural development”).

Now that a Russian liberal party — the Constitutional-Democratic Party — has appeared on the scene, we know that in *its* program the political self-determination of nations has been replaced by “cultural self-determination”. Rosa Luxemburg’s Polish friends, therefore, were “*combating*” the nationalism of the PSP, and did it so successfully that they proposed the substitution of a *liberal* program for the Marxist program! And in the same breath they accused our program of being opportunist; no wonder this accusation was received with laughter by the Program Commission of the Second Congress!

How was “self-determination” understood by the delegates to the Second Congress, of whom, as we have seen, *not one* was opposed to “self-determination of nations”?

The following three extracts from the minutes provide the answer:

“*Martynov* is of the opinion that the term ‘self-determination’ should not be given a broad interpretation; it merely means the right of a nation to establish itself as a

separate polity, not regional self-government” (p. 171). Martynov was a member of the Program Commission, in which the arguments of Rosa Luxemburg’s friends were repudiated and ridiculed. Martynov was then an Economist in his views, and a violent opponent of *Iskra*; had he expressed an opinion that was not shared by the majority of the Program Commission he would certainly have been repudiated.

Bundist Goldblatt was the first to speak when the congress, after the commission had finished its work, discussed §8 (the present Clause 9) of the program.

He said:

No objections can be raised to the “right to self-determination”. When a nation is fighting for independence, that should not be opposed. If Poland refuses to enter into lawful marriage with Russia, she should not be interfered with, as Plekhanov put it. I agree with this opinion within these limits. (pp. 175-76)

Plekhanov had not spoken on this subject at all at the plenary meeting of the Congress. Goldblatt was referring to what Plekhanov had said at the Program Commission, where the “right to self-determination” had been explained in a simple yet detailed manner to mean the right to secession. Lieber, who spoke after Goldblatt, remarked:

Of course, if any nationality finds that it cannot live within the frontiers of Russia, the party will not place any obstacles in its way. (p. 176)

The reader will see that at the Second Congress of the party, which adopted the program, it was unanimously understood that self-determination meant “only” the right to secession. Even the Bundists grasped this truth at the time, and it is only in our own deplorable times of continued counterrevolution and all sorts of “apostasy” that we can find people who, bold in their ignorance, declare that the program is “vague”. But before devoting time to these sorry would-be social-democrats, let us first finish with the attitude of the Poles to the program.

They came to the Second Congress (1903) declaring that unity was necessary and imperative. But they left the Congress after their “reverses” in the Program Commission, and their *last word* was a written statement, printed in the minutes of the Congress, containing the above-mentioned proposal to *substitute* cultural-national autonomy for self-determination.

In 1906 the Polish Marxists joined the party; *neither* upon joining nor afterwards (at the Congress of 1907, the conferences of 1907 and 1908, or the plenum of 1910) *did they introduce* a single proposal to amend §9 of the Russian Program!

That is a fact.

And, despite all utterances and assurances, this fact definitely proves that Rosa Luxemburg’s friends regarded the question as having been settled by the debate at the Program Commission of the Second Congress, as well as by the decision of that

Congress, and that they tacitly acknowledged their mistake and corrected it by joining the party in 1906, after they had left the Congress in 1903, without a single attempt to raise the question of amending §9 of the Program through *party* channels.

Rosa Luxemburg's article appeared over her signature in 1908 — of course, it never entered anyone's head to deny party publicists the right to criticise the program — and, *since* the writing of this article, *not a single* official body of the Polish Marxists has raised the question of revising §9.

Trotsky was therefore rendering a great disservice to certain admirers of Rosa Luxemburg when he wrote, on behalf of the editors of *Borba*, in issue No. 2 of that publication (March 1914):

The Polish Marxists consider that “the right to national self-determination” is entirely devoid of political content and should be deleted from the program [p. 25]).

The obliging Trotsky is more dangerous than an enemy! Trotsky could produce *no* proof, except “private conversations” (i.e., simply gossip, on which Trotsky always subsists), for classifying “Polish Marxists” in general as supporters of every article by Rosa Luxemburg. Trotsky presented the “Polish Marxists” as people devoid of honour and conscience, incapable of respecting even their own convictions and the program of their party. How obliging Trotsky is!

When, in 1903, the representatives of the Polish Marxists walked out of the Second Congress *over* the right to self-determination, Trotsky could have said *at the time* that they regarded this right as devoid of content and subject to deletion from the program.

But after that the Polish Marxists *joined* the party whose program this was, and they have never introduced a motion to amend it.<sup>a</sup>

Why did Trotsky withhold these facts from the readers of his journal? Only because it pays him to speculate on fomenting differences between the Polish and the Russian opponents of liquidationism and to deceive the Russian workers on the question of the program.

Trotsky has never yet held a firm opinion on any important question of Marxism. He always contrives to worm his way into the cracks of any given difference of opinion, and desert one side for the other. At the present moment he is in the company of the Bundists and the liquidators. And these gentlemen do not stand on ceremony where

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<sup>a</sup> We are informed that the Polish Marxists attended the Summer Conference of the Russian Marxists in 1913 with *only* a consultative voice and did not vote at all on the right to self-determination (secession), declaring their opposition to this right in general. Of course, they had a perfect right to act the way they did, and, as hitherto, to agitate in Poland against secession. But this is not quite what Trotsky said; for the Polish Marxists did not demand the “deletion” of §9 “from the program”.

the party is concerned.

Listen to the Bundist Liebman.

When, 15 years ago [this gentleman writes] the Russian Social-Democrats included the point about the right of every nationality to “self-determination” in their program, everyone [!] asked himself: What does this fashionable [!] term really mean? No answer was forthcoming [!]. This word was left [!] wrapped in mist. And indeed, at the time, it was difficult to dispel that mist. The moment had not come when this point could be made concrete — it was said — so let it remain wrapped in mist [!] for the time being and practice will show what content should be put into it.

Isn't it magnificent, the way this “ragamuffin”<sup>63</sup> mocks at the party program?

And why does he mock at it?

Because he is an absolute ignoramus, who has never learnt anything or even read any party history, but merely happened to land in liquidationist circles where going about in the nude is considered the “right” thing to do as far as knowledge of the party and everything it stands for is concerned.

Pomyalovsky's seminary student boasts of having “spat into a barrel of sauerkraut”.<sup>64</sup> The Bundist gentlemen have gone one better. They let the Liebman loose to spit publicly into their own barrel. What do the Liebman care about the fact that the International Congress has passed a decision, that at the congress of their own party two representatives of their own Bund proved that they were quite able (and what “severe” critics and determined enemies of *Iskra* they were!) to understand the meaning of “self-determination” and were even in agreement with it? And will it not be easier to liquidate the party if the “party publicists” (no jokes, please!) treat its history and program after the fashion of the seminary student?

Here is a second “ragamuffin”, Mr. Yurkevich of *Dzvin*. Mr. Yurkevich must have had the minutes of the Second Congress before him, because he quotes Plekhanov, as repeated by Goldblatt, and shows that he is aware of the fact that self-determination can only mean the right to secession. This, however, does not prevent him from spreading slander about the Russian Marxists among the Ukrainian petty bourgeoisie, alleging that they stand for the “state integrity” of Russia, (No. 7-8, 1913, p. 83, etc.) Of course, the Yurkeviches could not have invented a better method than such slander to alienate the Ukrainian democrats from the Great-Russian democrats. And such alienation is in line with the entire policy of the group of *Dzvin* publicists who advocate the *separation* of the Ukrainian workers *in a special* national organisation!<sup>a</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> See particularly Mr. Yurkevich's preface to Mr. Levinsky's book (written in Ukrainian) *Outline of the Development of the Ukrainian Working-Class Movement in Galicia*, Kiev, 1914.

It is quite appropriate of course, that a group of nationalist philistines, who are engaged in splitting the ranks of the proletariat — and objectively this is the role of *Dzvin* — should disseminate such hopeless confusion on the national question. Needless to say, the Yurkeviches and Liebman, who are “terribly” offended when they are called “near-party men”, do not say a word, not a single word, as to how *they* would like the problem of the right to secede to be settled in the program.

But here is the third and principal “ragamuffin”, Mr. Semkovsky, who, addressing a Great-Russian audience through the columns of a liquidationist newspaper, lashes at §9 of the Program and at the same time declares that “for certain reasons he does not approve of the proposal” to delete this clause!

This is incredible, but it is a fact.

In August 1912, the liquidators’ conference raised the national question officially. For 18 months not a single article has appeared on the question of §9, except the one written by Mr. Semkovsky. And in this article the author *repudiates* the program, “without approving”, however, “for *certain* reasons” (is this a secrecy disease?) the proposal to amend it! We may be sure that it would be difficult to find anywhere in the world similar examples of opportunism, or even worse — renunciation of the party, and a desire to liquidate it.

A single example will suffice to show what Semkovsky’s arguments are like:

What are we to do [he writes] if the Polish proletariat wants to fight side by side with the proletariat of all Russia within the framework of a single state, while the reactionary classes of Polish society, on the contrary, want to separate Poland from Russia and obtain a majority of votes in favour of secession by referendum? Should we, Russian Social-Democrats in the central parliament, vote together with our Polish comrades *against* secession, or — in order not to violate the “right to self-determination” — vote *for* secession? (*Novaya Rabochaya Gazeta*, No. 71)

From this it is evident that Mr. Semkovsky does not even understand the *point at issue!* It did not occur to him that the right to secession presupposes the settlement of the question by a parliament (diet, referendum, etc.) of the *seceding* region, *not* by a central parliament.

The childish perplexity over the question “What are we to do”, if under democracy the majority are for reaction, serves to screen the real and live issue when *both* the Purishkeviches and the Kokoshkins consider the very idea of secession criminal! Perhaps the proletarians of *all* Russia ought not to fight the Purishkeviches and the Kokoshkins today, but should bypass them and fight the reactionary classes of Poland!

Such is the sheer rubbish published in the liquidators’ organ of which Mr. L. Martov is one of the ideological leaders, the selfsame L. Martov who drafted the

program and spoke in favour of its adoption in 1903, and even subsequently wrote in favour of the right to secede. Apparently L. Martov is now arguing according to the rule:

No clever man is needed there;  
Better send Read,  
And I shall wait and see.<sup>65</sup>

He sends Read-Semkovsky along and allows our program to be distorted, and endlessly muddled up in a daily paper whose new readers are unacquainted with it!

Yes. Liquidationism has gone a long way — there are even very many prominent ex-social-democrats who have not a trace of party spirit left in them.

Rosa Luxemburg cannot, of course, be classed with the Liebmanns, Yurkeviches and Semkovskys, but the fact that it was this kind of people who seized upon her error shows with particular clarity the opportunism she has lapsed into.

## 10. Conclusion

To sum up.

As far as the theory of Marxism in general is concerned, the question of the right to self-determination presents no difficulty. No one can seriously question the London resolution of 1896, or the fact that self-determination implies only the right to secede, or that the formation of independent national states is the tendency in all bourgeois-democratic revolutions.

A difficulty is to some extent created by the fact that in Russia the proletariat of both the oppressed and oppressor nations are fighting, and must fight, side by side. The task is to preserve the unity of the proletariat's class struggle for socialism, and to resist all bourgeois and Black-Hundred nationalist influences. Where the oppressed nations are concerned, the separate organisation of the proletariat as an independent party sometimes leads to such a bitter struggle against local nationalism that the perspective becomes distorted and the nationalism of the oppressor nation is lost sight of.

But this distortion of perspective cannot last long. The experience of the joint struggle waged by the proletarians of various nations has demonstrated all too clearly that we must formulate political issues from the all-Russia, not the "Cracow" point of view. And in all-Russia politics it is the Purishkeviches and the Kokoshkins who are in the saddle. Their ideas predominate, and their persecution of non-Russians for "separatism", for *thinking* about secession, is being preached and practised in the Duma, in the schools, in the churches, in the barracks, and in hundreds and thousands of newspapers. It is this Great-Russian nationalist poison that is polluting the entire

all-Russia political atmosphere. This is the misfortune of one nation, which, by subjugating other nations, is strengthening reaction throughout Russia. The memories of 1849 and 1863 form a living political tradition, which, unless great storms arise, threatens to hamper every democratic and *especially* every Social-Democratic movement for decades to come.

There can be no doubt that however natural the point of view of certain Marxists belonging to the oppressed nations (whose “misfortune” is sometimes that the masses of the population are blinded by the idea of their “own” national liberation) may appear at times, *in reality* the objective alignment of class forces in Russia makes refusal to advocate the right to self-determination tantamount to the worst opportunism, to the infection of the proletariat with the ideas of the Kokoshkins. And these ideas are, essentially, the ideas and the policy of the Purishkeviches.

Therefore, although Rosa Luxemburg’s point of view could at first have been excused as being specifically Polish, “Cracow” narrow-mindedness,<sup>a</sup> it is inexcusable today, when nationalism and, above all, governmental Great-Russian nationalism, has everywhere gained ground, and when policy is being shaped by this *Great-Russian nationalism*. In actual fact, it is being seized upon by the opportunists of *all* nations, who fight shy of the idea of “storms” and “leaps”, believe that the bourgeois-democratic revolution is over, and follow in the wake of the liberalism of the Kokoshkins.

Like any other nationalism, Great-Russian nationalism passes through various phases, according to the classes that are dominant in the bourgeois country at any given time. Up to 1905, we almost exclusively knew national-reactionaries. After the revolution, *national-liberals* arose in our country.

In our country this is virtually the stand adopted both by the Octobrists and by the Cadets (Kokoshkin), i.e., by the whole of the present-day bourgeoisie.

Great-Russian national-democrats will *inevitably* appear later on. Mr. Peshekhonov, one of the founders of the “Popular Socialist” Party, already expressed this point of view (in the issue of *Russkoye Bogatstvo* for August 1906) when he called for caution in regard to the peasants’ nationalist prejudices. However much others may slander us Bolsheviks and accuse us of “idealising” the peasant, we always have made and always will make a clear distinction between peasant intelligence and peasant prejudice, between

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<sup>a</sup> It is not difficult to understand that the recognition by the Marxists of the *whole of* Russia, and first and foremost by the Great Russians, of the *right* of nations to secede in no way precludes *agitation* against secession by Marxists of a particular *oppressed* nation, just as the recognition of the right to divorce does not preclude agitation against divorce in a particular case. We think, therefore, that there will be an inevitable increase in the number of Polish Marxists who laugh at the non-existent “contradiction” now being “encouraged” by Semkovsky and Trotsky.

peasant strivings for democracy and opposition to Purishkevich, and the peasant desire to make peace with the priest and the landlord.

Even now, and probably for a fairly long time to come, proletarian democracy must reckon with the nationalism of the Great-Russian peasants (not with the object of making concessions to it, but in order to combat it).<sup>a</sup> The awakening of nationalism among the oppressed nations, which became so pronounced after 1905 (let us recall, say, the group of “Federalist-Autonomists” in the First Duma, the growth of the Ukrainian movement, of the Moslem movement, etc.), will inevitably lead to greater nationalism among the Great-Russian petty bourgeoisie in town and countryside. The slower the democratisation of Russia, the more persistent, brutal and bitter will be the national persecution and bickering among the bourgeoisie of the various nations. The particularly reactionary nature of the Russian Purishkeviches will simultaneously give rise to (and strengthen) “separatist” tendencies among the various oppressed nationalities, which sometimes enjoy far greater freedom in neighbouring states.

In this situation, the proletariat of Russia is faced with a twofold or, rather, a two-sided task: to combat nationalism of every kind, above all, Great-Russian nationalism; to recognise, not only fully equal rights for all nations in general, but also equality of rights as regards polity, i.e., the right of nations to self-determination, to secession. And at the same time, it is their task, in the interests of a successful struggle against all and every kind of nationalism among all nations, to preserve the unity of the proletarian struggle and the proletarian organisations, amalgamating these organisations into a close-knit international association, despite bourgeois strivings for national exclusiveness.

Complete equality of rights for all nations; the right of nations to self-determination; the unity of the workers of all nations — such is the national program that Marxism, the experience of the whole world, and the experience of Russia, teach the workers.

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<sup>a</sup> It would be interesting to trace the changes that take place in Polish nationalism, for example, in the process of its transformation from gentry nationalism into bourgeois nationalism, and then into peasant nationalism. In his book *Das polnische Gemeinwesen im preussischen Staat* (The Polish Community in the Prussian State; there is a Russian translation), Ludwig Bernhard, who shares the view of a German Kokoshkin, describes a very typical phenomenon: the formation of a sort of “peasant republic” by the Poles in Germany in the form of a close alliance of the various cooperatives and other associations of *Polish* peasants in their struggle for nationality, religion and “Polish” land. German oppression has welded the Poles together and segregated them, after first awakening the nationalism of the gentry, then of the bourgeoisie, and finally of the peasant masses (especially after the campaign the Germans launched in 1873 against the use of the Polish language in schools). Things are moving in the same direction in Russia, and not only with regard to Poland.

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This article had been set up when I received No. 3 of *Nasha Rabochaya Gazeta*, in which Mr. Vl. Kosovsky writes the following about the recognition of the right of all nations to self-determination:

Taken mechanically from the resolution of the First Congress of the party (1898), which in turn had borrowed it from the decisions of international socialist congresses, it was given, as is evident from the debate, the same meaning at the 1903 Congress as was ascribed to it by the Socialist International, i.e., political self-determination, the self-determination of nations in the field of political independence. Thus the formula: national self-determination, which implies the right to territorial separation, does not in any way affect the question of how national relations *within* a given state organism should be regulated for nationalities that cannot or have no desire to leave the existing state.

It is evident from this that Mr. Vl. Kosovsky has seen the minutes of the Second Congress of 1903 and understands perfectly well the real (and only) meaning of the term self-determination. Compare this with the fact that the editors of the Bund newspaper *Zeit* let Mr. Liebman loose to scoff at the program and to declare that it is vague! Queer “party” ethics among those Bundists ... The Lord alone knows why Kosovsky should declare that the Congress took over the principle of self-determination *mechanically*. Some people want to “object”, but how, why, and for what reason — they do not know. ■

# The Revolutionary Proletariat & the Right of Nations to Self-Determination<sup>66</sup>

Like most programs or tactical resolutions of the social-democratic parties, the Zimmerwald Manifesto proclaims the “right of nations to self-determination”. In Nos. 252 and 253 of *Berner Tagwacht*, Parabellum has called “illusory” “the struggle for the non-existent right to self-determination” and *has contraposed* to it “the proletariat’s revolutionary mass struggle against capitalism” while at the same time *assuring* us that “we are against annexations” (an assurance is repeated *five* times in Parabellum’s article), and against all violence against nations.

The arguments advanced by Parabellum in support of his position boil down to an assertion that today all national problems, like those of Alsace-Lorraine, Armenia, etc., are problems of imperialism; that capital has outgrown the framework of national states; that it is impossible to turn the clock of history back to the obsolete ideal of national states, etc.

Let us see whether Parabellum’s reasoning is correct.

First of all, it is Parabellum who is looking backward, not forward, when, in opposing working-class acceptance “of the ideal of the national state”, he looks towards Britain, France, Italy, Germany, i.e., countries where the movement for national liberation is a thing of the past, and not towards the East, towards Asia, Africa, and the colonies, where this movement is a thing of the present and the future. Mention of India, China, Persia, and Egypt will be sufficient.

Furthermore, imperialism means that capital has outgrown the framework of national states; it means that national oppression has been extended and heightened on a new historical foundation. Hence, it follows that, despite Parabellum, we must *link* the revolutionary struggle for socialism with a revolutionary program on the

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Written not earlier than October 16 (29), 1915.

national question.

From what Parabellum says, it appears that, *in the name of* the socialist revolution, he scornfully rejects a consistently revolutionary program in the sphere of democracy. He is wrong to do so. The proletariat cannot be victorious except through democracy, i.e., by giving full effect to democracy and by linking with each step of its struggle democratic demands formulated in the most resolute terms. It is absurd to *contrapose* the socialist revolution and the revolutionary struggle against capitalism to a *single* problem of democracy, in this case, the national question. We must *combine* the revolutionary struggle against capitalism with a revolutionary program and tactics on *all* democratic demands: a republic, a militia, the popular election of officials, equal rights for women, the self-determination of nations, etc. While capitalism exists, these demands — all of them — can only be accomplished as an exception, and even then in an incomplete and distorted form. Basing ourselves on the democracy already achieved, and exposing its incompleteness under capitalism, we demand the overthrow of capitalism, the expropriation of the bourgeoisie, as a necessary basis both for the abolition of the poverty of the masses and for the *complete* and *all-round* institution of *all* democratic reforms. Some of these reforms will be started before the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, others *in the course* of that overthrow, and still others after it. The social revolution is not a single battle, but a period covering a series of battles over all sorts of problems of economic and democratic reform, which are consummated only by the expropriation of the bourgeoisie. It is for the sake of this final aim that we must formulate *every one* of our democratic demands in a consistently revolutionary way. It is quite conceivable that the workers of some particular country will overthrow the bourgeoisie *before* even a single fundamental democratic reform has been fully achieved. It is, however, quite inconceivable that the proletariat, as a historical class, will be able to defeat the bourgeoisie, unless it is prepared for that by being educated in the spirit of the most consistent and resolutely revolutionary democracy.

Imperialism means the progressively mounting oppression of the nations of the world by a handful of great powers; it means a period of wars between the latter to extend and consolidate the oppression of nations; it means a period in which the masses of the people are deceived by hypocritical social-patriots, i.e., individuals who, *under the pretext* of the “freedom of nations”, “the right of nations to self-determination”, and “defence of the fatherland”, justify and defend the oppression of the majority of the world’s nations by the great powers.

That is why the focal point in the social-democratic program must be that division of nations into oppressor and oppressed which forms the *essence* of imperialism, and is *deceitfully* evaded by the social-chauvinists and Kautsky. This division is not significant

from the angle of bourgeois pacifism or the philistine utopia of peaceful competition among independent nations under capitalism, but it is most significant from the angle of the revolutionary struggle against imperialism. It is from this division that *our* definition of the “right of nations to self-determination” must follow, a definition that is consistently democratic, revolutionary, and *in accord* with the general task of the immediate struggle for socialism. It is for that right, and in a struggle to achieve sincere recognition for it, that the social-democrats of the oppressor nations must demand that the oppressed nations should have the right of secession, for otherwise recognition of equal rights for nations and of international working-class solidarity would in fact be merely empty phrase-mongering, sheer hypocrisy. On the other hand, the social-democrats of the oppressed nations must attach prime significance to the unity and the merging of the workers of the oppressed nations with those of the oppressor nations; otherwise these social-democrats will involuntarily become the allies of their own national *bourgeoisie*, which *always* betrays the interests of the people and of democracy, and is *always* ready, in its turn, to annex territory and oppress other nations.

The way in which the national question was posed at the end of the sixties of the past century may serve as an instructive example. The petty-bourgeois democrats, to whom any thought of the class struggle and of the socialist revolution was wholly alien, pictured to themselves a utopia of peaceful competition among free and equal nations, under capitalism. In examining the immediate tasks of the social revolution, the Proudhonists totally “negated” the national question and the right of nations to self-determination. Marx ridiculed French Proudhonism and showed the affinity between it and French chauvinism. (“All Europe must and will sit quietly on their hindquarters until the gentlemen in France abolish ‘poverty’ ... By the negation of nationalities they appeared, quite unconsciously, to understand their absorption by the model French nation.”) Marx demanded *the separation of Ireland* from Britain “although after the separation there may come federation”, demanding it, not from the standpoint of the petty-bourgeois utopia of a peaceful capitalism, or from considerations of “justice for Ireland”,<sup>67</sup> but from the standpoint of the interests of the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat of the *oppressor, i.e., British, nation* against capitalism. The freedom of *that* nation has been cramped and mutilated by the fact that it has oppressed another nation. The British proletariat’s internationalism would remain a hypocritical phrase if *they* did not demand the separation of Ireland. Never in favour of petty states, or the splitting up of states in general, or the principle of federation, Marx considered the separation of an oppressed nation to be a step towards federation, and consequently, not towards a split, but towards concentration, both political and economic, but

concentration on the basis of democracy. As Parabellum sees it, Marx was probably waging an “illusory struggle” in demanding separation for Ireland. Actually, however, this demand *alone* presented a consistently revolutionary program; it alone was in accord with internationalism; it alone advocated concentration along *non-imperialist* lines.

The imperialism of our days has led to a situation in which the great-power oppression of nations has become general. The view that a struggle must be conducted against the social-chauvinism of the dominant nations, who are now engaged in an imperialist war to enhance the oppression of nations, and are oppressing most of the world’s nations and most of the earth’s population — this view must be decisive, cardinal and basic in the national program of social-democracy.

Take a glance at the present trends in social-democratic thinking on this subject. The petty-bourgeois utopians, who dreamt of equality and peace among nations under capitalism, have been succeeded by the social-imperialists. In combating the former, Parabellum is tilting at windmills, thereby unwittingly playing in the hands of the social-imperialists. What is the social-chauvinists’ program on the national question?

They either entirely deny the right to self-determination, using arguments like those advanced by Parabellum (Cunow, Parvus, the Russian opportunists Semkovsky, Liebman, and others), or they recognise that right in a patently hypocritical fashion, namely, without applying it to those very nations that are oppressed by their own nation or by her military allies (Plekhanov, Hyndman, all the pro-French patriots, then Scheidemann, etc., etc.). The most plausible formulation of the social-chauvinist lie, one that is therefore most dangerous to the proletariat, is provided by Kautsky. In word, he is *in favour* of the self-determination of nations; in word, he is for the Social-Democratic Party “*die Selbständigkeit der Nationen allseitig [!] und rückhaltlos [?] achtet und fordert*”<sup>a</sup> (*Die Neue Zeit*, No. 33, 11, S. 241, May 21, 1915). In *deed*, however, he has adapted the national program to the prevailing social-chauvinism, distorted and docked it; he gives no precise definition of the duties of the socialists in the oppressor nations, and patently falsifies the democratic principle itself when he says that to demand “state independence” (*staatliche Selbständigkeit*) for every nation would mean demanding “too much” (“*zu viel*”, *Die Neue Zeit* No. 33, 11, S. 77, April 16, 1915). “National autonomy”, if you please, is enough! The principal question, the one the imperialist bourgeoisie will not permit discussion of, namely, the question of the *boundaries of a state* that is built upon the oppression of nations, is evaded by Kautsky, who, to please

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<sup>a</sup> “comprehensively [!] and unreservedly [?] respecting and demanding the independence of nations”. — *Ed.*

that bourgeoisie, has thrown out of the program what is most essential. The bourgeoisie are ready to promise all the “national equality” and “national autonomy” you please, so long as the proletariat remain within the framework of legality and “peacefully” submit to them on the question of the state *boundaries!* Kautsky has formulated the national program of social-democracy in a reformist, not a revolutionary manner.

Parabellum’s national program, or, to be more precise, his *assurances* that “we are against annexations”, has the wholehearted backing of the *Parteiivorstand*,<sup>a</sup> Kautsky, Plekhanov and Co., for the very reason that the program does not expose the dominant social-patriots. Bourgeois pacifists would also endorse that program. Parabellum’s splendid *general* program (“a revolutionary mass struggle against capitalism”) serves him — as it did the Proudhonists of the sixties — not for the drawing up, in conformity with it and in its spirit, of a program on the national question that is uncompromising and equally revolutionary, but in order to leave the way open to the social-patriots. In our imperialist times most socialists throughout the world are members of nations that oppress other nations and strive to extend that oppression. That is why our “struggle against annexations” will be meaningless and will not scare the social-patriots in the least, unless we declare that a socialist of an oppressor nation who does not conduct both peacetime and wartime propaganda in favour of freedom of secession for oppressed nations, is no socialist and no internationalist, but a chauvinist! The socialist of an oppressor nation who fails to conduct such propaganda in defiance of government bans, i.e., in the free, i.e., in the illegal press, is a hypocritical advocate of equal rights for nations!

Parabellum has *only* a single sentence on Russia, which has not yet completed its bourgeois-democratic revolution:

*Selbst das wirtschaftlich sehr zurückgebliebene Russland hat in der Haltung der Polnischen, Lettischen, Armenischen Bourgeoisie gezeigt, dass nicht nur die militärische Bewachung es ist, die die Völker in diesem “Zuchthaus der Völker” zusammenhält, sondern Bedürfnisse der kapitalistischen Expansion, für die das ungeheure Territorium ein glänzender Boden der Entwicklung ist.*<sup>b</sup>

That is not a “social-democratic standpoint” but a liberal-bourgeois one, not an internationalist, but a Great-Russian chauvinist standpoint. Parabellum, who is such a fine fighter against the German social-patriots, seems to have little knowledge of

<sup>a</sup> The Executive of the German Social-Democratic Party. — *Ed.*

<sup>b</sup> “Even economically very backward Russia has proved, in the stand taken by the Polish, Lettish and Armenian bourgeoisie that it is not only the military guard that keeps together the peoples in that ‘prison of peoples’, but also the need for capitalist expansion, for which the vast territory is a splendid ground for development.” — *Ed.*

Russian chauvinism. For Parabellum's wording to be converted into a social-democratic postulate and for social-democratic conclusions to be drawn from it, it should be modified and supplemented as follows:

Russia is a prison of peoples, not only because of the military-feudal character of tsarism and not only because the Great-Russian bourgeoisie support tsarism, but also because the Polish, etc., bourgeoisie have sacrificed the freedom of nations and democracy in general for the interests of capitalist expansion. The Russian proletariat cannot march at the head of the people towards a victorious democratic revolution (which is its immediate task), or fight alongside its brothers, the proletarians of Europe, for a socialist revolution, without immediately demanding, fully and "*rückhaltlos*",<sup>a</sup> for all nations oppressed by tsarism, the freedom to secede from Russia. This we demand, not independently of our revolutionary struggle for socialism, but because this struggle will remain a hollow phrase if it is not linked up with a revolutionary approach to all questions of democracy, including the national question. We demand freedom of self-determination, i.e., independence, i.e., freedom of secession for the oppressed nations, not because we have dreamt of splitting up the country economically, or of the ideal of small states, but, on the contrary, because we want large states and the closer unity and even fusion of nations, only on a truly democratic, truly internationalist basis, which is *inconceivable* without the freedom to secede. Just as Marx, in 1869, demanded the separation of Ireland, not for a split between Ireland and Britain, but for a subsequent free union between them, not so as to secure "justice for Ireland", but in the interests of the revolutionary struggle of the British proletariat, we in the same way consider the refusal of Russian socialists to demand freedom of self-determination for nations, in the sense we have indicated above, to be a direct betrayal of democracy, internationalism and socialism. ■

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<sup>a</sup> "unreservedly". — *Ed.*

# The Socialist Revolution & the Right of Nations to Self-Determination<sup>68</sup>

*Theses*

## **1. Imperialism, socialism & the liberation of oppressed nations**

Imperialism is the highest stage in the development of capitalism. In the foremost countries capital has outgrown the bounds of national states, has replaced competition by monopoly and has created all the objective conditions for the achievement of socialism. In Western Europe and in the United States, therefore, the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat for the overthrow of capitalist governments, and the expropriation of the bourgeoisie is on the order of the day. Imperialism forces the masses into this struggle by sharpening class contradictions on a tremendous scale, by worsening the conditions of the masses both economically — trusts, high cost of living — and politically — the growth of militarism, more frequent wars, more powerful reaction, the intensification and expansion of national oppression and colonial plunder. Victorious socialism must necessarily establish a full democracy and, consequently, not only introduce full equality of nations but also realise the right of the oppressed nations to self-determination, i.e., the right to free political separation. Socialist parties which did not show by all their activity, both now, during the revolution, and after its victory, that they would liberate the enslaved nations and build up relations with them on the basis of a free union — and free union is a false phrase without the right to secede — these parties would be betraying socialism.

Democracy, of course, is also a form of state which must disappear when the state disappears, but that will only take place in the transition from conclusively victorious and consolidated socialism to full communism.

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Written in January-February 1916.

## 2. The socialist revolution & the struggle for democracy

The socialist revolution is not a single act, it is not one battle on one front, but a whole epoch of acute class conflicts, a long series of battles on all fronts, i.e., on all questions of economics and politics, battles that can only end in the expropriation of the bourgeoisie. It would be a radical mistake to think that the struggle for democracy was capable of diverting the proletariat from the socialist revolution or of hiding, overshadowing it, etc. On the contrary, in the same way as there can be no victorious socialism that does not practise full democracy, so the proletariat cannot prepare for its victory over the bourgeoisie without an all-round, consistent and revolutionary struggle for democracy.

It would be no less a mistake to remove one of the points of the democratic program, for example, the point on the self-determination of nations, on the grounds of it being “impracticable” or “illusory” under imperialism. The contention that the right of nations to self-determination is impracticable within the bounds of capitalism can be understood either in the absolute, economic sense, or in the conditional, political sense.

In the first case it is radically incorrect from the standpoint of theory. First, in that sense, such things as, for example, labour money, or the abolition of crises, etc., are impracticable under capitalism. It is absolutely untrue that the self-determination of nations is *equally* impracticable. Secondly, even the one example of the secession of Norway from Sweden in 1905 is sufficient to refute “impracticability” in that sense. Thirdly, it would be absurd to deny that some slight change in the political and strategic relations of, say, Germany and Britain, might today or tomorrow make the formation of a new Polish, Indian and other similar state fully “practicable”. Fourthly, finance capital, in its drive to expand, can “freely” buy or bribe the freest democratic or republican government and the elective officials of any, even an “independent”, country. The domination of finance capital and of capital in general is not to be abolished by *any* reforms in the sphere of political democracy; and self-determination belongs wholly and exclusively to this sphere. This domination of finance capital, however, does not in the least nullify the significance of political democracy as a freer, wider and clearer *form* of class oppression and class struggle. Therefore all arguments about the “impracticability”, in the economic sense, of one of the demands of political democracy under capitalism are reduced to a theoretically incorrect definition of the general and basic relationships of capitalism and of political democracy as a whole.

In the second case the assertion is incomplete and inaccurate. This is because not only the right of nations to self-determination, but *all* the fundamental demands of political democracy are only partially “practicable” under imperialism, and then in a

distorted form and by way of exception (for example, the secession of Norway from Sweden in 1905). The demand for the immediate liberation of the colonies that is put forward by all revolutionary social-democrats is also “impracticable” under capitalism without a series of revolutions. But from this it does not by any means follow that social-democracy should reject the immediate and most determined struggle for *all* these demands — such a rejection would only play into the hands of the bourgeoisie and reaction — but, on the contrary, it follows that these demands must be formulated and put through in a revolutionary and not a reformist manner, going beyond the bounds of bourgeois legality, breaking them down, going beyond speeches in parliament and verbal protests, and drawing the masses into decisive action, extending and intensifying the struggle for every fundamental democratic demand up to a direct proletarian onslaught on the bourgeoisie, i.e., up to the socialist revolution that expropriates the bourgeoisie. The socialist revolution may flare up not only through some big strike, street demonstration or hunger riot or a military insurrection or colonial revolt, but also as a result of a political crisis such as the Dreyfus case or the Zabern incident,<sup>69</sup> or in connection with a referendum on the secession of an oppressed nation, etc.

Increased national oppression under imperialism does not mean that social-democracy should reject what the bourgeoisie call the “utopian” struggle for the freedom of nations to secede but, on the contrary, it should make greater use of the conflicts that arise in this sphere, *too*, as grounds for mass action and for revolutionary attacks on the bourgeoisie.

### **3. The significance of the right to self-determination & its relation to federation**

The right of nations to self-determination implies exclusively the right to independence in the political sense, the right to free political separation from the oppressor nation. Specifically, this demand for political democracy implies complete freedom to agitate for secession and for a referendum on secession by the seceding nation. This demand, therefore, is not the equivalent of a demand for separation, fragmentation and the formation of small states. It implies only a consistent expression of struggle against all national oppression. The closer a democratic state system is to complete freedom to secede the less frequent and less ardent will the desire for separation be in practice, because big states afford indisputable advantages, both from the standpoint of economic progress and from that of the interests of the masses and, furthermore, these advantages increase with the growth of capitalism. Recognition of self-determination is not synonymous with recognition of federation as a principle. One may be a determined

opponent of that principle and a champion of democratic centralism but still prefer federation to national inequality as the only way to full democratic centralism. It was from this standpoint that Marx, who was a centralist, preferred even the federation of Ireland and England to the forcible subordination of Ireland to the English.<sup>70</sup>

The aim of socialism is not only to end the division of mankind into tiny states and the isolation of nations in any form, it is not only to bring the nations closer together but to integrate them. And it is precisely in order to achieve this aim that we must, on the one hand, explain to the masses the reactionary nature of Renner's and Otto Bauer's idea of so-called "cultural and national autonomy" and, on the other, demand the liberation of oppressed nations in a clearly and precisely formulated political program that takes special account of the hypocrisy and cowardice of socialists in the oppressor nations, and not in general nebulous phrases, not in empty declamations and not by way of "relegating" the question until socialism has been achieved. In the same way as mankind can arrive at the abolition of classes only through a transition period of the dictatorship of the oppressed class, it can arrive at the inevitable integration of nations only through a transition period of the complete emancipation of all oppressed nations, i.e., their freedom to secede.

#### **4. The proletarian-revolutionary presentation of the question of the self-determination of nations**

The petty bourgeoisie had put forward not only the demand for the self-determination of nations but *all* the points of our democratic minimum program long *before*, as far back as the 17th and 18th centuries. They are still putting them *all* forward in a utopian manner because they fail to see the class struggle and its increased intensity under democracy, and because they believe in "peaceful" capitalism. That is the exact nature of the utopia of a peaceful union of equal nations under imperialism which deceives the people and which is defended by Kautsky's followers. The program of social-democracy, as a counterbalance to this petty-bourgeois, opportunist utopia, must postulate the division of nations into oppressor and oppressed as basic, significant and inevitable under imperialism.

The proletariat of the oppressor nations must not confine themselves to general, stereotyped phrases against annexation and in favour of the equality of nations in general, such as any pacifist bourgeois will repeat. The proletariat cannot remain silent on the question of the *frontiers* of a state founded on national oppression, a question so "unpleasant" for the imperialist bourgeoisie. The proletariat must struggle against the enforced retention of oppressed nations within the bounds of the given state, which means that they must fight for the right to self-determination. The proletariat

must demand freedom of political separation for the colonies and nations oppressed by “their own” nation. Otherwise, the internationalism of the proletariat would be nothing but empty words; neither confidence nor class solidarity would be possible between the workers of the oppressed and the oppressor nations; the hypocrisy of the reformists and Kautskyites, who defend self-determination but remain silent about the nations oppressed by “their own” nation and kept in “their own” state by force, would remain unexposed.

On the other hand, the socialists of the oppressed nations must, in particular, defend and implement the full and unconditional unity, including organisational unity, of the workers of the oppressed nation and those of the oppressor nation. Without this it is impossible to defend the independent policy of the proletariat and their class solidarity with the proletariat of other countries in face of all manner of intrigues, treachery and trickery on the part of the bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie of the oppressed nations persistently utilise the slogans of national liberation to deceive the workers; in their internal policy they use these slogans for reactionary agreements with the bourgeoisie of the dominant nation (for example, the Poles in Austria and Russia who come to terms with reactionaries for the oppression of the Jews and Ukrainians); in their foreign policy they strive to come to terms with one of the rival imperialist powers for the sake of implementing their predatory plans (the policy of the small Balkan states, etc.).

The fact that the struggle for national liberation against one imperialist power may, under certain conditions, be utilised by another “great” power for its own, equally imperialist, aims, is just as unlikely to make the social-democrats refuse to recognise the right of nations to self-determination as the numerous cases of bourgeois utilisation of republican slogans for the purpose of political deception and financial plunder (as in the Romance countries, for example) are unlikely to make the social-democrats reject their republicanism.<sup>a</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> It would, needless to say, be quite ridiculous to reject the right to self-determination on the grounds that it implies “defence of the fatherland”. With equal right, i.e., with equal lack of seriousness, the social-chauvinists of 1914-16 refer to any of the demands of democracy (to its republicanism, for example) and to any formulation of the struggle against national oppression in order to justify “defence of the fatherland”. Marxism deduces the defence of the fatherland in wars, for example, in the great French Revolution or the wars of Garibaldi, in Europe, and the renunciation of defence of the fatherland in the imperialist war of 1914-16, from an analysis of the concrete historical peculiarities of each individual war and never from any “general principle”, or any one point of a program.

## 5. Marxism & Proudhonism on the national question

In contrast to the petty-bourgeois democrats, Marx regarded every democratic demand without exception not as an absolute, but as an historical expression of the struggle of the masses of the people, led by the bourgeoisie, against feudalism. There is not one of these demands which could not serve and has not served, under certain circumstances, as an instrument in the hands of the bourgeoisie for deceiving the workers. To single out, in this respect, one of the demands of political democracy, specifically, the self-determination of nations, and to oppose it to the rest, is fundamentally wrong in theory. In practice, the proletariat can retain its independence only by subordinating its struggle for all democratic demands, not excluding the demand for a republic, to its revolutionary struggle for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie.

On the other hand, in contrast to the Proudhonists who “denied” the national problem “in the name of social revolution”, Marx, mindful in the first place of the interests of the proletarian class struggle in the advanced countries, put the fundamental principle of internationalism and socialism in the foreground — namely, that no nation can be free if it oppresses other nations.<sup>71</sup> It was from the standpoint of the interests of the German workers’ revolutionary movement that Marx in 1848 demanded that victorious democracy in Germany should proclaim and grant freedom to the nations oppressed by the Germans.<sup>72</sup> It was from the standpoint of the revolutionary struggle of the English workers that Marx, in 1869, demanded the separation of Ireland from England, and added: “... even if federation should follow upon separation.”<sup>73</sup> Only by putting forward this demand was Marx really educating the English workers in the spirit of internationalism. Only in this way could he counterpose the opportunists and bourgeois reformism — which even to this day, half a century later, has not carried out the Irish “reform” — with a revolutionary solution of the given historical task. Only in this way could Marx maintain — unlike the apologists of capital who shout that the freedom of small nations to secede is utopian and impracticable and that not only economic but also political concentration is progressive — that this concentration is progressive when it is *non-imperialist*, and that nations should not be brought together by force, but by a free union of the proletarians of all countries. Only in this way could Marx, in opposition to the merely verbal, and often hypocritical, recognition of the equality and self-determination of nations, advocate the revolutionary action of the masses in the settlement of national questions *as well*. The imperialist war of 1914-16, and the Augean stables of hypocrisy on the part of the opportunists and Kautskyites that it has exposed, have strikingly confirmed the correctness of Marx’s policy, which should serve as a model for all advanced countries, for all of them are now oppressing other nations.<sup>a</sup>

## 6. Three types of countries with respect to the self-determination of nations

In this respect, countries must be divided into three main types.

First, the advanced capitalist countries of Western Europe and the United States. In these countries progressive bourgeois national movements came to an end long ago. Every one of these “great” nations oppresses other nations both in the colonies and at home. The tasks of the proletariat of these ruling nations are the same as those of the proletariat in England in the 19th century in relation to Ireland.<sup>b</sup>

Secondly, Eastern Europe: Austria, the Balkans and particularly Russia. Here it was the 20th century that particularly developed the bourgeois-democratic national movements and intensified the national struggle. The tasks of the proletariat in these countries both in completing their bourgeois-democratic reforms, and rendering assistance to the socialist revolution in other countries, cannot be carried out without championing the right of nations to self-determination. The most difficult and most important task in this is to unite the class struggle of the workers of the oppressor nations with that of the workers of the oppressed nations.

Thirdly, the semi-colonial countries, such as China, Persia and Turkey, and all the colonies, which have a combined population of 1000 million. In these countries the bourgeois-democratic movements either have hardly begun, or have still a long way

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<sup>a</sup> Reference is often made — e.g., recently by the German chauvinist Lensch in *Die Glocke*<sup>74</sup> Nos. 8 and 9 — to the fact that Marx’s objection to the national movement of certain peoples, to that of the Czechs in 1848, for example, refutes the necessity of recognising the self-determination of nations from the Marxist standpoint. But this is incorrect, for in 1848 there were historical and political grounds for drawing a distinction between “reactionary” and revolutionary-democratic nations. Marx was right to condemn the former and defend the latter.<sup>75</sup> The right to self-determination is one of the demands of democracy which must naturally be subordinated to its general interests. In 1848 and the following years these general interests consisted primarily in combating tsarism.

<sup>b</sup> In some small states which have kept out of the war of 1914-16 — Holland and Switzerland, for example — the bourgeoisie makes extensive use of the “self-determination of nations” slogan to justify participation in the imperialist war. This is a motive inducing the social-democrats in such countries to repudiate self-determination. Wrong arguments are being used to defend a correct proletarian policy, the repudiation of “defence of the fatherland” in an *imperialist* war. This results in a distortion of Marxism in theory, and in practice leads to a peculiar small-nation narrow-mindedness, neglect of the *hundreds of millions* of people in nations that are enslaved by the “dominant” nations. Comrade Gorter, in his excellent pamphlet *Imperialism, War and Social-Democracy*, wrongly rejects the principle of self-determination of nations, but correctly *applies* it, when he demands the *immediate* granting of “political and national independence” to the Dutch East Indies and exposes the Dutch opportunists who refuse to put forward this demand and to fight for it.

to go. Socialists must not only demand the unconditional and immediate liberation of the colonies without compensation — and this demand in its political expression signifies nothing else than the recognition of the right to self-determination; they must also render determined support to the more revolutionary elements in the bourgeois-democratic movements for national liberation in these countries and assist their uprising — or revolutionary war, in the event of one — *against* the imperialist powers that oppress them.

## 7. Social-chauvinism & the self-determination of nations

The imperialist epoch and the war of 1914-16 has laid special emphasis on the struggle against chauvinism and nationalism in the leading countries. There are two main trends on the self-determination of nations among the social-chauvinists, that is, among the opportunists and Kautskyites, who hide the imperialist, reactionary nature of the war by applying to it the “defence of the fatherland” concept.

On the one hand, we see quite undisguised servants of the bourgeoisie who defend annexation on the plea that imperialism and political concentration are progressive, and who deny what they call the utopian, illusory, petty-bourgeois, etc., right to self-determination. This includes Cunow, Parvus and the extreme opportunists in Germany, some of the Fabians and trade union leaders in England, and the opportunists in Russia: Semkovsky, Liebman, Yurkevich, etc.

On the other hand, we see the Kautskyites, among whom are Vandervelde, Renaudel, many pacifists in Britain and France, and others. They favour unity with the former and in practice are completely identified with them; they defend the right to self-determination hypocritically and by words alone: they consider “excessive” (“*zu viel verlangt*”: Kautsky in *Die Neue Zeit*, May 21, 1915) the demand for free political separation, they do not defend the necessity for revolutionary tactics on the part of the socialists of the oppressor nations in particular but, on the contrary, obscure their revolutionary obligations, justify their opportunism, make easy for them their deception of the people, and avoid the very question of the *frontiers* of a state forcefully retaining underprivileged nations within its bounds, etc.

Both are equally opportunist, they prostitute Marxism, having lost all ability to understand the theoretical significance and practical urgency of the tactics which Marx explained with Ireland as an example.

As for annexations, the question has become particularly urgent in connection with the war. But what is annexation? It is quite easy to see that a protest against annexations either boils down to recognition of the self-determination of nations or is based on the pacifist phrase that defends the status quo and is hostile to *any*, even

revolutionary, violence. Such a phrase is fundamentally false and incompatible with Marxism.

## 8. The concrete tasks of the proletariat in the immediate future

The socialist revolution may begin in the very near future. In this case the proletariat will be faced with the immediate task of winning power, expropriating the banks and effecting other dictatorial measures. The bourgeoisie — and especially the intellectuals of the Fabian and Kautskyite type — will, at such a moment, strive to split and check the revolution by foisting limited, democratic aims on it. Whereas *any* purely democratic demands are in a certain sense liable to act as a hindrance to the revolution, provided the proletarian attack on the pillars of bourgeois power has begun, the necessity to proclaim and grant liberty to *all* oppressed peoples (i.e., their right to self-determination) will be as urgent in the socialist revolution as it was for the victory of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in, say, Germany in 1848, or Russia in 1905.

It is possible, however, that five, 10 or more years will elapse before the socialist revolution begins. This will be the time for the revolutionary education of the masses in a spirit that will make it impossible for socialist-chauvinists and opportunists to belong to the working-class party and gain a victory, as was the case in 1914-16. The socialists must explain to the masses that British socialists who do not demand freedom to separate for the colonies and Ireland, German socialists who do not demand freedom to separate for the colonies, the Alsatians, Danes and Poles, and who do not extend their revolutionary propaganda and revolutionary mass activity directly to the sphere of struggle against national oppression, or who do not make use of such incidents as that at Zabern for the broadest illegal propaganda among the proletariat of the oppressor nation, for street demonstrations and revolutionary mass action — Russian socialists who do not demand freedom to separate for Finland, Poland, the Ukraine, etc., etc. — that such socialists act as chauvinists and lackeys of bloodstained and filthy imperialist monarchies and the imperialist bourgeoisie.

## 9. The attitude of Russian & Polish Social Democrats & of the Second International to self-determination

The differences between the revolutionary Social-Democrats of Russia and the Polish Social-Democrats on the question of self-determination came out into the open as early as 1903, at the Congress which adopted the program of the RSDLP Party, and which, despite the protest by the Polish Social-Democrat delegation, inserted Clause 9, recognising the right of nations to self-determination. Since then the Polish Social-

Democrats have on no occasion repeated, in the name of their party, the proposal to remove Clause 9 from our party's program, or to replace it by some other formula.

In Russia, where the oppressed nations account for no less than 57% of the population, or over 100 million, where they occupy mostly the border regions, where some of them are more highly cultured than the Great Russians, where the political system is especially barbarous and medieval, where the bourgeois-democratic revolution has not been consummated — there, in Russia, recognition of the right of nations oppressed by tsarism to free secession from Russia is absolutely obligatory for Social-Democrats, for the furtherance of their democratic and socialist aims. Our party, re-established in January 1912, adopted a resolution in 1913<sup>76</sup> reaffirming the right to self-determination and explaining it in precisely the above concrete sense. The rampage of Great-Russian chauvinism in 1914-16 both among the bourgeoisie and among the opportunist socialists (Rubanovich, Plekhanov, *Nashe Dyelo*, etc.) has given us even more reason to insist on this demand and to regard those who deny it as actual supporters of Great-Russian chauvinism and tsarism. Our party declares that it most emphatically declines to accept any responsibility for such actions against the right to self-determination.

The latest formulation of the position of the Polish Social-Democrats on the national question (the declaration of the Polish Social-Democrats at the Zimmerwald Conference) contains the following ideas:

The declaration condemns the German and other governments that regard the "Polish regions" as a pawn in the forthcoming compensation game, "*depriving the Polish people of the opportunity of deciding their own fate themselves*". "Polish Social-Democrats resolutely and solemnly protest against the *carving up and parcelling out of a whole country*" ... They flay the socialists who left it to the Hohenzollerns "*to liberate the oppressed peoples*". They express the conviction that only participation in the approaching struggle of the international revolutionary proletariat, the struggle for socialism, "*will break the fetters of national oppression and destroy all forms of foreign rule, will ensure for the Polish people the possibility of free all-round development as an equal member of a concord of nations*". The declaration recognises that "*for the Poles*" the war is "*doubly fratricidal*". (*Bulletin of the International Socialist Committee*, No. 2, September 27, 1915, p. 15. Russian translation in the symposium *The International and the War*, p. 97.)

These propositions do not differ in substance from recognition of the right of nations to self-determination, although their political formulations are even vaguer and more indeterminate than those of most programs and resolutions of the Second International. Any attempt to express these ideas as precise political formulations and

to define their applicability to the capitalist system or only to the socialist system will show even more clearly the mistake the Polish Social-Democrats make in denying the self-determination of nations.

The decision of the London International Socialist Congress of 1896, which recognised the self-determination of nations, should be supplemented on the basis of the above theses by specifying:

(1) the particular urgency of this demand under imperialism, (2) the political conventionalism and class content of all the demands of political democracy, the one under discussion included, (3) the necessity to distinguish the concrete tasks of the social-democrats of the oppressor nations from those of the social-democrats of the oppressed nations, (4) the inconsistent, purely verbal recognition of self-determination by the opportunists and the Kautskyites, which is, therefore, hypocritical in its political significance, (5) the actual identity of the chauvinists and those social-democrats, especially those of the great powers (Great Russians, Anglo-Americans, Germans, French, Italians, Japanese, etc.), who do not uphold the freedom to secede for colonies and nations oppressed by “their own” nations, (6) the necessity to subordinate the struggle for the demand under discussion and for all the basic demands of political democracy directly to the revolutionary mass struggle for the overthrow of the bourgeois governments and for the achievement of socialism.

The introduction into the International of the viewpoint of certain small nations, especially that of the Polish Social-Democrats, who have been led by their struggle against the Polish bourgeoisie, which deceives the people with its nationalist slogans, to the incorrect denial of self-determination, would be a theoretical mistake, a substitution of Proudhonism for Marxism implying in practice involuntary support for the most dangerous chauvinism and opportunism of the great-power nations.

*Editorial Board of Sotsial-Demokrat, Central Organ of RSDLP*

*Postscript.* In *Die Neue Zeit* for March 3, 1916, which has just appeared, Kautsky openly holds out the hand of Christian reconciliation to Austerlitz, a representative of the foulest German chauvinism, rejecting freedom of separation for the oppressed nations of Hapsburg Austria but recognising it for *Russian* Poland, as a menial service to Hindenburg and Wilhelm II. One could not have wished for a better self-exposure of Kautskyism! ■

# The Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up<sup>77</sup>

Issue No. 2 of the *Herald* (*Vorbote* No. 2, April 1916), the Marxist journal of the Zimmerwald Left, published theses for and against the self-determination of nations, signed by the Editorial Board of our Central Organ, *Sotsial-Demokrat*, and by the Editorial Board of the organ of the Polish Social-Democratic opposition, *Gazeta Robotnicza*. Above the reader will find a reprint of the former and a translation of the latter theses.<sup>78</sup> This is practically the first time that the question has been presented so extensively in the international field: it was raised only in respect of Poland in the discussion carried on in the German Marxist journal *Neue Zeit* 20 years ago, 1895-96, before the London International Socialist Congress of 1896, by Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Kautsky and the Polish “independents” (champions of the independence of Poland, the Polish Socialist Party), who represented three different views.<sup>79</sup> Since then, as far as we know, the question of self-determination has been discussed at all systematically only by the Dutch and the Poles. Let us hope that the *Herald* will succeed in promoting the discussion of this question, so urgent today, among the British, Americans, French, Germans and Italians. Official socialism, represented both by direct supporters of “their own” governments, the Plekhanovs, Davids and Co., and their undercover defenders of opportunism, the Kautskyites (among them Axelrod, Martov, Chkheidze and others), has told so many lies on this question that for a long time there will inevitably be efforts, on the one hand, to maintain silence and evade the issue, and, on the other, workers’ demands for “direct answers” to these “accursed questions”. We shall try to keep our readers informed of the struggle between the trends among socialists abroad.

This question is of specific importance to us Russian Social-Democrats; the present discussion is a continuation of the one that took place in 1903 and 1913; during the war this question has been the cause of some wavering in the thinking of party members;

it has been made more acute by the trickery of such prominent leaders of the Gvozdyov or chauvinist workers' party as Martov and Chkheidze, in their efforts to evade the substance of the problem. It is essential, therefore, to sum up at least the initial results of the discussion that has been started in the international field.

It will be seen from the theses that our Polish comrades provide us with a direct answer to some of our arguments, for example, on Marxism and Proudhonism. In most cases, however, they do not answer us directly, but indirectly, by opposing *their* assertions to ours. Let us examine both their direct and indirect answers.

## 1. Socialism & the self-determination of nations

We have affirmed that it would be a betrayal of socialism to refuse to implement the self-determination of nations under socialism. We are told in reply that “the right of self-determination is not applicable to a socialist society”. The difference is a radical one. Where does it stem from?

“We know”, runs our opponents' reasoning, “that socialism will abolish every kind of national oppression since it abolishes the class interests that lead to it ...” What has this argument about the *economic* prerequisites for the abolition of national oppression, which are very well known and undisputed, to do with a discussion of *one* of the forms of *political* oppression, namely, the forcible retention of one nation within the state frontiers of another? This is nothing but an attempt to evade political questions! And subsequent arguments further convince us that our judgement is right:

We have no reason to believe that in a socialist society, the nation will exist as an economic and political unit. It will in all probability assume the character of a cultural and linguistic unit only, because the territorial division of a socialist cultural zone, if practised at all, can be made only according to the needs of production and, furthermore, the question of such a division will naturally not be decided by individual nations alone and in possession of full sovereignty [as is required by “the right to self-determination”], but will be *determined jointly* by all the citizens concerned ...

Our Polish comrades like this last argument, on *joint* determination instead of *self*-determination, so much that they repeat it *three times* in their theses! Frequency of repetition, however, does not turn this Octobrist and reactionary argument into a social-democratic argument. All reactionaries and bourgeois grant to nations forcibly retained within the frontiers of a given state the right to “determine jointly” their fate in a common parliament. Wilhelm II also gives the Belgians the right to “determine jointly” the fate of the German Empire in a common German parliament.

Our opponents try to evade precisely the point at issue, the only one that is up for discussion — the right to secede. This would be funny if it were not so tragic!

Our very first thesis said that the liberation of oppressed nations implies a dual transformation in the political sphere: (1) the full equality of nations. This is not disputed and applies only to what takes place within the state; (2) freedom of political separation. This refers to the demarcation of state frontiers. This *only* is disputed. But it is precisely this that our opponents remain silent about. They do not want to think either about state frontiers or even about the state as such. This is a sort of “imperialist economism” like the old economism of 1894-1902, which argued in this way: capitalism is victorious, *therefore* political questions are a waste of time. Imperialism is victorious, *therefore* political questions are a waste of time! Such an apolitical theory is extremely harmful to Marxism.

In his *Critique of the Gotha Program*, Marx wrote: “Between capitalist and communist society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. There corresponds to this also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat.”<sup>80</sup> Up to now this truth has been indisputable for socialists and it includes the recognition of the fact that the *state* will exist until victorious socialism develops into full communism. Engels’ dictum about the *withering away* of the state is well known. We deliberately stressed, in the first thesis, that democracy is a form of state that will also wither away when the state withers away. And until our opponents replace Marxism by some sort of “non-state” viewpoint their arguments will constitute one big mistake.

Instead of speaking about the state (which *means*, about the demarcation of its *frontiers!*), they speak of a “socialist cultural zone”, i.e., they deliberately choose an expression that is indefinite in the sense that all state questions are obliterated! Thus we get a ridiculous tautology: if there is no state there can, of course, be no question of frontiers. In that case the *whole* democratic-political program is unnecessary. Nor will there be any republic, when the state “withers away”.

The German chauvinist Lensch, in the articles we mentioned in Thesis 5 (footnote), quoted an interesting passage from Engels’ article “The Po and the Rhine”. Amongst other things, Engels says in this article that in the course of historical development, which swallowed up a number of small and non-viable nations, the “frontiers of great and viable European nations” were being increasingly determined by the “language and sympathies” of the population. Engels calls these frontiers “natural”.<sup>81</sup> Such was the case in the period of progressive capitalism in Europe, roughly from 1848 to 1871. Today, these democratically determined frontiers are more and more often being *broken down* by reactionary, imperialist capitalism. There is every sign that imperialism will leave its successor, socialism, a heritage of *less* democratic frontiers, a number of annexations in Europe and in other parts of the world. Is it to be supposed that

victorious socialism, restoring and implementing full democracy all along the line, will refrain from *democratically* demarcating state frontiers and ignore the “sympathies” of the population? These questions need only be stated to make it quite clear that our Polish colleagues are sliding down from Marxism towards imperialist economism.

The old economists, who made a caricature of Marxism, told the workers that “only the economic” was of importance to Marxists. The new economists seem to think either that the democratic state of victorious socialism will exist without frontiers (like a “complex of sensations” without matter) or that frontiers will be delineated “only” in accordance with the needs of production. In actual fact its frontiers will be delineated democratically, i.e., in accordance with the will and “sympathies” of the population. Capitalism rides roughshod over these sympathies, adding more obstacles to the rapprochement of nations. Socialism, by organising production *without* class oppression, by ensuring the wellbeing of *all* members of the state, gives *full play* to the “sympathies” of the population, thereby promoting and greatly accelerating the drawing together and fusion of the nations.

To give the reader a rest from the heavy and clumsy economism let us quote the reasoning of a socialist writer who is outside our dispute. That writer is Otto Bauer, who also has his own “pet little point” — “cultural and national autonomy” — but who argues quite correctly on a large number of most important questions. For example, in Chapter 29 of his book *The National Question and Social-Democracy*, he was doubly right in noting the use of national ideology to cover up *imperialist* policies. In Chapter 30, “Socialism and the Principle of Nationality”, he says:

The socialist community will never be able to include whole nations within its make-up by the use of force. Imagine the masses of the people, enjoying all the blessings of national culture, taking a full and active part in legislation and government, and, finally, supplied with arms — would it be possible to subordinate such a nation to the rule of an alien social organism by force? All state power rests on the force of arms. The present-day people’s army, thanks to an ingenious mechanism, still constitutes a tool in the hands of a definite person, family or class exactly like the knightly and mercenary armies of the past. The army of the democratic community of a socialist society is nothing but the people armed, since it consists of highly cultured persons, working without compulsion in socialised workshops and taking full part in all spheres of political life. In such conditions any possibility of alien rule disappears.

This is true. It is *impossible* to abolish national (or any other political) oppression under capitalism, since this *requires* the abolition of classes, i.e., the introduction of socialism. But while being based on economics, socialism cannot be reduced to economics alone. A foundation — socialist production — is essential for the abolition of national

oppression but this foundation must *also* carry a democratically organised state, a democratic army, etc. By transforming capitalism into socialism the proletariat creates the *possibility* of abolishing national oppression; the possibility becomes *reality* “only” — “only”! — with the establishment of full democracy in all spheres, including the delineation of state frontiers in accordance with the “sympathies” of the population, including complete freedom to secede. And this, in turn, will serve as a basis for developing the *practical* elimination of even the slightest national friction and the least national mistrust, for an accelerated drawing together and fusion of nations that will be completed when the state *withers away*. This is the Marxist theory, the theory from which our Polish colleagues have mistakenly departed.

## 2. Is democracy ‘practicable’ under imperialism?

The old polemic conducted by Polish Social-Democrats against the self-determination of nations is based entirely on the argument that it is “impracticable” under capitalism. As long ago as 1903 we, the *Iskra* supporters, laughed at this argument in the Program Commission of the Second Congress of the RSDLP, and said that it was a repetition of the distortion of Marxism preached by the (late lamented) Economists. In our theses we dealt with this error in particular detail and it is precisely on this point, which contains the theoretical kernel of the whole dispute, that the Polish comrades did not wish to (or could not?) answer *any* of our arguments.

To prove the economic impossibility of self-determination would require an economic analysis such as that used to prove the impracticability of prohibiting machines or introducing labour-money, etc. No one has even attempted to make such an analysis. No one will maintain that it has been possible to introduce “labour-money” under capitalism “by way of exception” in even one country, in the way it was possible for one small country to realise this impracticable self-determination, even without war or revolution, “by way of exception”, in the era of the most rabid imperialism (Norway, 1905).

In general, political democracy is merely one of the possible *forms* of superstructure *above* capitalism (although it is theoretically the normal one for “pure” capitalism). The facts show that both capitalism and imperialism develop within the framework of *any* political form and subordinate them *all*. It is, therefore, a basic theoretical error to speak of the “impracticability” of *one* of the forms and of *one* of the demands of democracy.

The absence of an answer to these arguments from our Polish colleagues compels us to consider the discussion closed on this point. To make it graphic, so to say, we made the very concrete assertion that it would be “ridiculous” to deny the “practicability”

of the restoration of Poland today, making it dependent on the strategic and other aspects of the present war. No reply was forthcoming!

The Polish comrades simply *repeated* an obviously incorrect assertion (§II, 1), saying that “in questions of the annexation of foreign territories, forms of political democracy are pushed aside; sheer force is decisive ... Capital will never allow the people to decide the question of their state frontiers ...”. As though “capital” could “allow the people” to select *its* civil servants, the servants of imperialism! Or as though weighty decisions on important democratic questions, such as the establishment of a republic in place of a monarchy, or a militia in place of a regular army, were, *in general*, conceivable without “sheer force”. Subjectively, the Polish comrades want to make Marxism “more profound” but they are doing it altogether unsuccessfully. *Objectively*, their phrases about impracticability are opportunism, because their tacit assumption is: this is “impracticable” without a series of revolutions, in the same way as democracy *as a whole*, all its demands taken together, is impracticable under imperialism.

Once only, at the very end of §II, 1, in the discussion on Alsace, our Polish colleagues abandoned the position of imperialist economism and approached the question of one of the forms of democracy with a concrete answer and not with general references to the “economic”. And it was precisely this approach that was wrong! It would, they wrote, be “particularist, undemocratic” if *some* Alsatians, without asking the French, were to “impose” on them a union with Alsace, although part of Alsace was German-orientated and this threatened war!!! The confusion is amusing: self-determination presumes (this is in itself clear, and we have given it special emphasis in our theses) freedom to *separate* from the oppressor state; but the fact that *union* with a state presumes the consent of *that state* is something that is “not customarily” mentioned in politics any more than the “consent” of a capitalist to receive profit or of a worker to receive wages is mentioned in economics! It is ridiculous even to speak of such a thing.

If one wants to be a Marxist politician, one should, in speaking of Alsace, attack the German socialist scoundrels for not fighting for Alsace’s freedom to secede and attack the French socialist scoundrels for making their peace with the French bourgeoisie who want to annex the whole of Alsace by force — and both of them for serving the imperialism of “their own” country and for fearing a separate state, even if only a little one; the thing is to show *how* the socialists who recognise self-determination would solve the problem in a few weeks without going against the will of the Alsatians. To argue, instead, about the horrible danger of the French Alsatians “forcing” themselves on France is a real pearl.

### 3. What is annexation?

We raised this question in a most definite manner in our theses (Section 7). The Polish comrades did *not* reply to it: they evaded it, insisting (1) that they are against annexations and explaining (2) why they are against them. It is true that these are very important questions. But they are questions of *another kind*. If we want our principles to be theoretically sound at all, if we want them to be clearly and precisely formulated, we cannot *evade* the question of what an annexation is, since this concept is used in our political propaganda and agitation. The evasion of the question in a discussion between colleagues cannot be interpreted as anything but desertion of one's position.

Why have we raised this question? We explained this when we raised it. It is because "a protest against annexations is nothing but recognition of the right to self-determination". The concept of annexation usually includes: (1) the concept of force (joining by means of force); (2) the concept of oppression by another nation (the joining of "*alien*" regions, etc.), and, sometimes (3) the concept of violation of the *status quo*. We pointed this out in the theses and this did not meet with any criticism.

Can social-democrats be against the use of force in general, it may be asked? Obviously not. This means that we are against annexations not because they constitute force, but for some other reason. Nor can the social-democrats be for the status quo. However you may twist and turn, annexation is *violation of the self-determination* of a nation, it is the establishment of state *frontiers contrary to the will of the population*.

To be against annexations *means* to be in favour of the right to self-determination. To be "against the forcible retention of any nation within the frontiers of a given state" (we deliberately employed this slightly changed formulation of the same idea in Section 4 of our theses, and the Polish comrades *answered* us with *complete* clarity at the beginning of their §1, 4, that they "are against the forcible retention of oppressed nations within the frontiers of the annexing state") — is *the same* as being in favour of the self-determination of nations.

We do not want to haggle over words. If there is a party that says in its program (or in a resolution binding on all — the form does not matter) that it is against annexations,<sup>a</sup> against the forcible retention of oppressed nations within the frontiers of *its* state, we declare our complete agreement in principle with that party. It would be absurd to insist on the *word* "self-determination". And if there are people in our party who want to change *words* in this spirit, who want to amend Clause 9 of our party program, we should consider our differences with *such* comrades to be anything but a matter of

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<sup>a</sup> Karl Radek formulated this as "against old and new annexations" in one of his articles in *Berner Tagwacht*.

principle!

The only thing that matters is political clarity and theoretical soundness of our slogans.

In verbal discussions on this question — the importance of which nobody will deny, especially now, in view of the war — we have met the following argument (we have not come across it in the press): *a protest against* a known evil does not necessarily mean recognition of a positive concept that precludes the evil. This is obviously an unfounded argument and, apparently, as such has not been reproduced in the press. If a socialist party declares that it is “against the forcible retention of an oppressed nation within the frontiers of the annexing state”, it is *thereby committed to renounce retention by force* when it comes to power.

We do not for one moment doubt that if Hindenburg were to accomplish the semi-conquest of Russia tomorrow and this semi-conquest were to be expressed by the appearance of a new Polish state (in connection with the desire of Britain and France to weaken tsarism somewhat), something that is quite “practicable” from the standpoint of the economic laws of capitalism and imperialism, and if, the day after tomorrow, the socialist revolution were to be victorious in Petrograd, Berlin and Warsaw, the Polish socialist government, like the Russian and German socialist governments, would renounce the “forcible retention” of, say, the Ukrainians, “within the frontiers of the Polish state”. If there were members of the *Gazeta Robotnicza* Editorial Board in that government they would no doubt sacrifice their “theses”, thereby disproving the “theory” that “the right of self-determination is not applicable to a socialist society”. If we thought otherwise we should not put a comradely discussion with the Polish Social-Democrats on the agenda but would rather conduct a ruthless struggle against them as chauvinists.

Suppose I were to go out into the streets of any European city and make a public “protest”, which I then published in the press, against my not being permitted to purchase a man as a slave. There is no doubt that people would have the right to regard me as a slave-owner, a champion of the principle, or system, if you like, of slavery. No one would be fooled by the fact that my sympathies with slavery were expressed in the negative form of a protest and not in a positive form (“I am for slavery”). A political “protest” is *quite* the equivalent of a political program; this is so obvious that one feels rather awkward at having to explain it.

In any case, we are firmly convinced that on the part of the Zimmerwald Left, at any rate — we do not speak of the Zimmerwald group as a whole since it contains Martov and other Kautskyites — we shall not meet with any “protest” if we say that in the Third International there will be no place for people capable of separating a political

protest from a political program, of counterposing the one to the other, etc.

Not wishing to haggle over words, we take the liberty of expressing the sincere hope that the Polish Social-Democrats will try soon to formulate, officially, their proposal to delete Clause 9 from our party program (which is also *theirs*) and also from the program of the International (the resolution of the 1896 London Congress), as well as *their own* definition of the relevant political concepts of “old and new annexations” and of “the forcible retention of an oppressed nation within the frontiers of the annexing state”

Let us now turn to the next question.

#### 4. For or against annexations?

In §3 of Part One of their theses the Polish comrades declare very definitely that they are against any kind of annexation. Unfortunately, in §4 of the same part we find an assertion that must be considered annexationist. It opens with the following ... how can it be put more delicately? ... the following strange phrase:

The starting-point of social-democracy’s struggle against annexations, against the forcible retention of oppressed nations within the frontiers of the annexing state is *renunciation of any defence of the fatherland* [the authors’ italics], which, in the era of imperialism, is defence of the right of one’s own bourgeoisie to oppress and plunder foreign peoples ...

What’s this? How is it put?

“The starting-point of the struggle against annexations is renunciation of *any* defence of the fatherland ...” But any national war and any national revolt can be called “defence of the fatherland” and, until now, has been *generally* recognised as such! We are against annexations, *but* ... we mean by this that we are against the annexed waging a war for their liberation from those who have annexed them, that we are against the annexed revolting to liberate themselves from those who have annexed them! Isn’t that an annexationist declaration?

The authors of the theses motivate their ... strange assertion by saying that “in the era of imperialism” defence of the fatherland amounts to defence of the right of one’s own bourgeoisie to oppress foreign peoples. This, however, is true *only* in respect of an imperialist war, i.e., in respect of a war *between* imperialist powers or groups of powers, when *both* belligerents not only oppress “foreign peoples” but are fighting a war to *decide* who shall have a *greater share* in oppressing foreign peoples!

The authors seem to present the question of “defence of the fatherland” very differently from the way it is presented by our party. We renounce “defence of the

fatherland” in an *imperialist* war. This is said as clearly as it can be in the manifesto of our party’s central committee and in the Berne resolutions reprinted in the pamphlet *Socialism and War*, which has been published both in German and French. We stressed this *twice* in our theses (footnotes to Sections 4 and 6). The authors of the Polish theses seem to renounce defence of the fatherland *in general*, i.e., *for a national war as well*, believing, perhaps, that in the “era of imperialism” national wars are *impossible*. We say “perhaps” because the Polish comrades have *not* expressed this view in their theses.

Such a view is clearly expressed in the theses of the German *Internationale* group and in the Junius pamphlet which is dealt with in a special article. In addition to what is said there, let us note that the national revolt of an annexed region or country against the annexing country may be called precisely a revolt and not a war (we have heard this objection made and, therefore, cite it here, although we do not think this terminological dispute a serious one). In any case, hardly anybody would risk denying that annexed Belgium, Serbia, Galicia and Armenia would call their “revolt” against those who annexed them “defence of the fatherland” *and would do so in all justice*. It looks as if the Polish comrades are *against* this type of revolt on the grounds that there is *also* a bourgeoisie in these annexed countries which *also* oppresses foreign peoples or, more exactly, could oppress them, since the question is one of the “*right to oppress*”. Consequently, the given war or revolt is not assessed on the strength of its *real* social content (the struggle of an oppressed nation for its liberation from the oppressor nation) but the possible exercise of the “*right to oppress*” by a bourgeoisie which is at present itself oppressed. If Belgium, let us say, is annexed by Germany in 1917, and in 1918 revolts to secure her liberation, the Polish comrades will be against her revolt on the grounds that the Belgian bourgeoisie possess “the right to oppress foreign peoples”!

There is nothing Marxist or even revolutionary in this argument. If we do not want to betray socialism we *must* support *every* revolt against our chief enemy, the bourgeoisie of the big states, provided it is not the revolt of a reactionary class. By refusing to support the revolt of annexed regions we become, objectively, annexationists. It is precisely in the “era of imperialism”, which is the era of nascent social revolution, that the proletariat will today give especially vigorous support to any revolt of the annexed regions so that tomorrow, or simultaneously, it may attack the bourgeoisie of the “great” power that is weakened by the revolt.

The Polish comrades, however, go further in their annexationism. They are not only against any revolt by the annexed regions; they are against *any* restoration of their independence, even a peaceful one! Listen to this:

Social-democracy, rejecting all responsibility for the consequences of the policy of

oppression pursued by imperialism, and conducting the sharpest struggle against them, *does not by any means favour the erection of new frontier posts in Europe or the re-erection of those swept away by imperialism* [the authors' italics].

Today “imperialism has swept away the frontier posts” between Germany and Belgium and between Russia and Galicia. International social-democracy, if you please, ought to be against their re-erection in general, whatever the means. In 1905, “in the era of imperialism”, when Norway’s autonomous diet proclaimed her secession from Sweden, and Sweden’s war against Norway, as preached by the Swedish reactionaries, did not take place, what with the resistance of the Swedish workers and the international imperialist situation — social-democracy ought to have been against Norway’s secession, since it undoubtedly meant “the erection of new frontier posts in Europe”!!

This is downright annexationism. There is no need to refute it because it refutes itself. No socialist party would risk taking this stand: “We oppose annexations in general but we sanction annexations for Europe or tolerate them once they have been made” ...

We need deal only with the theoretical sources of the error that has led our Polish comrades to such a patent ... “impossibility”. We shall say further on why there is no reason to make exceptions for “Europe”. The following two phrases from the theses will explain the other sources of the error:

Wherever the wheel of imperialism has rolled over and crushed an already formed capitalist state, the political and economic concentration of the capitalist world, paving the way for socialism, takes place in the brutal form of imperialist oppression ...

This justification of annexations is not Marxism but Struveism. Russian Social-Democrats who remember the 1890s in Russia have a good knowledge of this manner of distorting Marxism, which is common to Struve, Cunow, Legien and Co. In another of the theses (11, 3) of the Polish comrades we read the following, specifically about the German Struveists, the so-called “social-imperialists”:

[The slogan of self-determination] provides the social-imperialists with an opportunity, by demonstrating the illusory nature of that slogan, to represent our struggle against national oppression as historically unfounded sentimentality, thereby undermining the faith of the proletariat in the scientific validity of the social-democratic program ...

This means that the authors consider the position of the German Struveists “scientific”! Our congratulations.

One “trifle”, however, brings down this amazing argument which threatens to show that the Lensches, Cunows and Parvuses are *right* in comparison to us: it is that the Lensches are consistent people in their own way and in issue No. 8-9 of the chauvinist German *Glocke* — we deliberately quoted it in our theses — Lensch

demonstrates *simultaneously* both the “scientific invalidity” of the self-determination slogan (the Polish Social-Democrats apparently believe that *this* argument of Lensch’s is irrefutable, as can be seen from their arguments in the theses we have quoted) *and* the “scientific invalidity” of the slogan against annexations!!

For Lensch had an excellent understanding of that simple truth which we pointed out to those Polish colleagues who showed no desire to reply to our statement: there is no difference “either political or economic” or even logical, between the “recognition” of self-determination and the “protest” against annexations. If the Polish comrades regard the arguments of the Lensches against self-determination to be irrefutable, there is one *fact* that has to be accepted: the Lensches also use *all* these arguments to oppose the struggle against annexations.

The theoretical error that underlies all the arguments of our Polish colleagues has led them to the point of becoming *inconsistent annexationists*.

## 5. Why are social-democrats against annexations?

In our view the answer is obvious: because annexation violates the self-determination of nations, or, in other words, is a form of national oppression.

In the view of the Polish Social-Democrats there have to be *special* explanations of why we are against annexations, and it is these (I, 3 in the theses) that inevitably enmesh the authors in a further series of contradictions.

They produce two reasons to “justify” our opposition to annexations (the “scientifically valid” arguments of the Lensches notwithstanding):

First: “To the assertion that annexations in Europe are essential for the military security of a victorious imperialist state, the Social-Democrats counterpose the fact that annexations only serve to sharpen antagonisms, thereby increasing the danger of war ...”

This is an inadequate reply to the Lensches because their chief argument is not that annexations are a military necessity but that they are *economically* progressive and under imperialism mean concentration. Where is the logic if the Polish Social-Democrats in the same breath recognise the progressive nature of *such* a concentration, refusing to re-erect frontier posts in Europe that have been swept away by imperialism, and protest *against* annexations?

Furthermore, the danger of *what* wars is increased by annexations? Not imperialist wars, because they have other causes; the chief antagonisms in the present imperialist war are undoubtedly those between Germany and Britain, and between Germany and Russia. These antagonisms have nothing to do with annexations. It is the danger of *national* wars and national revolts that is increased. But how can one declare national

wars to be *impossible* in “the era of imperialism”, on the one hand, and then speak of the “danger” of national wars, on the other? This is not logical.

The second argument:

Annexations “create a gulf between the proletariat of the ruling nation and that of the oppressed nation ... the proletariat of the oppressed nation would unite with its bourgeoisie and regard the proletariat of the ruling nation as its enemy. Instead of the proletariat waging an international class struggle against the international bourgeoisie it would be split and ideologically corrupted. . .”.

We fully agree with these arguments. But is it logical to put forward simultaneously two arguments on the same question which cancel each other out. In §3 of the first part of the theses we find the above arguments that regard annexations as causing a *split* in the proletariat, and next to it, in §4, we are told that we must oppose the annulment of annexations already effected in Europe and favour “the education of the working masses of the oppressed and the oppressor nations in a spirit of solidarity in struggle”. If the annulment of annexations is reactionary “sentimentality”, annexations *must not* be said to create a “gulf” between sections of the “proletariat” and cause a “split”, but should, on the contrary, be regarded as a condition for the *bringing together* of the proletariat of different nations.

We say: In order that we may have the strength to accomplish the socialist revolution and overthrow the bourgeoisie, the workers must unite more closely and this close union is promoted by the struggle for self-determination, i.e., the struggle against annexations. We are consistent. But the Polish comrades who say that European annexations are “non-annullable” and national wars, “impossible”, defeat themselves by contending “against” annexations with the use of arguments *about* national wars! These arguments are to the effect that annexations *hamper* the drawing together and fusion of workers of different nations!

In other words, the Polish Social-Democrats, in order to contend against annexations, have to draw for arguments on the theoretical stock *they themselves* reject in principle.

The question of colonies makes this even more obvious.

## 6. Is it right to contrast ‘Europe’ with the colonies in the present question?

Our theses say that the demand for the immediate liberation of the colonies is as “impracticable” (that is, it cannot be effected without a number of revolutions and is not stable without socialism) under capitalism as the self-determination of nations, the election of civil servants by the people, the democratic republic, and so on — and, furthermore, that the demand for the liberation of the colonies is nothing more than

“the recognition of the right of nations to self-determination”.

The Polish comrades have not answered a single one of these arguments. They have tried to differentiate between “Europe” and the colonies. For Europe alone they become inconsistent annexationists by refusing to annul any annexations once these have been made. As for the colonies, they demand unconditionally: “Get out of the colonies!”

Russian socialists must put forward the demand: “Get out of Turkestan, Khiva, Bukhara, etc.”, but, it is alleged, they would be guilty of “utopianism”, “unscientific sentimentality” and so on if they demanded a similar freedom of secession for Poland, Finland, the Ukraine, etc. British socialists must demand: “Get out of Africa, India, Australia”, but not out of Ireland. What are the theoretical grounds for a distinction that is so patently false? This question cannot be evaded.

The chief “ground” of those opposed to self-determination is its “impracticability”. The same idea, with a nuance, is expressed in the reference to “economic and political concentration”.

Obviously, concentration *also* comes about with the annexation of colonies. There was formerly an economic distinction between the colonies and the European peoples — at least, the majority of the latter — the colonies having been drawn into *commodity* exchange but not into capitalist *production*. Imperialism changed this. Imperialism is, among other things, the export of *capital*. Capitalist production is being transplanted to the colonies at an ever increasing rate. They cannot be extricated from dependence on European finance capital. From the military standpoint, as well as from the standpoint of expansion, the separation of the colonies is practicable, as a general rule, only under socialism; under capitalism it is practicable only by way of exception or at the cost of a series of revolts and revolutions both in the colonies and the metropolitan countries.

The greater part of the dependent nations in Europe are capitalistically more developed than the colonies (though not all, the exceptions being the Albanians and many non-Russian peoples in Russia). But it is just this that generates greater resistance to national oppression and annexations! Precisely because of this, the development of capitalism is *more secure* in Europe under any political conditions, including those of separation, than in the colonies.... “There,” the Polish comrades say about the colonies (I, 4), “capitalism is still confronted with the task of developing the productive forces independently ...” This is even more noticeable in Europe: capitalism is undoubtedly developing the productive forces more vigorously, rapidly and independently in Poland, Finland, the Ukraine and Alsace than in India, Turkestan, Egypt and other straightforward colonies. In a commodity-producing society, no independent development, or development of any sort whatsoever, is possible without capital. In

Europe the dependent nations have both *their own* capital and easy access to it on a wide range of terms. The colonies have no capital of *their own*, or none to speak of, and under finance capital no colony can obtain any except on terms of political submission. What then, in face of all this, is the significance of the demand to liberate the colonies immediately and unconditionally? Is it not clear that it is more “utopian” in the vulgar, caricature-“Marxist” sense of the word, “utopian” in the sense in which it is used by the Struves, Lensches, Cunows, with the Polish comrades unfortunately following in their footsteps? Any deviation from the ordinary, the commonplace, as well as everything that is revolutionary, is here labelled “utopianism”. But revolutionary movements of *all* kinds — including national movements — are more possible, more practicable, more stubborn, more conscious and more difficult to defeat in Europe than they are in the colonies.

Socialism, say the Polish comrades (I, 3), “will be able to give the underdeveloped peoples of the colonies *unselfish cultural aid without ruling over them*”. This is perfectly true. But what grounds are there for supposing that a great nation, a great state that goes over to socialism, will not be able to attract a small, oppressed European nation by means of “unselfish cultural aid”? It is the freedom to secede “*granted*” to the colonies by the Polish Social-Democrats that will attract the small but cultured and politically *exacting* oppressed nations of Europe to union with great socialist states, because under socialism a great state will mean so many hours *less* work a day and so much more *pay* a day. The masses of working people, as they liberate themselves from the bourgeois yoke, *will gravitate* irresistibly towards union and integration with the great, advanced socialist nations for the sake of that “cultural aid”, provided yesterday’s oppressors do not infringe on the long-oppressed nations’ highly developed democratic feeling of self-respect, and provided they are granted equality in everything, including state construction, that is, experience in organising “their own” state. Under capitalism this “experience” means war, isolation, seclusion, and the narrow egoism of the small privileged nations (Holland, Switzerland). Under socialism the working people themselves will nowhere consent to seclusion merely for the above-mentioned purely economic motives, while the variety of political forms, freedom to secede, and experience in state organisation — there will be all this until the state in all its forms withers away — will be the basis of a prosperous cultured life and an earnest that the nations will draw closer together and integrate at an ever faster pace.

By setting the colonies aside and contrasting them to Europe the Polish comrades step into a contradiction which immediately brings down the whole of their fallacious argument.

## 7. Marxism or Proudhonism?

By way of an exception, our Polish comrades parry our reference to Marx's attitude towards the separation of Ireland directly and not indirectly. What is their objection? References to Marx's position from 1848 to 1871, they say, are "not of the slightest value". The argument advanced in support of this unusually irate and peremptory assertion is that "at one and the same time" Marx opposed the strivings for independence of the "Czechs, South Slavs, etc."<sup>82</sup>

The argument is so very irate because it is so very unsound. According to the Polish Marxists, Marx was simply a muddlehead who "in one breath" said contradictory things! This is altogether untrue, and it is certainly not Marxism. It is precisely the demand for "concrete" analysis, which our Polish comrades insist on, *but do not themselves apply*, that makes it necessary for us to investigate whether Marx's different attitudes towards different concrete "national" movements did not spring from *one and the same* socialist outlook.

Marx is known to have favoured Polish independence in the interests of *European* democracy in its struggle against the power and influence — or, it might be said, against the omnipotence and predominating reactionary influence — of tsarism. That this attitude was correct was most clearly and practically demonstrated in 1849, when the Russian serf army crushed the national liberation and revolutionary-democratic rebellion in Hungary. From that time until Marx's death, and even later, until 1890, when there was a danger that tsarism, allied with France, would wage a reactionary war against a *non-imperialist* and nationally independent Germany, Engels stood first and foremost for a struggle against tsarism. It was for this reason, and exclusively for this reason, that Marx and Engels were opposed to the national movement of the Czechs and South Slavs. A simple reference to what Marx and Engels wrote in 1848 and 1849 will prove to anyone who is interested in Marxism in real earnest and not merely for the purpose of brushing Marxism aside, that Marx and Engels at that time drew a clear and definite *distinction* between "whole reactionary nations" serving as "Russian outposts" in Europe, and "revolutionary nations" namely, the Germans, Poles and Magyars. This is a fact. And it was indicated *at the time with incontrovertible truth*: in 1848 revolutionary nations fought for liberty, whose principal enemy was tsarism, whereas the Czechs, etc., were in fact reactionary nations, and outposts of tsarism.

What is the lesson to be drawn from this concrete example which must be analysed *concretely* if there is any desire to be true to Marxism? Only this: (1) that the interests of the liberation of a number of big and very big nations in Europe rate higher than the interests of the movement for liberation of small nations; (2) that the demand for democracy must not be considered in isolation but on a European — today we should

say a world — scale.

That is all there is to it. There is no hint of any repudiation of that elementary socialist principle which the Poles forget but to which Marx was *always* faithful — that no nation can be free if it oppresses other nations. If the concrete situation which confronted Marx when tsarism dominated international politics were to repeat itself, for instance, in the form of a few nations starting a socialist revolution (as a bourgeois-democratic revolution was started in Europe in 1848), and *other* nations serving as the chief bulwarks of bourgeois reaction — then we too would have to be in favour of a revolutionary war against the latter, in favour of “crushing” them, in favour of destroying all their outposts, no matter what small-nation movements arose in them. Consequently, instead of rejecting any examples of Marx’s tactics — this would mean professing Marxism while abandoning it in practice — we must analyse them concretely and draw invaluable lessons for the future. The several demands of democracy, including self-determination, are not an absolute, but only a *small part* of the general-democratic (now: general-socialist) *world* movement. In individual concrete cases, the part may contradict the whole; if so, it must be rejected. It is possible that the republican movement in one country may be merely an instrument of the clerical or financial-monarchist intrigues of other countries; if so, we must *not* support this particular, concrete movement, but it would be ridiculous to delete the demand for a republic from the program of international social-democracy on these grounds.

In what way has the concrete situation changed between the periods of 1848-71 and 1898-1916? (I take the most important landmarks of imperialism as a period: from the Spanish-American imperialist war to the European imperialist war.) Tsarism has manifestly and indisputably ceased to be the chief mainstay of reaction, first, because it is supported by international finance capital, particularly French, and, secondly, because of 1905. At that time the system of big national states — the democracies of Europe — was bringing democracy and socialism to the world in spite of tsarism.<sup>a</sup> Marx and Engels did not live to see the period of imperialism. The system now is a handful of imperialist “great” powers (five or six in number), each oppressing other nations; and this oppression is a source for artificially retarding the collapse of capitalism, and artificially supporting opportunism and social-chauvinism in the imperialist nations which dominate the world. At that time, West-European democracy, liberating the big

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<sup>a</sup> Ryazanov has published in Grünberg’s *Archives of the History of Socialism* (1916, I) a very interesting article by Engels on the Polish question, written in 1866. Engels emphasises that the proletariat must recognise the political independence and “self-determination” (“right to dispose of itself” [These words are in English in the original.— *Ed.*]) of the great, major nations of Europe, and points to the absurdity of the “principle of nationalities” (particularly in its

nations, was opposed to tsarism, which used certain small-nation movements for reactionary ends. Today, the socialist proletariat, split into chauvinists, “social-imperialists”, on the one hand, and revolutionaries, on the other, is confronted by an *alliance* of tsarist imperialism and advanced capitalist, European, imperialism, which is based on their common oppression of a number of nations.

Such are the concrete changes that have taken place in the situation, and it is just these that the Polish Social-Democrats ignore, in spite of their promise to be concrete! Hence the concrete change in the *application* of the same socialist principles: *formerly* the main thing was to fight against tsarism” (and against certain small-nation movements that *it* was using for undemocratic ends), and for the greater revolutionary peoples of the West; the main thing *today* is to stand against the united, aligned front of the imperialist powers, the imperialist bourgeoisie and the social-imperialists, and *for* the utilisation of *all* national movements against imperialism for the purposes of the socialist revolution. The *more purely* proletarian the struggle against the general imperialist front now is, the more vital, obviously, is the internationalist principle: “No nation can be free if it oppresses other nations.”

*In the name* of their doctrinaire concept of social revolution, the Proudhonists ignored the international role of Poland and brushed aside the national movements. Equally doctrinaire is the attitude of the Polish Social-Democrats, who *break up* the international front of struggle against the social-imperialists, and (objectively) help the latter by their vacillations on the question of annexations. For it is precisely the international front of proletarian struggle that has changed in relation to the concrete position of the small nations: at that time (1848-71) the small nations were important as the potential allies either of “Western democracy” and the revolutionary nations, or of tsarism; now (1898-1914) that is no longer so; today they are important as one of the nutritive media of the parasitism and, consequently, the social-imperialism of the “dominant nations”. The important thing is not whether one-fiftieth or one-hundredth of the small nations are liberated before the socialist revolution, but the fact that in the epoch of imperialism, owing to objective causes, the proletariat has been split into two international camps, one of which has been corrupted by the crumbs that fall from the table of the dominant-nation bourgeoisie — obtained, among other things, from the double or triple exploitation of small nations — while the other cannot liberate itself

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Bonapartist application), i.e., of placing any small nation on the same level as these big ones. “And as to Russia”, says Engels, “she could only be mentioned as the detainer of an immense amount of stolen property [i.e., oppressed nations] which would have to be disgorged on the day of reckoning.”<sup>83</sup> Both Bonapartism and tsarism *utilise* the small-nation movements for *their own* benefit, *against* European democracy.

without liberating the small nations, without educating the masses in an anti-chauvinist, i.e., anti-annexationist, i.e., “self-determinationist”, spirit.

This, the most important aspect of the question, is ignored by our Polish comrades, who do *not* view things from the key position in the epoch of imperialism, the standpoint of the division of the international proletariat into two camps.

Here are some other concrete examples of their Proudhonism: (1) their attitude to the Irish rebellion of 1916, of which later; (2) the declaration in the theses (II, 3, end of §3) that the slogan of socialist revolution “must not be overshadowed by anything”. The idea that the slogan of socialist revolution can be “overshadowed” by *linking* it up with a consistently revolutionary position on all questions, including the national question, is certainly profoundly anti-Marxist.

The Polish Social-Democrats consider our program “national-reformist”. Compare these two practical proposals: (1) for autonomy (Polish theses, III, 4), and (2) for freedom to secede. It is in this, and in this alone, that our programs differ! And is it not clear that it is precisely the first program that is reformist and not the second? A reformist change is one which leaves intact the foundations of the power of the ruling class and is merely a concession leaving its power unimpaired. A revolutionary change undermines the foundations of power. A reformist national program does *not* abolish *all* the privileges of the ruling nation; it does *not* establish complete equality; it does *not* abolish national oppression *in all its forms*. An “autonomous” nation does not enjoy rights equal to those of the “ruling” nation; our Polish comrades could not have failed to notice this had they not (like our old Economists) obstinately avoided making an analysis of *political* concepts and categories. Until 1905 autonomous Norway, as a part of Sweden, enjoyed the widest autonomy, but she was not Sweden’s equal. Only by her free secession was her equality manifested *in practice* and proved (and let us add in parenthesis that it was this free secession that created the basis for a more intimate and more democratic association, founded on equality of rights). As long as Norway was merely autonomous, the Swedish aristocracy had *one* additional privilege; and secession did not “mitigate” this privilege (the essence of reformism lies in *mitigating* an evil and not in destroying it), but *eliminated it altogether* (the principal criterion of the revolutionary character of a program).

Incidentally, autonomy, as a reform, differs in principle from freedom to secede, as a revolutionary measure. This is unquestionable. But as everyone knows, in practice a reform is often merely a step towards revolution. It is autonomy that enables a nation forcibly retained within the boundaries of a given state to crystallise into a nation, to gather, assess and organise its forces, and to select the most opportune moment for a *declaration* ... in the “Norwegian” spirit: We, the autonomous diet of

such-and-such a nation, or of such-and-such a territory, declare that the Emperor of all the Russias has ceased to be King of Poland, etc. The usual “objection” to this is that such questions are decided by wars and not by declarations. True: in the vast majority of cases they are decided by wars (just as questions of the form of government of big states are decided, in the vast majority of cases, only by wars and revolutions). However, it would do no harm to reflect whether *such* an “objection” to the political program of a revolutionary party is logical. Are we opposed to wars and revolutions *for* what is just and beneficial to the proletariat, *for* democracy and socialism?

“But we cannot be in favour of a war between great nations, in favour of the slaughter of 20 million people for the sake of the problematical liberation of a small nation with a population of perhaps 10 or 20 millions!” Of course not! And it does *not* mean that we throw complete national equality out of our program; it means that the democratic interests of *one* country must be subordinated to the democratic interests of *several and all* countries. Let us assume that between two great monarchies there is a little monarchy whose kingly is “bound” by blood and other ties to the monarchs of both neighbouring countries. Let us further assume that the declaration of a republic in the little country and the expulsion of *its* monarch would in practice lead to a war between the two neighbouring big countries for the restoration of that or another monarch in the little country. There is no doubt that all international social-democracy, as well as the really internationalist section of social-democracy in the little country, *would be against substituting a republic for the monarchy* in this case. The substitution of a republic for a monarchy is not an absolute, but one of the democratic demands, subordinate to the interests of democracy, (and still more, of course, to those of the socialist proletariat) as a whole. A case like this would in all probability not give rise to the slightest disagreement among social-democrats in any country. But if any social-democrat were to propose on *these* grounds that the demand for a republic be deleted altogether from the program of international social-democracy, he would certainly be regarded as quite mad. He would be told that after all one must not forget the elementary logical difference between the *general* and the *particular*.

This example brings us, from a somewhat different angle, to the question of the *internationalist* education of the working class. Can such education — on the necessity and urgent importance of which differences of opinion among the Zimmerwald Left are inconceivable — be *concretely identical* in great, oppressor nations and in small, oppressed nations, in annexing nations and in annexed nations?

Obviously not. The way to the common goal — complete equality, the closest association and the eventual *amalgamation of all* nations — obviously runs along different routes in each concrete case, as, let us say, the way to a point in the centre of

this page runs left from one edge and right, from the opposite edge. If a social-democrat from a great, oppressing, annexing nation, while advocating the amalgamation of nations in general, were for one moment to forget that “his” Nicholas II, “his” Wilhelm, George, Poincaré, etc., *also stand for amalgamation* with small nations (by means of annexations) — Nicholas II for “amalgamation” with Galicia, Wilhelm II for “amalgamation” with Belgium, etc. — such a social-democrat would be a ridiculous doctrinaire in theory and an abettor of imperialism in practice.

In the internationalist education of the workers of the oppressor countries, emphasis must necessarily be laid on their advocating freedom for the oppressed countries to secede and their fighting for it. Without this there can be *no* internationalism. It is our right and duty to treat every social-democrat of an oppressor nation who *fails* to conduct such propaganda as a scoundrel and an imperialist. This is an absolute demand, even where the *chance* of secession being possible and “practicable” before the introduction of socialism is only one in a thousand.

It is our duty to teach the workers to be “indifferent” to national distinctions. There is no doubt about that. But it must not be the indifference of the *annexationists*. A member of an oppressor nation must be “indifferent” to whether small nations belong to *his* state *or to a neighbouring* state, or to themselves, according to where their sympathies lie: without such “indifference” he is *not* a social-democrat. To be an internationalist social-democrat one must *not* think only of one’s own nation, but place *above it* the interests of all nations, their common liberty and equality. Everyone accepts this in “theory” but displays an annexationist indifference in practice. There is the root of the evil.

On the other hand, a social-democrat from a small nation must emphasise in his agitation the *second* word of our general formula: “voluntary *integration*” of nations. He may, without failing in his duties as an internationalist, be in favour of *both* the political independence of his nation and its integration with the neighbouring state of X, Y, Z, etc. But in all cases he must fight *against* small-nation narrow-mindedness, seclusion and isolation, consider the whole and the general, subordinate the particular to the general interest.

People who have not gone into the question thoroughly think that it is “contradictory” for the social-democrats of oppressor nations to insist on the “freedom to *secede*”, while social-democrats of oppressed nations insist on the “freedom to *integrate*”. However, a little reflection will show that there is not, and cannot be, any *other* road to internationalism and the amalgamation of nations, any other road *from the given* situation to this goal.

And now we come to the *specific* position of Dutch and Polish Social-Democrats.

## 8. The specific & the general in the position of the Dutch & Polish social-democrat internationalists

There is not the slightest doubt that the Dutch and Polish Marxists who oppose self-determination are among the best revolutionary and internationalist elements in international social-democracy. How *can* it be then that their theoretical arguments, as we have seen, are a mass of errors? There is not a single correct general argument, nothing but imperialist Economism!

It is not at all due to the especially bad subjective qualities of the Dutch and Polish comrades but to the *specific* objective conditions in their countries. Both countries are: (1) small and helpless in the present-day “system” of great powers; (2) both are geographically situated between tremendously powerful imperialist plunderers engaged in the most bitter rivalry with each other (Britain and Germany; Germany and Russia); (3) in both there are terribly strong memories and traditions of the times when they *themselves* were great powers: Holland was once a colonial power greater than England, Poland was more cultured and was a stronger great power than Russia and Prussia; (4) to this day both retain their privileges consisting in the oppression of other peoples: the Dutch bourgeois owns the very wealthy Dutch East Indies; the Polish landed proprietor oppresses the Ukrainian and Byelorussian peasant; the Polish bourgeois, the Jew, etc.

The particularity comprised in the combination of these four points is not to be found in Ireland, Portugal (she was at one time annexed to Spain), Alsace, Norway, Finland, the Ukraine, the Lettish and Byelorussian territories or many others. And it is this very peculiarity that is the *real essence* of the matter! When the Dutch and Polish social-democrats reason against self-determination, using *general* arguments, i.e., those that concern imperialism in general, socialism in general, democracy in general, national oppression in general, we may truly say that they wallow in mistakes. But one has only to discard this obviously erroneous *shell* of general arguments and examine the *essence* of the question from the standpoint of the *specific* conditions obtaining in Holland and Poland for their particular position to become *comprehensible* and quite legitimate. It may be said, without any fear of sounding paradoxical, that when the Dutch and Polish Marxists battle against self-determination they do not say quite what they mean, or, to put it another way, mean quite what they say.<sup>a</sup>

We have already quoted one example in our theses. Gorter is against the self-determination of *his own* country but *in favour* of self-determination for the Dutch

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<sup>a</sup> Let us recall that all the Polish Social-Democrats *recognised* self-determination *in general* in their Zimmerwald declaration, although their formulation was slightly different.

East Indies, oppressed as they are by “his” nation! Is it any wonder that we see in him a more sincere internationalist and a fellow-thinker who is closer to us than those who recognise self-determination as verbally and hypocritically as Kautsky in Germany, and Trotsky and Martov in Russia? The general and fundamental principles of Marxism undoubtedly imply the duty to struggle for the freedom to secede for nations that are oppressed by “one’s own” nation, but they certainly do not require the independence specifically of Holland to be made a matter of paramount importance — Holland, which suffers most from her narrow, callous, selfish and stultifying seclusion: let the whole world burn, we stand aside from it all, “we” are satisfied with our old spoils and the rich “leftovers”, the Indies, “we” are not concerned with anything else!

Here is another example. Karl Radek, a Polish Social-Democrat, who has done particularly great service by his determined struggle for internationalism in German Social-Democracy since the outbreak of war, made a furious attack on self-determination in an article entitled “The Right of Nations to Self-Determination” (*Lichtstrahlen*<sup>84</sup> — a Left Radical monthly prohibited by the Prussian censor, edited by J. Borchardt — 1915, December 5, Third Year of Publication, No. 3). He quotes, incidentally, *only* Dutch and Polish authorities in his support and propounds, amongst others, the argument that self-determination fosters the idea that “it is allegedly the duty of Social-Democrats to support any struggle for independence”.

From the standpoint of *general* theory this argument is outrageous, because it is clearly illogical: first, no democratic demand can fail to give rise to abuses, unless the specific is subordinated to the general; we are not obliged to support either “any” struggle for independence or “any” republican or anti-clerical movement. Secondly, *no* formula for the struggle against national oppression can fail to suffer from the *same* “shortcoming”. Radek himself in *Berner Tagwacht* used the formula (1915, Issue 253): “Against old and new annexations.” Any Polish nationalist will legitimately “deduce” from this formula: “Poland is an annexment, I am against annexations, i.e., I am for the independence of Poland.” Or I recall Rosa Luxemburg saying in an article written in 1908<sup>85</sup> that the formula: “against national oppression” was quite adequate. But any Polish nationalist would say — *and quite justly* — that annexation is *one* of the forms of national oppression, *consequently*, etc.

However, take Poland’s *specific* conditions in place of these general arguments: her independence *today* is “impracticable” without wars or revolutions. To be in favour of an all-European war merely for the sake of restoring Poland is to be a nationalist of the worst sort, and to place the interests of a small number of Poles above those of the hundreds of millions of people who suffer from war. Such, indeed, are the “Fracy” (the right wing of the PSP<sup>86</sup>) who are socialists only in word, and compared with whom the

Polish Social-Democrats are a thousand times right. To raise the question of Poland's independence *today*, with the *existing* alignment of the *neighbouring* imperialist powers, is really to run after a will-o'-the-wisp, plunge into narrow-minded nationalism and forget the necessary premise of an all-European or at least a Russian and a German revolution. To have put forward in 1908-14 freedom of coalition in Russia as an independent slogan would also have meant running after a will-o'-the-wisp, and would, objectively, have helped the Stolypin labour party (now the Potresov-Gvozdyov party, which, incidentally, is the same thing). But it would be madness to remove freedom of coalition in general from the program of social-democracy!

A third and perhaps, the most important example. We read in the Polish theses (III, end of §2) that the idea of an independent Polish buffer state is opposed on the grounds that it is an "inane utopia of small impotent groups. Put into effect, it would mean the creation of a tiny fragment of a Polish state that would be a military colony of one or another group of great powers, a plaything of their military or economic interests, an area exploited by foreign capital, and a battlefield in future wars". This is all very *true* when used as an argument *against* the slogan of Polish independence today, because even a revolution in Poland alone would change nothing and would only divert the attention of the masses in Poland from the *main thing* — the connection between their struggle and that of the Russian and German proletariat. It is not a paradox but a fact that today the Polish proletariat as such can help the cause of socialism and freedom, *including the freedom of Poland*, only by *joint* struggle with the proletariat of the neighbouring countries, against the *narrow* Polish nationalists. The great historical service rendered by the Polish Social-Democrats in the struggle against the nationalists cannot possibly be denied.

But these same arguments, which are true from the standpoint of Poland's *specific* conditions in the *present* epoch, are manifestly untrue in the *general* form in which they are presented. So long as there are wars, Poland will always remain a battlefield in wars between Germany and Russia, but this is no argument against greater political liberty (and, therefore, against political independence) in the periods between wars. The same applies to the arguments about exploitation by foreign capital and Poland's role as a plaything of foreign interests. The Polish Social-Democrats cannot, at the moment, raise the slogan of Poland's independence, for the Poles, as proletarian internationalists, can do *nothing* about it without stooping, like the "Fracy", to humble servitude to *one* of the imperialist monarchies. But it is *not* indifferent to the Russian and German workers whether Poland is independent, or they take part in annexing her (and that would mean educating the Russian and German workers and peasants in the basest turpitude and their consent to play the part of executioner of other peoples).

The situation is, indeed, bewildering, but there is a way out in which *all* participants would remain internationalists: the Russian and German Social-Democrats by demanding for Poland unconditional “*freedom to secede*”; the Polish Social-Democrats by working for the unity of the proletarian struggle in both small and big countries without putting forward the slogan of Polish independence for the given epoch or the given period.

## 9. Engels’s letter to Kautsky

In his pamphlet *Socialism and Colonial Politics* (Berlin, 1907), Kautsky, who was then still a Marxist, published a letter written to him by Engels, dated September 12, 1882, which is extremely interesting in relation to the question under discussion. Here is the principal part of the letter.

In my opinion the colonies proper, i.e., the countries occupied by a European population — Canada, the Cape, Australia — will all become independent; on the other hand, the countries inhabited by a native population, which are simply subjugated — India, Algeria, the Dutch, Portuguese and Spanish possessions — must be taken over for the time being by the proletariat and led as rapidly as possible towards independence. How this process will develop is difficult to say. India will perhaps, indeed very probably, make a revolution, and as a proletariat in process of self-emancipation cannot conduct any colonial wars, it would have to be allowed to run its course; it would not pass off without all sorts of destruction, of course, but that sort of thing is inseparable from all revolutions. The same might also take place elsewhere, e.g., in Algeria and Egypt, and would certainly be the best thing *for us*. We shall have enough to do at home. Once Europe is reorganised, and North America, that will furnish such colossal power and such an example that the semi-civilised countries will of themselves follow in their wake; economic needs, if anything, will see to that. But as to what social and political phases these countries will then have to pass through before they likewise arrive at socialist organisation, I think we today can advance only rather idle hypotheses. One thing alone is certain: *the victorious proletariat can force no blessings of any kind upon any foreign nation without undermining its own victory by so doing*. Which of course by no means excludes defensive wars of various kinds ...<sup>87</sup>

Engels does not at all suppose that the “economic” alone will directly remove all difficulties. An economic revolution will be a stimulus to *all* peoples to *strive* for socialism; but at the same time revolutions — against the socialist state — and wars are possible. Politics will inevitably adapt themselves to the economy, but not immediately or smoothly, not simply, not directly. Engels mentions as “certain” only one, absolutely internationalist, principle, and this he applies to *all* “foreign nations”, i.e., not to colonial

nations only: to force blessings upon them would mean to undermine the victory of the proletariat.

Just because the proletariat has carried out a social revolution it will not become holy and immune from errors and weaknesses. But it will be inevitably led to realise this truth by possible errors (and selfish interest — attempts to saddle others).

We of the Zimmerwald Left all hold the same conviction as Kautsky, for example, held before his desertion of Marxism for the defence of chauvinism in 1914, namely, that the socialist revolution is quite possible *in the very near future* — “any day”, as Kautsky himself once put it. National antipathies will not disappear so quickly: the hatred — and perfectly legitimate hatred — of an oppressed nation for its oppressor *will last* for a while; it will evaporate only *after* the victory of socialism and *after* the final establishment of completely democratic relations between nations. If we are to be faithful to socialism we must even now educate the masses in the spirit of internationalism, which is impossible in oppressor nations without advocating freedom of secession for oppressed nations.

## 10. The Irish rebellion of 1916

Our theses were written before the outbreak of this rebellion, which must be the touchstone of our theoretical views.

The views of the opponents of self-determination lead to the conclusion that the vitality of small nations oppressed by imperialism has already been sapped, that they cannot play any role against imperialism, that support of their purely national aspirations will lead to nothing, etc. The imperialist war of 1914-16 has provided *facts* which refute such conclusions.

The war proved to be an epoch of crisis for the West-European nations, and for imperialism as a whole. Every crisis discards the conventionalities, tears away the outer wrappings, sweeps away the obsolete and reveals the underlying springs and forces. What has it revealed from the standpoint of the movement of oppressed nations? In the colonies there have been a number of attempts at rebellion, which the oppressor nations, naturally, did all they could to hide by means of a military censorship. Nevertheless, it is known that in Singapore the British brutally suppressed a mutiny among their Indian troops; that there were attempts at rebellion in French Annam (see *Nashe Slovo*) and in the German Cameroons (see the Junius pamphlet); that in Europe, on the one hand, there was a rebellion in Ireland, which the “freedom-loving” English, who did not dare to extend conscription to Ireland, suppressed by executions, and, on the other, the Austrian government passed the death sentence on the deputies of the Czech diet “for treason”, and shot whole Czech regiments for the same “crime”.

This list is, of course, far from complete. Nevertheless, it proves that, *owing* to the crisis of imperialism, the flames of national revolt have flared up *both* in the colonies and in Europe, and that national sympathies and antipathies have manifested themselves in spite of the draconian threats and measures of repression. All this before the crisis of imperialism hit its peak; the power of the imperialist bourgeoisie was yet to be undermined (this may be brought about by a war of “attrition” but has not yet happened) and the proletarian movements in the imperialist countries were still very feeble. What will happen when the war has caused complete exhaustion, or when, in one state at least, the power of the bourgeoisie has been shaken under the blows of proletarian struggle, as that of tsarism in 1905?

On May 9, 1916, there appeared in *Berner Tagwacht*, the organ of the Zimmerwald group, including some of the leftists, an article on the Irish rebellion entitled “Their Song Is Over” and signed with the initials K.R.<sup>88</sup> It described the Irish rebellion as being nothing more nor less than a “putsch”, for, as the author argued, “the Irish question was an agrarian one”, the peasants had been pacified by reforms, and the nationalist movement remained only a “purely urban, petty-bourgeois movement, which, notwithstanding the sensation it caused, had not much social backing”.

It is not surprising that this monstrously doctrinaire and pedantic assessment coincided with that of a Russian national-liberal Cadet, Mr. A. Kulisher (*Rech*<sup>89</sup> No. 102, April 15, 1916), who also labelled the rebellion “the Dublin putsch”.

It is to be hoped that, in accordance with the adage, “it’s an ill wind that blows nobody any good”, many comrades, who were not aware of the morass they were sinking into by repudiating “self-determination” and by treating the national movements of small nations with disdain, will have their eyes opened by the “accidental” coincidence of opinion held by a social-democrat and a representative of the imperialist bourgeoisie!!

The term “putsch”, in its scientific sense, may be employed only when the attempt at insurrection has revealed nothing but a circle of conspirators or stupid maniacs, and has aroused no sympathy among the masses. The centuries-old Irish national movement, having passed through various stages and combinations of class interest, manifested itself, in particular, in a mass Irish National Congress in America (*Vorwärts*, March 20, 1916) which called for Irish independence; it also manifested itself in street fighting conducted by a section of the urban petty bourgeoisie *and a section of the workers* after a long period of mass agitation, demonstrations, suppression of newspapers, etc. Whoever calls such a rebellion a “putsch” is either a hardened reactionary, or a doctrinaire hopelessly incapable of envisaging a social revolution as a living phenomenon.

To imagine that social revolution is *conceivable* without revolts by small nations in

the colonies and in Europe, without revolutionary outbursts by a section of the petty bourgeoisie *with all its prejudices*, without a movement of the politically non-conscious proletarian and semi-proletarian masses against oppression by the landowners, the church, and the monarchy, against national oppression, etc. — to imagine all this is to *repudiate social revolution*. So one army lines up in one place and says, “We are for socialism”, and another, somewhere else and says, “We are for imperialism”, and that will be a social revolution! Only those who hold such a ridiculously pedantic view could vilify the Irish rebellion by calling it a “putsch”.

Whoever expects a “pure” social revolution will *never* live to see it. Such a person pays lip-service to revolution without understanding what revolution is.

The Russian Revolution of 1905 was a bourgeois-democratic revolution. It consisted of a series of battles in which *all* the discontented classes, groups and elements of the population participated. Among these there were masses imbued with the crudest prejudices, with the vaguest and most fantastic aims of struggle; there were small groups which accepted Japanese money, there were speculators and adventurers, etc. But *objectively*, the mass movement was breaking the back of tsarism and paving the way for democracy; for this reason the class-conscious workers led it.

The socialist revolution in Europe *cannot be* anything other than an outburst of mass struggle on the part of all and sundry oppressed and discontented elements. Inevitably, sections of the petty bourgeoisie and of the backward workers will participate in it — without such participation, *mass struggle is impossible*, without it *no* revolution is possible — and just as inevitably will they bring into the movement their prejudices, their reactionary fantasies, their weaknesses and errors. But *objectively* they will attack *capital*, and the class-conscious vanguard of the revolution, the advanced proletariat, expressing this objective truth of a variegated and discordant, motley and outwardly fragmented, mass struggle, will be able to unite and direct it, capture power, seize the banks, expropriate the trusts which all hate (though for different reasons!), and introduce other dictatorial measures which in their totality will amount to the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the victory of socialism, which, however, will by no means immediately “purge” itself of petty-bourgeois slag.

Social-democracy, we read in the Polish theses (I, 4) “must utilise the struggle of the young colonial bourgeoisie against European imperialism *in order to sharpen the revolutionary crisis in Europe*”. (Authors’ italics.)

Is it not clear that it is least of all permissible to contrast Europe to the colonies in *this* respect? The struggle of the oppressed nations *in Europe*, a struggle capable of going all the way to insurrection and street fighting, capable of breaking down the iron discipline of the army and martial law, will “sharpen the revolutionary crisis in Europe”

to an infinitely greater degree than a much more developed rebellion in a remote colony. A blow delivered against the power of the English imperialist bourgeoisie by a rebellion in Ireland is a hundred times more significant politically than a blow of equal force delivered in Asia or in Africa.

The French chauvinist press recently reported the publication in Belgium of the 80th issue of an illegal journal, *Free Belgium*.<sup>90</sup> Of course, the chauvinist press of France very often lies, but this piece of news seems to be true. Whereas chauvinist and Kautskyite German Social-Democracy has failed to establish a free press for itself during the two years of war, and has meekly borne the yoke of military censorship (only the Left Radical elements, to their credit be it said, have published pamphlets and manifestos, in spite of the censorship) — an oppressed civilised nation has reacted to a military oppression unparalleled in ferocity by establishing an organ of revolutionary protest! The dialectics of history are such that small nations, powerless as an *independent* factor in the struggle against imperialism, play a part as one of the ferments, one of the bacilli, which help the *real* anti-imperialist force, the socialist proletariat, to make its appearance on the scene.

The general staffs in the current war are doing their utmost to utilise any national and revolutionary movement in the enemy camp: the Germans utilise the Irish rebellion, the French — the Czech movement, etc. They are acting quite correctly from their own point of view. A serious war would not be treated seriously if advantage were not taken of the enemy's slightest weakness and if every opportunity that presented itself were not seized upon, the more so since it is impossible to know beforehand at what moment, where, and with what force some powder magazine will "explode". We would be very poor revolutionaries if, in the proletariat's great war of liberation for socialism, we did not know how to utilise *every* popular movement against *every single* disaster imperialism brings in order to intensify and extend the crisis. If we were, on the one hand, to repeat in a thousand keys the declaration that we are "opposed" to all national oppression and, on the other, to describe the heroic revolt of the most mobile and enlightened section of certain classes in an oppressed nation against its oppressors as a "putsch", we should be sinking to the same level of stupidity as the Kautskyites.

It is the misfortune of the Irish that they rose prematurely, before the European revolt of the proletariat had *had time* to mature. Capitalism is not so harmoniously built that the various sources of rebellion can immediately merge of their own accord, without reverses and defeats. On the other hand, the very fact that revolts do break out at different times, in different places, and are of different kinds, guarantees wide scope and depth to the general movement; but it is only in premature, individual, sporadic and therefore unsuccessful, revolutionary movements that the masses gain

experience, acquire knowledge, gather strength, and get to know their real leaders, the socialist proletarians, and in this way prepare for the general onslaught, just as certain strikes, demonstrations, local and national, mutinies in the army, outbreaks among the peasantry, etc., prepared the way for the general onslaught in 1905.

## 11. Conclusion

Contrary to the erroneous assertions of the Polish Social-Democrats, the demand for the self-determination of nations has played no less a role in our party agitation than, for example, the arming of the people, the separation of the church from the state, the election of civil servants by the people and other points the philistines have called “utopian”. On the contrary, the strengthening of the national movements after 1905 naturally prompted more vigorous agitation by our party, including a number of articles in 1912-13, and the resolution of our party in 1913 giving a precise “anti-Kautskian” definition (i.e., one that does not tolerate purely verbal “recognition”) of the *content* of the point.

It will not do to overlook a fact which was revealed at that early date: opportunists of various nationalities, the Ukrainian Yurkevich, the Bundist Liebman, Semkovsky, the Russian myrmidon of Potresov and Co., all spoke *in favour* of Rosa Luxemburg’s arguments *against* self-determination! What for Rosa Luxemburg, the Polish Social-Democrat, had been merely an incorrect theoretical generalisation of the *specific* conditions of the movement in Poland, became *objective* opportunist support for Great-Russian imperialism when actually applied to more extensive circumstances, to conditions obtaining in a big state instead of a small one, when applied on an international scale instead of the narrow Polish scale. The history of *trends* in political thought (as distinct from the views of individuals) has proved the correctness of our program.

Outspoken social-imperialists, such as Lensch, still rail both against self-determination and the renunciation of annexations. As for the Kautskyites, they hypocritically recognise self-determination — Trotsky and Martov are going the same way here in Russia. *Both of them*, like Kautsky, say they favour self-determination. What happens in practice? Take Trotsky’s articles “The Nation and the Economy” in *Nashe Slovo*, and you will find his usual eclecticism: on the one hand, the economy unites nations and, on the other, national oppression divides them. The conclusion? The conclusion is that the prevailing hypocrisy remains unexposed, agitation is dull and does not touch upon what is most important, basic, significant and closely connected with practice — one’s attitude to the nation that is oppressed by “one’s own” nation. Martov and other secretaries abroad simply preferred to forget — a profitable lapse

of memory! — the struggle of their colleague and fellow-member Semkovsky against self-determination. In the legal press of the Gvozdyovites (*Nash Golos*) Martov spoke *in favour* of self-determination, pointing out the indisputable truth that during the imperialist war it does not *yet* imply participation, etc., but evading the main thing — he also evades it in the illegal, free press! — which is that *even in peacetime* Russia set a world record for the oppression of nations with an imperialism that is much more crude, medieval, economically backward and militarily bureaucratic. The Russian Social-Democrat who “recognises” the self-determination of nations more or less as it is recognised by Messrs. Plekhanov, Potresov and Co., that is, without bothering to fight for the freedom of secession for nations oppressed by tsarism, is *in fact* an imperialist and a lackey of tsarism.

No matter what the subjective “good” intentions of Trotsky and Martov may be, their evasiveness objectively supports Russian social-imperialism. The epoch of imperialism has turned all the “great” powers into the oppressors of a number of nations, and the development of imperialism will inevitably lead to a more definite division of trends in this question in international Social Democracy as well. ■

## Reply to P. Kievsky<sup>91</sup>

Like every crisis in the life of individuals or in the history of nations, war oppresses and breaks some, steels and enlightens others.

The truth of that is making itself felt in social-democratic thinking on the war and in connection with the war. It is one thing to give serious thought to the causes and significance of an imperialist war that grows out of highly developed capitalism, social-democratic tactics in connection with such a war, the causes of the crisis within the social-democratic movement, and so on. But it is quite another to allow the war to *oppress* your thinking, to stop thinking and analysing *under the weight* of the terrible impressions and tormenting consequences or features of the war.

One such form of *oppression* or *repression* of human thinking caused by the war is the contemptuous attitude of imperialist economism towards *democracy*. P. Kievsky does not notice that running like a red thread through all his arguments is this war-inspired oppression, this fear, this refusal to analyse. What point is there in discussing defence of the fatherland when we are in the midst of such a terrible holocaust? What point is there in discussing nations' rights when outright strangulation is everywhere the rule? Self-determination and "independence" of nations — but look what they have done to "independent" Greece! What is the use of talking and thinking of "rights", when rights are everywhere being trampled upon in the interests of the militarists! What sense is there in talking and thinking of a republic, when there is absolutely no difference whatsoever between the most democratic republics and the most reactionary monarchies, when the war has obliterated every trace of difference!

Kievsky is very angry when told that he has given way to fear, to the extent of rejecting democracy in general. He is angry and objects: I am not against democracy, only against *one* democratic demand, which I consider "bad". But though Kievsky is offended, and though he "*assures*" us (and himself as well, perhaps) that he is not at all "against" democracy, his *arguments* — or, more correctly, the endless errors in his arguments — *prove* the very opposite.

Defence of the fatherland is a lie in an imperialist war, but not in a democratic and revolutionary war. All talk of “rights” seems absurd during a war, because *every* war replaces rights by direct and outright violence. But that should not lead us to forget that history has known in the past (and very likely will know, must know, in the future) wars (democratic and revolutionary wars) which, while replacing every kind of “right”, every kind of democracy, by violence during the war, nevertheless, in their social content and implications, *served* the cause of democracy, and *consequently* socialism. The example of Greece, it would seem, “refutes” all national self-determination. But if you stop to think, analyse and weigh matters, and do not allow yourself to be deafened by the sound of words or frightened and oppressed by the nightmarish impressions of the war, then this example is no more serious or convincing than ridiculing the republican system because the “democratic” republics, the most democratic — not only France, but also the United States, Portugal and Switzerland — have already introduced or are introducing, in the course of this war, exactly the same kind of militarist arbitrariness that exists in Russia.

That imperialist war obliterates the difference between republic and monarchy is a fact. But to therefore reject the republic, or even be contemptuous towards it, is to allow oneself to be frightened by the war, and one’s thinking to be *oppressed* by its horrors. That is the mentality of many supporters of the “disarmament” slogan (Roland-Holst, the younger element in Switzerland, the Scandinavian “lefts”<sup>92</sup> and others). What, they imply, is the use of discussing revolutionary utilisation of the army or a militia when there is no difference in this war between a republican militia and a monarchist standing army, and when militarism is *everywhere* doing its horrible work?

That is all *one* trend of thought, *one and the same* theoretical and practical political error Kievsky unwittingly makes at every step. He *thinks* he is arguing only against self-determination, he *wants* to argue only against self-determination, but the *result* — against his will and conscience, and that is the curious thing! — is that he has adduced *not a single* argument which could not be just as well applied to democracy in general!

The real source of all his curious logical errors and confusion — and this applies not only to self-determination, but also to defence of the fatherland, divorce, “rights” in general — lies in the *oppression* of his thinking by the war, which makes him completely distort the Marxist position on democracy.

Imperialism is highly developed capitalism; imperialism is progressive; imperialism *is* the negation of democracy” hence”, democracy is “unattainable” under capitalism. Imperialist war is a flagrant violation of all democracy, whether in backward monarchies or progressive republics “hence”, there is no point in talking of “rights” (i.e., democracy!). The “only” thing that can be “opposed” to imperialist war is socialism; socialism alone

is “the way out”; “hence”, to advance democratic slogans in our minimum program, i.e., under capitalism, is a deception or an illusion, befuddlement or postponement, etc., of the slogan of socialist revolution.

Though Kievsky does not realise it, that is the real source of all his mishaps. That is his *basic* logical error which, precisely because it is basic and is not realised by the author, “*explodes*” at every step like a punctured bicycle tire. It “bursts out” now on the question of defending the fatherland, now on the question of divorce, now in the phrase about “rights”, in this remarkable phrase (remarkable for its utter contempt for “rights” and its utter failure to understand the issue): we shall discuss *not* rights, *but* the destruction of age-old slavery!

To say that is to show a lack of understanding of the relationship between capitalism and democracy, between socialism and democracy.

Capitalism in general, and imperialism in particular, turn democracy into an illusion — though at the same time capitalism engenders democratic aspirations in the masses, creates democratic institutions, aggravates the antagonism between imperialism’s denial of democracy and the mass striving for democracy. Capitalism and imperialism can be overthrown only by economic revolution. They cannot be overthrown by democratic transformations, even the most “ideal”. But a proletariat not schooled in the struggle for democracy is incapable of performing an economic revolution. Capitalism cannot be vanquished without *taking over the banks*, without repealing *private ownership* of the means of production. These revolutionary measures, however, cannot be implemented without organising the entire people for democratic administration of the means of production captured from the bourgeoisie, without enlisting the entire mass of the working people, the proletarians, semi-proletarians and small peasants, for the democratic organisation of their ranks, their forces, their participation in state affairs. Imperialist war may be said to be a triple negation of democracy (a) every war replaces “rights” by violence; (b) imperialism as such is the negation of democracy; (c) imperialist war fully equates the republic with the monarchy), but the awakening and growth of socialist revolt against imperialism are *indissolubly* linked with the growth of democratic resistance and unrest. Socialism leads to the withering away of *every* state, consequently also of every democracy, but socialism can be implemented only *through* the dictatorship of the proletariat, which combines violence against the bourgeoisie, i.e., the minority of the population, with *full* development of democracy, i.e., the genuinely equal and genuinely universal participation of the *entire* mass of the population in all *state* affairs and in all the complex problems of abolishing capitalism.

It is in these “contradictions” that Kievsky, having forgotten the Marxist teaching on democracy, got himself confused. Figuratively speaking, the war has so oppressed

his thinking that he uses the agitational slogan “break out of imperialism” to replace all thinking, just as the cry “get out of the colonies” is used to replace analysis of what, properly speaking, is the *meaning* — economically and politically — of the civilised nations “getting out of the colonies”.

The Marxist solution of the problem of democracy is for the proletariat to *utilise all* democratic institutions and aspirations in its class struggle against the bourgeoisie in order to prepare for its overthrow and assure its own victory. Such utilisation is no easy task. To the economists, Tolstoyans, etc., it often seems an unpardonable concession to “bourgeois” and opportunist views, just as to Kievsky defence of national self-determination “in the epoch of finance capital” seems an unpardonable concession to bourgeois views. Marxism teaches us that to “fight opportunism” by renouncing utilisation of the democratic institutions created and distorted by the bourgeoisie of the *given*, capitalist, society is to *completely surrender* to opportunism!

The slogan of *civil war* for socialism indicates the quickest way out of the imperialist war and *links* our struggle against the war with our struggle against opportunism. It is the only slogan that correctly takes into account both wartime peculiarities — the war is dragging out and threatening to grow into a whole “epoch” of war — and the general character of our activities as distinct from opportunism with its pacifism, legalism and adaptation to one’s “own” bourgeoisie. In addition, civil war against the bourgeoisie is a *democratically* organised and *democratically* conducted war of the propertyless mass against the propertied minority. But civil war, like every other, must inevitably replace rights by violence. However, violence in the name of the interests and rights of the majority is of a different nature: it tramples on the “rights” of the exploiters, the bourgeoisie, it is *unachievable* without democratic organisation of the army and the “rear”. Civil war forcibly expropriates, immediately and first of all, the banks, factories, railways, the big estates, etc. But *in order* to expropriate all this, we shall have to introduce election of all officials and officers by the people, *completely merge* the army conducting the war against the bourgeoisie with the mass of the population, completely democratise administration of the food supply, the production and distribution of food, etc. The object of civil war is to seize the banks, factories, etc., destroy all possibility of resistance by the bourgeoisie, destroy *its* armed forces. But that aim cannot be achieved *either* in its purely military, *or* economic, *or* political aspects, unless we, during the war, simultaneously introduce and extend democracy among *our* armed forces and in *our* “rear”. We tell the masses now (and they instinctively feel that we are right): “They are deceiving you in making you fight for imperialist capitalism in a war disguised by the great slogans of democracy. You must, you shall wage a *genuinely* democratic war *against* the bourgeoisie for the achievement of genuine democracy and socialism.”

The present war unites and “merges” nations into coalitions by means of violence and financial dependence. In our civil war against the bourgeoisie, *we* shall unite and merge the nations *not* by the force of the ruble, *not* by the force of the truncheon, *not* by violence, but by *voluntary* agreement and solidarity of the working people against the exploiters. For the bourgeoisie the proclamation of equal rights for all nations has become a deception. For us it will be the truth that will facilitate and accelerate the winning over of all nations. Without effectively organised *democratic* relations between nations — and, consequently, without freedom of secession — civil war of the workers and working people generally of all nations against the bourgeoisie is *impossible*.

Through utilisation of bourgeois democracy to socialist and consistently democratic organisation of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie and against opportunism. There is no other path. There is *no* other way out. Marxism, just as life itself, knows no other way out. In this path we must include free secession and free merging of nations, we must not fight shy of them, not fear that they will “defile” the “purity” of our economic aims. ■

# From Report on the Party Program<sup>93</sup>

I have to say the same thing about *the national question*. Here too the wish is father to the thought with Comrade Bukharin. He says that we must not recognise the right of nations to self-determination. A nation means the bourgeoisie together with the proletariat. And are we, the proletarians, to recognise the right to self-determination of the despised bourgeoisie? That is absolutely incompatible! Pardon me, it is compatible with what actually exists. If you eliminate this, the result will be sheer fantasy. You refer to the process of differentiation which is taking place within the nations, the process of separation of the proletariat from the bourgeoisie. But let us see how this differentiation will proceed.

Take, for instance, Germany, the model of an advanced capitalist country whose organisation of capitalism, finance capitalism, was superior to that of America. She was inferior in many other respects, in technical development and production and in the political sphere, but in respect of the organisation of finance capitalism, in respect of the transformation of monopoly capitalism into state monopoly capitalism, Germany was superior to America. She is a model, it would seem. But what is taking place there? Has the German proletariat become differentiated from the bourgeoisie? No! It was reported that the majority of the workers are opposed to Scheidemann in only a few of the large towns. But how did this come about? It was owing to the alliance between the Spartacists and the thrice-accursed German Menshevik-Independents, who make a muddle of everything and want to wed the system of workers' councils to a constituent assembly! And this is what is taking place in that very Germany! And she, mark you, is an advanced country.

Comrade Bukharin says, "Why do we need the right of nations to self-determination?" I must repeat what I said opposing him in the summer of 1917, when he proposed to delete the minimum program and to leave only the maximum

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Delivered at the 8th Congress of the Russian Communist Party, March 19, 1919.

program.<sup>94</sup> I then retorted: “Don’t halloo until you’re out of the wood.” When we have conquered power, even then only after waiting a while, we shall do this.<sup>95</sup> We have conquered power, we have waited a while, and now I am willing to do it. We have gone directly into socialist construction, we have beaten off the first assault that threatened us — now it will be in place. The same applies to the right of nations to self-determination. “I want to recognise only the right of the working classes to self-determination”, says Comrade Bukharin. That is to say, you want to recognise something that has not been achieved in a single country except Russia. That is ridiculous.

Look at Finland; she is a democratic country, more developed, more cultured than we are. In Finland a process of separation, of the differentiation of the proletariat is taking a specific course, far more painful than was the case with us. The Finns have experienced the dictatorship of Germany; they are now experiencing the dictatorship of Allied powers. But, thanks to the fact that we have recognised the right of nations to self-determination, the process of differentiation has been facilitated there. I very well recall the scene when, at Smolny, I handed the act to Svinhufvud<sup>96</sup> — which in Russian means “pighead” — the representative of the Finnish bourgeoisie, who played the part of a hangman. He amiably shook my hand, we exchanged compliments. How unpleasant that was! But it had to be done, because at that time the bourgeoisie were deceiving the people, were deceiving the working people by alleging that the Muscovites, the chauvinists, the Great Russians, wanted to crush the Finns. It had to be done.

Yesterday, was it not necessary to do the same thing in relation to the Bashkirian Republic?<sup>97</sup> When Comrade Bukharin said, “We can recognise this right in some cases”, I even wrote down that he had included in the list the Hottentots, the Bushmen and the Indians. Hearing this enumeration, I thought, how is it that Comrade Bukharin has forgotten a small trifle, the Bashkirs? There are no Bushmen in Russia, nor have I heard that the Hottentots have laid claim to an autonomous republic, but we have Bashkirs, Kirghiz and a number of other peoples, and to these we cannot deny recognition. We cannot deny it to a single one of the peoples living within the boundaries of the former Russian Empire. Let us even assume that the Bashkirs have overthrown the exploiters and we have helped them to do so. This is possible only when a revolution has fully matured, and it must be done cautiously, so as not to retard by one’s interference that very process of the differentiation of the proletariat which we ought to expedite. What, then, can we do in relation to such peoples as the Kirghiz, the Uzbeks, the Tajiks, the Turkmen, who to this day are under the influence of their mullahs? Here, in Russia, the population, having had a long experience of the priests, helped us to overthrow them. But you know how badly the decree on civil marriage is

still being put into effect. Can we approach these peoples and tell them that we shall overthrow their exploiters? We cannot do this, because they are entirely subordinated to their mullahs. In such cases we have to wait until the given nation develops, until the differentiation of the proletariat from the bourgeois elements, which is inevitable, has taken place.

Comrade Bukharin does not want to wait. He is possessed by impatience: "Why should we? When we have ourselves overthrown the bourgeoisie, proclaimed soviet power and the dictatorship of the proletariat, why should we act thus?" This has the effect of a rousing appeal, it contains an indication of our path, but if we were to proclaim only this in our program, it would not be a program, but a proclamation. We may proclaim soviet power, and the dictatorship of the proletariat, and express the contempt for the bourgeoisie they deserve a thousand times over, but in the program we must write just what actually exists with the greatest precision. And then our program will be incontrovertible.

We hold a strictly class standpoint. What we are writing in the program is a recognition of what has actually taken place since the time we wrote of the self-determination of nations in general. At that time there were still no proletarian republics. It was when they appeared, and only as they appeared, that we were able to write what is written here: "A federation of states organised after the *soviet type*." The soviet type is not yet soviets as they exist in Russia, but the soviet type is becoming international. And this is all we can say. To go farther, one step farther, one hair's breadth farther, would be wrong, and therefore unsuitable for a program.

We say that account must be taken of the stage reached by the given nation on its way from medievalism to bourgeois democracy, and from bourgeois democracy to proletarian democracy. That is absolutely correct. All nations have the right to self-determination — there is no need to speak specially of the Hottentots and the Bushmen. The vast majority, most likely nine-tenths of the population of the earth, perhaps 95%, come under this description, since all countries are on the way from medievalism to bourgeois democracy or from bourgeois democracy to proletarian democracy. This is an absolutely inevitable course. More cannot be said, because it would be wrong, because it would not be what actually exists. To reject the self-determination of nations and insert the self-determination of the working people would be absolutely wrong, because this manner of settling the question does not reckon with the difficulties, with the zigzag course taken by differentiation within nations. In Germany it is not proceeding in the same way as in our country — in certain respects more rapidly, and in other respects in a slower and more sanguinary way. Not a single party in our country accepted so monstrous an idea as a combination of workers' councils and a constituent

assembly. And yet we have to live side by side with these nations. Now Scheidemann's party is already saying that we want to conquer Germany. That is of course ridiculous, nonsensical. But the bourgeoisie have their own interests and their own press, which is shouting this to the whole world in hundreds of millions of copies; Wilson, too, is supporting this in his own interests. The Bolsheviki, they declare, have a large army, and they want, by means of conquest, to implant their Bolshevism in Germany. The best people in Germany — the Spartacists — told us that the German workers are being incited against the communists; look, they are told, how bad things are with the Bolsheviki! And we cannot say that things with us are very good. And so our enemies in Germany influence the people with the argument that the proletarian revolution in Germany would result in the same disorders as in Russia. Our disorders are a protracted illness. We are contending with desperate difficulties in creating the proletarian dictatorship in our country. As long as the bourgeoisie, or the petty bourgeoisie, or even part of the German workers, are under the influence of this bugbear — “the Bolsheviki want to establish their system by force” — so long will the formula “the self-determination of the working people” not help matters. We must arrange things so that the German traitor-socialists will not be able to say that the Bolsheviki are trying to impose their universal system, which, as it were, can be brought into Berlin on Red Army bayonets. And this is what may happen if the principle of the self-determination of nations is denied.

Our program must not speak of the self-determination of the working people, because that would be wrong. It must speak of what actually exists. Since nations are at different stages on the road from medievalism to bourgeois democracy and from bourgeois democracy to proletarian democracy, this thesis of our program is absolutely correct. With us there have been very many zigzags on this road. Every nation must obtain the right to self-determination, and that will make the self-determination of the working people easier. In Finland the process of separation of the proletariat from the bourgeoisie is remarkably clear, forceful and deep. At any rate, things will not proceed there as they do in our country. If we were to declare that we do not recognise any Finnish nation, but only the working people, that would be sheer nonsense. We cannot refuse to recognise what actually exists; it will itself compel us to recognise it. The demarcation between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie is proceeding in different countries in their own specific ways. Here we must act with utmost caution. We must be particularly cautious with regard to the various nations, for there is nothing worse than lack of confidence on the part of a nation. Self-determination of the proletariat is proceeding among the Poles. Here are the latest figures on the composition of the Warsaw Soviet of Workers' Deputies.<sup>98</sup> Polish traitor-socialists — 333, communists —

297. This shows that, according to our revolutionary calendar, October in that country is not very far off. It is somewhere about August or September 1917. But, firstly, no decree has yet been issued stating that all countries must live according to the Bolshevik revolutionary calendar; and even if it were issued, it would not be observed. And, secondly, the situation at present is such that the majority of the Polish workers, who are more advanced than ours and more cultured, share the standpoint of social-defencism, social-patriotism. We must wait.. We cannot speak here of the self-determination of the working people. We must carry on propaganda on behalf of this differentiation. That is what we are doing, but there is not the slightest shadow of doubt that we must recognise the self-determination of the Polish nation now. That is clear. The Polish proletarian movement is taking the same course as ours, towards the dictatorship of the proletariat, but not in the same way as in Russia. And there the workers are being intimidated by statements to the effect that the Muscovites, the Great Russians, who have always oppressed the Poles, want to carry their Great-Russian chauvinism into Poland in the guise of communism. Communism cannot be imposed by force. When I said to one of the best comrades among the Polish Communists, "You will do it in a different way", he replied, "No, we shall do the same thing, but better than you." To such an argument I had absolutely no objections. They must be given the opportunity of fulfilling a modest wish — to create a better soviet power than ours. We cannot help reckoning with the fact that things there are proceeding in rather a peculiar way, and we cannot say: "Down with the right of nations to self-determination! We grant the right of self-determination only to the working people." This self-determination proceeds in a very complex and difficult way. It exists nowhere but in Russia, and, while foreseeing every stage of development in other countries, we must decree nothing from Moscow. That is why this proposal is unacceptable in principle. ■

# The Question of Nationalities or 'Autonomisation'<sup>99</sup>

I suppose I have been very remiss with respect to the workers of Russia for not having intervened energetically and decisively enough in the notorious question of autonomisation,<sup>100</sup> which, it appears, is officially called the question of the union of Soviet socialist republics.

When this question arose last summer, I was ill; and then in autumn I relied too much on my recovery and on the October and December plenary meetings<sup>101</sup> giving me an opportunity of intervening in this question. However, I did not manage to attend the October plenary meeting (when this question came up) or the one in December, and so the question passed me by almost completely.

I have only had time for a talk with Comrade Dzerzhinsky, who came from the Caucasus and told me how this matter stood in Georgia. I have also managed to exchange a few words with Comrade Zinoviev and express my apprehensions on this matter. From what I was told by Comrade Dzerzhinsky, who was at the head of the commission sent by the CC to "investigate" the Georgian incident, I could only draw the greatest apprehensions. If matters had come to such a pass that Orjonikidze could go to the extreme of applying physical violence, as Comrade Dzerzhinsky informed me, we can imagine what a mess we have got ourselves into. Obviously the whole business of "autonomisation" was radically wrong and badly timed.

It is said that a united apparatus was needed. Where did that assurance come from? Did it not come from that same Russian apparatus which, as I pointed out in one of the preceding sections of my diary, we took over from tsarism and slightly anointed with Soviet oil?

There is no doubt that that measure should have been delayed somewhat until we could say that we vouched for our apparatus as our own. But now, we must, in all conscience, admit the contrary; the apparatus we call ours is, in fact, still quite alien to

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This is part of a series of notes dictated by Lenin and taken down by a secretary. The first one here is dated December 30, 1922 and the others the next day.

us; it is a bourgeois and tsarist hotch-potch and there has been no possibility of getting rid of it in the course of the past five years without the help of other countries and because we have been “busy” most of the time with military engagements and the fight against famine.

It is quite natural that in such circumstances the “freedom to secede from the union” by which we justify ourselves will be a mere scrap of paper, unable to defend the non-Russians from the onslaught of that really Russian man, the Great-Russian chauvinist, in substance a rascal and a tyrant, such as the typical Russian bureaucrat is. There is no doubt that the infinitesimal percentage of Soviet and sovietised workers will drown in that tide of chauvinistic Great-Russian riffraff like a fly in milk.

It is said in defence of this measure that the people’s commissariats directly concerned with national psychology and national education were set up as separate bodies. But there the question arises: can these people’s commissariats be made quite independent? and secondly: were we careful enough to take measures to provide the non-Russians with a real safeguard against the truly Russian bully? I do not think we took such measures although we could and should have done so.

I think that Stalin’s haste and his infatuation with pure administration, together with his spite against the notorious “nationalist-socialism”, played a fatal role here. In politics spite generally plays the basest of roles.

I also fear that Comrade Dzerzhinsky, who went to the Caucasus to investigate the “crime” of those “nationalist-socialists”, distinguished himself there by his truly Russian frame of mind (it is common knowledge that people of other nationalities who have become Russified overdo this Russian frame of mind) and that the impartiality of his whole commission was typified well enough by Orjonikidze’s “manhandling”. I think that no provocation or even insult can justify such Russian manhandling and that Comrade Dzerzhinsky was inexcusably guilty in adopting a light-hearted attitude towards it.

For all the citizens in the Caucasus Orjonikidze was the authority. Orjonikidze had no right to display that irritability to which he and Dzerzhinsky referred. On the contrary, Orjonikidze should have behaved with a restraint which cannot be demanded of any ordinary citizen, still less of a man accused of a “political” crime. And, to tell the truth, those nationalist-socialists were citizens who were accused of a political crime, and the terms of the accusation were such that it could not be described otherwise.

Here we have an important question of principle: how is internationalism to be understood?<sup>a</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> After this the following phrase was crossed out in the shorthand text: “It seems to me that our comrades have not studied this important question of principle sufficiently”. — *Ed.*

## Continuation of the notes

*(December 31, 1922)*

In my writings on the national question I have already said that an abstract presentation of the question of nationalism in general is of no use at all. A distinction must necessarily be made between the nationalism of an oppressor nation and that of an oppressed nation, the nationalism of a big nation and that of a small nation.

In respect of the second kind of nationalism we, nationals of a big nation, have nearly always been guilty, in historic practice, of an infinite number of cases of violence; furthermore, we commit violence and insult an infinite number of times without noticing it. It is sufficient to recall my Volga reminiscences of how non-Russians are treated; how the Poles are not called by any other name than *Polyachislka*, how the Tatar is nicknamed Prince, how the Ukrainians are always *Khokhols* and the Georgians and other Caucasian nationals always *Kapkasians*.

That is why internationalism on the part of oppressors or "great" nations, as they are called (though they are great only in their violence, only great as bullies), must consist not only in the observance of the formal equality of nations but even in an inequality of the oppressor nation, the great nation, that must make up for the inequality which obtains in actual practice. Anybody who does not understand this has not grasped the real proletarian attitude to the national question, he is still essentially petty bourgeois in his point of view and is, therefore, sure to descend to the bourgeois point of view.

What is important for the proletarian? For the proletarian it is not only important, it is absolutely essential that he should be assured that the non-Russians place the greatest possible trust in the proletarian class struggle. What is needed to ensure this? Not merely formal equality. In one way or another, by one's attitude or by concessions, it is necessary to compensate the non-Russians for the lack of trust, for the suspicion and the insults to which the government of the "dominant" nation subjected them in the past.

I think it is unnecessary to explain this to Bolsheviks, to Communists, in greater detail. And I think that in the present instance, as far as the Georgian nation is concerned, we have a typical case in which a genuinely proletarian attitude makes profound caution, thoughtfulness and a readiness to compromise a matter of necessity for us. The Georgian who is neglectful of this aspect of the question, or who carelessly flings about accusations of "nationalist-socialism" (whereas he himself is a real and true "nationalist-socialist", and even a vulgar Great-Russian bully), violates, in substance, the interests of proletarian class solidarity, for nothing holds up the development and strengthening of proletarian class solidarity so much as national injustice; "offended" nationals are not sensitive to

anything so much as to the feeling of equality and the violation of this equality, if only through negligence or jest — to the violation of that equality by their proletarian comrades. That is why in this case it is better to overdo rather than underdo the concessions and leniency towards the national minorities. That is why, in this case, the fundamental interest of proletarian solidarity, and consequently of the proletarian class struggle, requires that we never adopt a formal attitude to the national question, but always take into account the specific attitude of the proletarian of the oppressed (or small) nation towards the oppressor (or great) nation.

### Continuation of the notes

(December 31, 1922)

What practical measures must be taken in the present situation?

*Firstly*, we must maintain and strengthen the union of socialist republics. Of this there can be no doubt. This measure is necessary for us and it is necessary for the world communist proletariat in its struggle against the world bourgeoisie and its defence against bourgeois intrigues.

*Secondly*, the union of socialist republics must be retained for its diplomatic apparatus. By the way, this apparatus is an exceptional component of our state apparatus. We have not allowed a single influential person from the old tsarist apparatus into it. All sections with any authority are composed of communists. That is why it has already won for itself (this may be said boldly) the name of a reliable communist apparatus purged to an incomparably greater extent of the old tsarist, bourgeois and petty-bourgeois elements than that which we have had to make do with in other people's commissariats.

*Thirdly*, exemplary punishment must be inflicted on Comrade Orjonikidze (I say this all the more regretfully as I am one of his personal friends and have worked with him abroad) and the investigation of all the material which Dzerzhinsky's commission has collected must be completed or started over again to correct the enormous mass of wrongs and biased judgements which it doubtlessly contains. The political responsibility for all this truly Great-Russian nationalist campaign must, of course, be laid on Stalin and Dzerzhinsky.

*Fourthly*, the strictest rules must be introduced on the use of the national language in the non-Russian republics of our union, and these rules be checked with special care. There is no doubt that our apparatus being what it is, there is bound to be, on the pretext of unity in the railway service, unity in the fiscal service and so on, a mass of truly Russian abuses. Special ingenuity is necessary for the struggle against these abuses, not to mention special sincerity on the part of those who undertake this struggle. A

detailed code will be required, and only the nationals living in the republic in question can draw it up at all successfully.

And then we cannot be sure in advance that as a result of this work we shall not take a step backward at our next Congress of Soviets, i.e., retain the union of Soviet socialist republics only for military and diplomatic affairs, and in all other respects restore full independence to the individual people's commissariats.

It must be borne in mind that the decentralisation of the people's commissariats and the lack of coordination in their work as far as Moscow and other centres are concerned can be compensated sufficiently by party authority, if it is exercised with sufficient prudence and impartiality; the harm that can result to our state from a lack of unification between the national apparatuses and the Russian apparatus is infinitely less than that which will be done not only to us, but to the whole International, and to the hundreds of millions of the peoples of Asia, which is destined to follow us on to the stage of history in the near future.

It would be unpardonable opportunism if, on the eve of the debut of the East, just as it is awakening, we undermined our prestige with its peoples, even if only by the slightest crudity or injustice towards our own non-Russian nationalities. The need to rally against the imperialists of the West, who are defending the capitalist world, is one thing. There can be no doubt about that and it would be superfluous for me to speak about my unconditional approval of it. It is another thing when we ourselves lapse, even if only in trifles, into imperialist attitudes towards oppressed nationalities, thus undermining all our principled sincerity, all our principled defence of the struggle against imperialism. But the morrow of world history will be a day when the awakening peoples oppressed by imperialism are finally aroused and the decisive long and hard struggle for their liberation begins. ■

Appendix  
**Marxism & the National  
Question**<sup>102</sup>

*By J. V. Stalin*

The period of counterrevolution in Russia brought not only “thunder and lightning” in its train, but also disillusionment in the movement and lack of faith in common forces. As long as people believed in “a bright future”, they fought side by side irrespective of nationality: common questions first and foremost! But when doubt crept into people’s hearts, they began to depart, each to his own national tent: let every man count only upon himself! The “national question” first and foremost!

At the same time a profound upheaval was taking place in the economic life of the country. The year 1905 had not been in vain: one more blow had been struck at the survivals of serfdom in the country districts. The series of good harvests which succeeded the famine years, and the industrial boom that followed, furthered the progress of capitalism. Class differentiation in the rural districts, the growth of the towns, the development of trade and means of communication all took a big stride forward. This applied particularly to the border regions. And this could not but hasten the process of economic consolidation of the nationalities of Russia. They were bound to be stirred into movement ...

The “constitutional regime” already established at this time also acted in the same direction of stirring up the nationalities. The spread of newspapers and of literature generally, a certain freedom of the press and cultural institutions, an increase in the number of national theatres, and so forth, all unquestionably helped to strengthen “national sentiments”. The Duma, with its election campaigns and political groups, gave fresh opportunities for greater activity on the part of the nations and provided a new and wide arena for their mobilisation.

And the rising tide of militant nationalism above and the series of repressive

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Written at the end of 1912-beginning of 1913.

measures taken by the “powers that be” in vengeance on the border regions for their “love of freedom”, evoked an answering tide of nationalism below, which at times took the form of crude chauvinism. The spread of Zionism among the Jews, the increase of chauvinism in Poland, Pan-Islamism among the Tatars, the spread of nationalism among the Armenians, Georgians and Ukrainians, the general swing of the ordinary man to anti-semitism — all these are generally known facts.

The wave of nationalism swept onward with increasing force, threatening to engulf the working-class masses. And the more the movement for emancipation declined, the more plentifully nationalism pushed forth its blossoms.

These crucial times laid a high mission upon social-democracy — to resist nationalism and to protect the masses from the general “epidemic”. For social-democracy, and social-democracy alone, could do this, by bringing against nationalism the tried weapon of internationalism, the unity and indivisibility of the class struggle. And the more powerfully the wave of nationalism advanced, the louder had to be the call of social-democracy for fraternity and unity among the proletarians of all the nationalities of Russia. And in this connection particular firmness was demanded of the social-democrats of the border regions, who came into direct contact with the nationalist movement.

But not all the social-democrats proved equal to the task — and this applies particularly to the social-democrats of the border regions. The Bund, which had previously laid stress on the common aims, now began to give prominence to its own specific, purely nationalist aims: it went to the length of declaring the “observance of the Sabbath” and the “recognition of Yiddish” a fighting issue in its election campaign.<sup>a</sup> The Bund was followed by the Caucasus; one section of the Caucasian Social-Democrats, who, like all the Caucasian Social-Democrats, had formerly rejected “national-cultural autonomy”, are now making it an immediate demand.<sup>b</sup> We shall say nothing about the conference of the Liquidators,<sup>103</sup> which in a diplomatic way gave its sanction to nationalist vacillations.<sup>c</sup>

But from this it follows that the views of Russian Social-Democracy on the national question are not yet clear to all social-democrats.

It is evident that a serious and comprehensive discussion of the national question is required. Consistent social-democrats must work solidly and indefatigably against the nationalist obfuscation, no matter from what quarter it proceeds. ■

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<sup>a</sup> See “Report of the Ninth Conference of the Bund”.<sup>104</sup>

<sup>b</sup> See “Announcement of the August Conference”.

<sup>c</sup> *Ibid.*

# I. A Nation

What is a nation?

A nation is primarily a community, a definite community of people.

This community is not racial, nor is it tribal. The modern Italian nation was formed from Romans, Teutons, Etruscans, Greeks, Arabs, and so forth. The French nation was formed from Gauls, Romans, Britons, Teutons, and so on. The same should be said of the British, the Germans and others, who were formed into nations from peoples of diverse races and tribes.

Thus, a nation is not a racial or tribal, but a historically constituted community of people.

On the other hand, it is unquestionable that the great empires of Cyrus and Alexander could not be called nations, although they came to be constituted historically and were formed out of different tribes and races. They were not nations, but casual and loosely-connected conglomerations of groups, which fell apart or joined together depending upon the victories or defeats of this or that conqueror.

Thus, a nation is not a casual or ephemeral conglomeration, but a stable community of people.

But not every stable community constitutes a nation. Austria and Russia are also stable communities, but nobody calls them nations. What distinguishes a national community from a political community, a state? The fact, among others, that a national community is inconceivable without a common language, while a state need not necessarily have a common language. The Czech nation in Austria and the Polish in Russia would be impossible if each did not have a common language, whereas the integrity of Russia and Austria is not affected by the fact that there are several different languages within their borders. We are referring, of course, to the colloquial language of the people and not to the official government language.

Thus *a common language* is one of the characteristic features of a nation.

This, of course, does not mean that different nations always and everywhere speak different languages, or that all who speak one language necessarily constitute one nation. A *common* language for every nation, but not necessarily different languages for different nations! There is no nation which at one and the same time speaks several

languages, but this does not mean that there may not be two nations speaking the same language! Englishmen and Americans speak one language, but they do not constitute one nation. The same is true of the Norwegians and the Danes, the English and the Irish.

But why, for instance, do not the English and the Americans constitute one nation in spite of their common language?

Firstly, because they do not live together, but inhabit different territories. A nation is formed only as a result of lengthy and systematic intercourse, as a result of people living together generation after generation. But people cannot live together for lengthy periods unless they have a common territory. Englishmen and Americans originally inhabited the same territory, England, and constituted one nation. Later, one section of the English emigrated from England to a new territory, America, and there, in the new territory, in the course of time, came to form the new American nation. Difference of territory led to the formation of different nations.

Thus *a common territory* is one of the characteristic features of a nation.

But this is not all. Common territory does not by itself create a nation. This requires, in addition, an internal economic bond to weld the various parts of the nation into a single whole. There is no such bond between England and America, and so they constitute two different nations. But the Americans themselves would not deserve to be called a nation were not the different parts of America bound together into an economic whole, as a result of division of labour between them, the development of means of communication, and so forth.

Take the Georgians, for instance. The Georgians before the Reform<sup>105</sup> inhabited a common territory and spoke one language. Nevertheless, they did not, strictly speaking, constitute one nation, for, being split up into a number of disconnected principalities, they could not share a common economic life; for centuries they waged war against each other and pillaged each other, calling in the aid of the Persians and Turks against each other. The ephemeral and casual amalgamation of the principalities which some successful king sometimes managed to bring about, affected at best a superficial administrative sphere and rapidly disintegrated owing to the caprices of the princes and the indifference of the peasants. Nor could it be otherwise in economically disunited Georgia ... Georgia came on to the scene as a nation only in the latter half of the 19th century, when the fall of serfdom and the growth of the economic life of the country, the development of means of communication and the rise of capitalism, introduced division of labour between the various districts of Georgia, completely shattered the economic isolation of the principalities and bound them together into a single whole.

The same must be said of the other nations which have passed through the stage

of feudalism and have developed capitalism.

Thus *a common economic life, economic cohesion*, is one of the characteristic features of a nation.

But even this is not all. Apart from the foregoing, one must take into consideration the specific spiritual complexion of the people constituting a nation. Nations differ not only in their conditions of life, but also in spiritual complexion, which manifests itself in peculiarities of national culture. If England, America and Ireland, which speak one language, nevertheless constitute three distinct nations, it is in no small measure due to the peculiar psychological make-up which they developed from generation to generation as a result of dissimilar conditions of existence.

Of course, by itself, psychological make-up, or as it is otherwise called, “national character”, is something indefinable to the observer, but in so far as it manifests itself in a distinctive culture common to the nation it is definable and cannot be ignored.

Needless to say, “national character” is not a thing that is fixed once and for all, but is modified by changes in the conditions of life; but since it exists at every given moment, it leaves its imprint on the physiognomy of the nation.

Thus, *a common psychological make-up*, which manifests itself in a common culture, is one of the characteristic features of a nation.

We have now exhausted the characteristic features of a nation.

*A nation is a historically evolved, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture.*

It goes without saying that a nation, like every other historical phenomenon, is subject to the law of change, has its history, its beginning and end.

It must be emphasised that none of the above characteristics is by itself sufficient to define a nation. On the other hand, it is sufficient for a single one of these characteristics to be absent and the nation ceases to be a nation.

It is possible to conceive of people possessing a common “national character”, but they cannot be said to constitute a single nation if they are economically disunited, inhabit different territories, speak different languages, and so forth. Such, for instance, are the Russian, Galician, American, Georgian and Caucasian Highland *Jews*, who do not, in our opinion, constitute a single nation.

It is possible to conceive of people with a common territory and economic life who nevertheless would not constitute a single nation because they have no common language and no common “national character”. Such, for instance, are the Germans and Letts in the Baltic Region.

Finally, the Norwegians and the Danes speak one language, but they do not

constitute a single nation owing to the absence of the other characteristics.

*It is only when all these characteristics are present that we have a nation.*

It might appear that “national character” is not one of the characteristics but the *only* essential characteristic of a nation, and that all the other characteristics are, properly speaking, only *factors* in the development of a nation, rather than its characteristics. Such, for instance, is the view held by R. Springer, and particularly by O. Bauer, social-democratic theoreticians on the national question well known in Austria.

Let us examine their theory of nations. According to Springer:

A nation is a union of similarly thinking and similarly speaking persons. [It is] a cultural community of modern people no longer tied to the ‘soil’.<sup>a</sup> [Our italics.]

Thus, a “union” of similarly thinking and similarly speaking people, no matter how disunited they may be, no matter where they live, is a nation.

Bauer goes even further.

What is a nation? [he asks] Is it a common language which makes people a nation? But the English and the Irish ... speak the same language without, however, being one people; the Jews have no common language and yet are a nation.<sup>b</sup>

What, then, is a nation?

A nation is a relative community of character.<sup>c</sup>

But what is character, in this case national character? National character is

... the sum total of characteristics which distinguish the people of one nationality from the people of another nationality — the complex of physical and spiritual characteristics which distinguish one nation from another.<sup>d</sup>

Bauer knows, of course, that national character does not fall from the skies, and he therefore adds:

The character of people is determined by nothing so much as by their destiny ... A nation is nothing but a community with a common destiny [which, in turn, is determined] by the conditions under which people produce their means of subsistence and distribute the products of their labour.<sup>e</sup>

We thus arrive at the “fullest”, as Bauer calls it, definition of a nation

*A nation is an aggregate of people bound into a community of character by a common*

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<sup>a</sup> Springer, *The National Problem* (Obshchestvennaya Polza Publishing House: 1909, Russian edition), p. 43.

<sup>b</sup> Bauer, *The National Question and Social-Democracy* (Serp Publishing House: 1909, Russian edition), pp. 1-2.

<sup>c</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>d</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>e</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25.

*destiny.*<sup>a</sup>

We thus have common national character based on a common destiny, but not necessarily connected with a common territory, language or economic life.

But what in that case remains of the nation? What common nationality can there be among people who are economically disconnected, inhabit different territories and from generation to generation speak different languages?

Bauer speaks of the Jews as a nation, although they “have no common language”;<sup>b</sup> but what “common destiny” and national cohesion is there, for instance, between the Georgian, Daghestanian, Russian and American Jews, who are completely separated from each other, inhabit different territories, and speak different languages?

The Jews enumerated undoubtedly lead the same economic and political life as the Georgians, Daghestanians, Russians and Americans respectively, and in the same cultural atmosphere; this cannot but leave a definite impress on their national character; if there is anything common to them left, it is their religion, their common origin and certain relics of a national character. All this is beyond question. But how can it be seriously maintained that petrified religious rites and fading psychological relies affect the “destiny” of these Jews more powerfully than the living social, economic and cultural environment that surrounds them? And it is only on this assumption that it is possible to speak of the Jews as a single nation at all.

What, then, distinguishes Bauer’s nation from the mystical and self-contained “national spirit” of the spiritualists?

Bauer, by divorcing the “distinctive feature” of nations (national character) from the “conditions” of their life, sets up an impassable barrier between them. But what is national character if not a reflection of the conditions of life, a coagulation of impressions derived from environment? How can one limit the matter to national character alone, isolating and divorcing it from the soil that gave rise to it?

Indeed, what distinguished the English nation from the American nation at the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries, when the United States was still known as New England? Not national character, of course; for the Americans had originated from England and had brought with them to America not only the English language, but also the English national character, which, of course, they could not lose so soon; although, under the influence of the new conditions, they would naturally be developing their own specific character. Yet, despite their more or less common character, they at that time already constituted a nation distinct from England!

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<sup>a</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 139.

<sup>b</sup> *Ibid.*, p.2.

Obviously, New England as a nation differed from England as a nation not by its specific national character, or not so much by its national character, as by its environment and conditions of life, which were distinct from those of England.

It is therefore clear that there is in fact no *single* distinguishing characteristic of a nation. There is only a sum total of characteristics, of which, when nations are compared, one characteristic (national character), or another (language), or a third (territory, economic conditions), stands out in sharper relief. A nation constitutes the combination of all these characteristics, taken together.

Bauer's point of view, which identifies a nation with its national character, divorces the nation from its soil and converts it into an invisible, self-contained force. The result is not a living and active nation, but something mystical, intangible and supernatural. For, I repeat, what sort of nation, for instance, is a Jewish nation which consists of Georgian, Daghestanian, Russian, American and other Jews, the members of which do not understand each other (since they speak different languages), inhabit different parts of the globe, will never see each other, and will never act together, whether in time of peace or in time of war?

No, it is not for such paper "nations" that social-democracy draws up its national program. It can reckon only with real nations, which act and move, and therefore insist on being reckoned with.

Bauer is obviously confusing *nation*, which is a historical category, with *tribe*, which is an ethnographical category.

However, Bauer himself apparently feels the weakness of his position. While in the beginning of his book he definitely declares the Jews to be a nation,<sup>a</sup> he corrects himself at the end of the book and states that "in general capitalist society makes it impossible for them (the Jews) to continue as a nation",<sup>b</sup> by causing them to assimilate with other nations. The reason, it appears, is that "the Jews have no close territory of settlement,"<sup>c</sup> whereas the Czechs, for instance, have such a territory and, according to Bauer, will survive as a nation. In short, the reason lies in the absence of territory.

By arguing thus, Bauer wanted to prove that the Jewish workers cannot demand national autonomy,<sup>d</sup> but he thereby inadvertently refuted his own theory, which denies that a common territory is one of the characteristics of a nation.

But Bauer goes further. In the beginning of his book he definitely declares that "the

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<sup>a</sup> See p. 2 of his book.

<sup>b</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 389.

<sup>c</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 388.

<sup>d</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 396.

Jews have no *common* language, and yet are a nation”.<sup>a</sup> But hardly has he reached p. 130 than he effects a change of front and just as definitely declares that “*unquestionably no nation is possible without a common language*” (our italics).<sup>b</sup>

Bauer wanted to prove that “language is the most important instrument of human intercourse”,<sup>c</sup> but at the same time he inadvertently proved something he did not mean to prove, namely, the unsoundness of his own theory of nations, which denies the significance of a common language.

Thus this theory, stitched together by idealistic threads, refutes itself. ■

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<sup>a</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>b</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 130.

<sup>c</sup> *Ibid.*

## II. The National Movement

A nation is not merely a historical category but a historical category belonging to a definite epoch, the epoch of rising capitalism. The process of elimination of feudalism and development of capitalism was at the same time a process of amalgamation of people into nations. Such, for instance, was the case in Western Europe. The British, French, Germans, Italians and others formed themselves into nations at the time of the victorious advance of capitalism and its triumph over feudal disunity.

But the formation of nations in these instances at the same time signified their conversion into independent national states. The British, French and other nations are at the same time British, French, etc. states. Ireland, which did not participate in this process does not alter the general picture.

Matters proceeded somewhat differently in Eastern Europe. Whereas in the West nations developed into states, in the East multinational states were formed, states consisting of several nationalities. Such are Austria-Hungary and Russia. In Austria, the Germans proved to be politically the most developed, and they took it upon themselves to amalgamate the Austrian nationalities into a state. In Hungary, the most adapted for state organisation were the Magyars — the core of the Hungarian nationalities — and it was they who united Hungary. In Russia, the role of welder of nationalities was assumed by the Great Russians, who were headed by a historically formed powerful and well-organised aristocratic military bureaucracy.

This was how matters proceeded in the East.

This distinctive method of formation of states could take place only where feudalism had not yet been eliminated, where capitalism was feebly developed, where the nationalities which had been forced into the background had not yet been able to consolidate themselves economically into integral nations.

But capitalism also began to develop in the Eastern states. Trade and means of communication were developing. Large towns were springing up. The nations were becoming economically consolidated. Capitalism, erupting into the tranquil life of the nationalities which had been pushed into the background, was arousing them and stirring them into action. The development of the press and the theatre, the activity of the Reichsrat (Austria) and of the Duma (Russia) were helping to strengthen “national

sentiments". The intelligentsia that had arisen was being imbued with "the national idea" and was acting in the same direction ...

But the nations which had been pushed into the background and had now awakened to independent life, could no longer shape themselves into independent national states; they encountered the powerful resistance of the ruling strata of the dominant nations, which had long ago assumed the control of the state. They were too late! ...

In this way the Czechs, Poles, etc., formed themselves into nations in Austria; the Croats, etc., in Hungary; the Letts, Lithuanians, Ukrainians, Georgians, Armenians, etc., in Russia. What had been an exception in Western Europe (Ireland) became the rule in the East.

In the West, Ireland responded to its exceptional position by a national movement. In the East, the awakened nations were bound to respond in the same fashion.

Thus arose the circumstances which impelled the young nations of Eastern Europe into the path of struggle.

The struggle began and grew, to be sure, not between nations as a whole, but between the ruling classes of the dominant and the oppressed nations. The struggle is usually conducted by the urban petty bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation against the big bourgeoisie of the dominant nation (Czechs and Germans), or by the rural bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation against the landlords of the dominant nation (Ukrainians in Poland), or by the whole "national" bourgeoisie of the oppressed nations against the ruling nobility of the dominant nation (Poland, Lithuania and the Ukraine in Russia).

The bourgeoisie plays the leading role.

The chief problem for the young bourgeoisie is the problem of the market. Its aim is to sell its goods and to emerge victorious from competition with the bourgeoisie of another nationality. Hence its desire to secure its "own", its "home" market. The market is the first school in which the bourgeoisie learns its nationalism.

But matters are usually not confined to the market. The semifeudal, semibourgeois bureaucracy of the dominant nation intervenes in the struggle with its own methods of "arresting and preventing"<sup>106</sup> The bourgeoisie of the dominant nation, whether large or small, is able to deal more "swiftly" and "decisively" with its competitors. "Forces" are united and a series of restrictive measures is put into operation against the "alien" bourgeoisie, measures passing into acts of repression. The struggle spreads from the economic sphere to the political sphere. Restriction of freedom of locomotion, repression of language, restriction of franchise, closing of schools, religious restrictions, and so on, are piled upon the head of the "competitor". Of course, such measures are designed not only in the interest of the bourgeois classes of the dominant nation, but

also in furtherance of the specifically caste aims, so to speak, of the ruling bureaucracy. But from the point of view of the results achieved this is quite immaterial: the bourgeois classes and the bureaucracy in this matter go hand in hand — whether it be in Austria-Hungary or in Russia.

The bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation, repressed on every hand, is naturally stirred into movement. It appeals to its “native folk” and begins to shout about the “fatherland”, claiming that its own cause is the cause of the nation as a whole. It recruits itself an army from among its “countrymen” in the interests of ... the “fatherland”. Nor do the “folk” always remain unresponsive to its appeals, they rally around its banner: the repression from above affects them too and provokes their discontent.

Thus the national movement begins.

The strength of the national movement is determined by the degree to which the wide strata of the nation, the proletariat and peasantry, participate in it.

Whether the proletariat rallies to the banner of bourgeois nationalism depends on the degree of development of class antagonisms, on the class-consciousness and degree of organisation of the proletariat. The class-conscious proletariat has its own tried banner and has no need to rally to the banner of the bourgeoisie.

As far as the peasants are concerned, their participation in the national movement depends primarily on the character of the repressions. If the repressions affect the “land”, as was the case in Ireland, then the mass of the peasants immediately rally to the banner of the national movement.

On the other hand, if, for example, there is no serious *anti-Russian* nationalism in Georgia, it is primarily because there are no Russian landlords there or a Russian big bourgeoisie to supply the fuel for such nationalism among the masses. In Georgia there is *anti-Armenian* nationalism; but this is because there is still an Armenian big bourgeoisie there which, by outcompeting the small and still unconsolidated Georgian bourgeoisie, drives the latter to anti-Armenian nationalism.

Depending on these factors, the national movement either assumes a mass character and steadily grows (as in Ireland and Galicia), or is converted into a series of petty collisions, degenerating into squabbles and “fights” over signboards (as in some of the small towns of Bohemia).

The nature of the national movement, of course, will not everywhere be the same: it is wholly determined by the diverse demands made by the movement. In Ireland the movement bears an agrarian character; in Bohemia it bears a “language” character; in one place the demand is for civil equality and religious freedom, in another for the nation’s “own” officials, or its own diet. The diversity of demands not infrequently reveals the diverse features which characterise a nation in general (language, territory,

etc.). It is worthy of note that we never meet with a demand connected with Bauer's all-embracing "national character". And this is natural: "national character" *in itself* is something intangible, and, as was correctly remarked by J. Strasser, "a politician can't do anything with it".<sup>a</sup>

Such, in general, are the forms and character of the national movement.

From what has been said it will be clear that the national struggle under the conditions of *rising* capitalism is a struggle of the bourgeois classes among themselves. Sometimes the bourgeoisie succeeds in drawing the proletariat into the national movement, and then the national struggle *externally* assumes a "nationwide" character. But this is so only externally. *In its essence* it is always a bourgeois struggle, one that is mainly to the advantage and profit of the bourgeoisie.

But it does not follow from this that the proletariat should not put up a fight against the policy of national oppression.

Restriction of freedom of locomotion, disfranchisement, repression of language, closing of schools, and other forms of repression affect the workers no less, if not more, than the bourgeoisie. Such a state of affairs can only serve to retard the free development of the intellectual forces of the proletariat of subject nations. There can be no possibility of a full development of the intellectual faculties of the Tatar or Jewish worker if he is not allowed to use his native language at meetings and lectures, and if his schools are closed down.

But the policy of nationalist persecution is dangerous to the cause of the proletariat also on another account. It diverts the attention of large strata of the population from social questions, questions of the class struggle, to national questions, questions "common" to the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. And this creates a favourable soil for lying propaganda regarding "harmony of interests", for glossing over the class interests of the proletariat and for the intellectual enslavement of the workers. This creates a serious obstacle to the work of uniting the workers of all nationalities. If a considerable proportion of the Polish workers are still in intellectual bondage to the bourgeois nationalists, if they still stand aloof from the international labour movement, it is chiefly because the age-long anti-Polish policy of the "powers that be" creates the soil for, and hinders the emancipation of the workers from this bondage.

But the policy of repression does not stop there. It not infrequently passes from a "system" of *oppression* to a "system" of *inciting* nations against each other, to a "system" of massacres and pogroms. Of course, the latter is not everywhere and always possible, but where it is possible — in the absence of elementary civil rights — it frequently

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<sup>a</sup> See his *Der Arbeiter und die Nation* [The Worker and the Nation] (Reichenberg: 1912), p. 33.

assumes horrifying proportions and threatens to drown the cause of unity of the workers in blood and tears. The Caucasus and South Russia furnish numerous examples. "Divide and rule" — such is the purpose of the policy of incitement. And where such a policy succeeds, it is a tremendous evil for the proletariat and a serious obstacle to the work of uniting the workers of all the nationalities in the state.

But the workers are interested in the complete amalgamation of all their fellows into a single international army, in their speedy and final emancipation from intellectual bondage to the bourgeoisie, and in the full and free development of the intellectual forces of their brothers, whatever nation they may belong to.

The workers therefore combat and will continue to combat the policy of national oppression in all its forms, from the most subtle to the most crude, as well as the policy of inciting nations against each other in all its forms.

Social-democracy in all countries therefore proclaims the right of nations to self-determination.

The right of self-determination means that only the nation itself has the right to determine its destiny, that no one has the right *forcibly* to interfere in the life of the nation, to *destroy* its schools and other institutions, to *violate* its habits and customs, to *repress* its language, or *curtail* its rights.

This, of course, does not mean that social-democracy will support every custom and institution of a nation. While combating the coercion of any nation, it will only uphold the right of the *nation* to determine its own destiny, at the same time agitating against the noxious customs and institutions of that nation in order to enable the toiling strata of the nation to emancipate themselves from them.

The right of self-determination means that a nation may arrange its life in the way it wishes. It has the right to arrange its life on the basis of autonomy, it has the right to enter into federal relations with other nations. It has the right to complete secession. Nations are sovereign, and all nations are equal.

This, of course, does not mean that social-democracy will support every demand of a nation. A nation has the right even to return to the old order of things; but this does not mean that social-democracy will subscribe to such a decision if taken by any institution of the said nation. The obligations of social-democracy, which defends the interests of the proletariat, and the rights of a nation, which consists of various classes, are two different things.

In fighting for the right of nations to self-determination, the aim of social-democracy is to put an end to the policy of national oppression, to render it impossible, and thereby to remove the grounds of strife between nations, to take the edge off that strife and reduce it to a minimum.

This is what essentially distinguishes the policy of the class-conscious proletariat from the policy of the bourgeoisie, which attempts to aggravate and fan the national struggle and to prolong and sharpen the national movement.

And that is why the class-conscious proletariat cannot rally under the “national” flag of the bourgeoisie.

That is why the so-called “evolutionary national” policy advocated by Bauer cannot become the policy of the proletariat. Bauer’s attempt to identify his “evolutionary national” policy with the policy of the “modern working class”<sup>a</sup> is an attempt to adapt the class struggle of the workers to the struggle of the nations.

The fate of the national movement, which is essentially a bourgeois movement, is naturally bound up with the fate of the bourgeoisie. The final collapse of the national movement is possible only with the collapse of the bourgeoisie. Only under the reign of socialism can peace be fully established. But even within the framework of capitalism it is possible to reduce the national struggle to a minimum, to sever its roots, to render it as innocuous as possible to the proletariat. This is borne out by the examples of Switzerland and America. It requires that the country should be democratised and the nations be given the opportunity for free development. ■

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<sup>a</sup> See Bauer’s book, p. 166.

### III. The Presentation of the Problem

A nation has the right freely to determine its own destiny. It has the right to arrange its life as it sees fit, without, of course, trampling on the rights of other nations. That is beyond dispute.

But *how* exactly should it arrange its own life, *what forms* should its future constitution take, if the interests of the majority of the nation and, above all, of the proletariat are to be borne in mind?

A nation has the right to arrange its life on autonomous lines. It even has the right to secede. But this does not mean that it should do so under all circumstances, that autonomy, or separation, will everywhere and always be advantageous for a nation, i.e. for its majority, i.e., for the toiling strata. The Transcaucasian Tatars as a nation may assemble, let us say, in their diet and, succumbing to the influence of their beys and mullahs, decide to restore the old order of things and to secede from the state. According to the meaning of the clause on self-determination they are fully entitled to do so. But will this be in the interest of the toiling strata of the Tatar nation? Can social-democracy look on indifferently when the beys and mullahs take the lead of the masses in the solution of the national problem? Should not social-democracy interfere in the matter and influence the will of the nation in a definite way? Should it not come forward with a definite plan for the solution of the problem which would be most advantageous for the Tatar masses?

But what solution would be most compatible with the interests of the toiling masses? Autonomy, federation or separation?

All these are problems the solution of which will depend on the concrete historical conditions in which the given nation finds itself.

Nay, more. Conditions, like everything else, change, and a decision which is correct at one particular time may prove to be entirely unsuitable at another.

In the middle of the 19th century Marx was in favour of the secession of Russian Poland; and he was right, for it was then a question of emancipating a higher culture from a lower culture that was destroying it. And the question at that time was not only a theoretical question, and academic question, but a practical question, a question of actual reality ...

At the end of the 19th century the Polish Marxists were already declaring against the secession of Poland; and they too were right, for during the 50 years that had elapsed profound changes had taken place, bringing Russia and Poland closer economically and culturally. Moreover, during this period the question of secession had been converted from a practical matter into a matter of academic dispute, which excited nobody except perhaps the intellectuals abroad.

This, of course, by no means precludes the possibility that certain internal and external conditions may arise in which the question of the secession of Poland may again become actual.

It follows from this that the solution of the national problem can be arrived at only if due consideration is paid to historical conditions in their development.

The economic, political and cultural conditions of a given nation constitute the only key to the question *how* a particular nation ought to arrange its life and *what forms* its future constitution ought to take. It is possible that a specific solution of the problem will be required for each nation. If a dialectical approach to a question is required anywhere it is required here, in the national question.

In view of this we must declare our decided opposition to a certain very widespread, but very summary manner of “solving” the national problem, which owes its inception to the Bund. We have in mind the easy method of referring to Austrian and South-Slav<sup>a</sup> Social-Democracy, which has supposedly already solved the national problem and whose solution the Russian Social-Democrats should simply borrow. It is assumed that whatever, say, is right for Austria is also right for Russia. The most important and decisive factor is lost sight of here, namely, the concrete historical conditions in Russia as a whole and in the life of each of the nations inhabiting Russia in particular.

Listen, for example, to what the well-known Bundist, V. Kossovsky, says:

When at the Fourth Congress of the Bund<sup>107</sup> the principles of the question [i.e., the national question] were discussed, the proposal made by one of the members of the congress to settle the question in the spirit of the resolution of the South-Slav Social-Democratic Party met with general approval.<sup>b</sup>

And the result was that “the congress unanimously adopted” ... national autonomy.

And that was all! No analysis of the actual conditions in Russia, no investigation of the condition of the Jews in Russia. They first borrowed the solution of the South-Slav Social-Democratic Party, then they “approved” it, and finally they “unanimously adopted” it! This is the way the Bund presents and “solves” the national problem in

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<sup>a</sup> The South-Slav Social-Democratic Party operates in the southern part of Austria.

<sup>b</sup> Kossovsky, *Problems of Nationality* (1907), pp. 16-17.

Russia ...

As a matter of fact, Austria and Russia represent entirely different conditions. This explains why the social-democrats in Austria, when they adopted their national program at Brünn (1899)<sup>108</sup> in the spirit of the resolution of the South-Slav Social-Democratic Party (with certain insignificant amendments, it is true), approached the problem in so to speak an entirely non-Russian way and, of course, solved it in a non-Russian way.

First, as to the presentation of the problem. How is the problem presented by the Austrian theoreticians of cultural-national autonomy, the commentators on the Brünn national program and the resolution of the South-Slav Social-Democratic Party, Springer and Bauer?

Springer declares:

Whether a state of nationalities is possible, and whether, in particular, the Austrian nationalities are obliged to form a single political entity, is a question we shall not answer here but shall assume to be settled. For anyone who will not concede this possibility and necessity, our investigation will, of course, be purposeless. Our theme is as follows: inasmuch as these nations are *obliged* to live together, what *legal forms* will enable them *to live together in the best possible way?* [Springer's italics.]<sup>a</sup>

Thus, the point of departure is the political integrity of Austria.

Bauer says the same thing:

We therefore start from the assumption that the Austrian nations will remain in the political union in which they exist at present and enquire how the nations within this union will arrange their relations among themselves and to the state?<sup>b</sup>

Here again the first thing is the integrity of Austria.

Can Russian Social-Democracy present the question *in this way?* No, it cannot. And it cannot because from the very outset it holds the view of the right of nations to self-determination, by virtue of which a nation enjoys the right of secession.

Even the Bundist Goldblatt admitted at the Second Congress of the Russian Social-Democrats that the latter could not abandon the standpoint of self-determination. This is what Goldblatt said on that occasion:

Nothing can be said against the right of self-determination. If any nation is striving for independence, we must not oppose it. If Poland does not wish to enter into "lawful wedlock" with Russia, it is not for us to interfere with her.

All this is true. But it follows that the basic starting points of the Austrian and Russian

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<sup>a</sup> Springer, *The National Problem*, p. 14.

<sup>b</sup> Bauer, *The National Question and Social-Democracy*, p. 399.

Social-Democrats, far from being identical, are diametrically opposite. After this, can there be any question of borrowing the national program of the Austrians?

Furthermore, the Austrians hope to achieve the “freedom of nationalities” by means of petty reforms, by slow steps. While they propose cultural-national autonomy as a practical measure, they do not count on any radical change, on a democratic movement for liberation, which they do not even contemplate. The Russian Marxists, on the other hand, associate the “freedom of nationalities” with a probable radical change, with a democratic movement for liberation, having no grounds for counting on reforms. And this essentially alters matters in regard to the probable fate of the nations of Russia.

Of course [says Bauer] there is little probability that national autonomy will be the result of a great decision, of a bold action. Austria will develop towards national autonomy step by step, by a slow process of development, in the course of a severe struggle, as a consequence of which legislation and administration will be in a chronic state of paralysis. The new constitution will not be created by a great legislative act, but by a multitude of separate enactments for individual provinces and individual communities.<sup>a</sup>

Springer says the same thing. He writes:

I am very well aware that institutions of this kind [i.e., organs of national autonomy] are not created in a single year or a single decade. The reorganisation of the Prussian administration alone took considerable time ... It took the Prussians two decades to finally establish their basic administrative institutions. Let nobody think that I harbour any illusions as to the time required and the difficulties to be overcome in Austria.<sup>b</sup>

All this is very definite. But can the Russian Marxists avoid associating the national question with “bold actions”? Can they count on partial reforms, on “a multitude of separate enactments” as a means for achieving the “freedom of nationalities”? But if they cannot and must not do so, is it not clear from this that the methods of struggle of the Austrians and the Russians and their prospects must be entirely different? How in such a state of affairs can they confine themselves to the one-sided, milk-and-water cultural-national autonomy of the Austrians? One or the other: either those who are in favour of borrowing do not count on “bold actions” in Russia, or they do count on such actions but “know not what they do”.

Finally, the immediate tasks facing Russia and Austria are entirely different and consequently dictate different methods of solving the national problem. In Austria

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<sup>a</sup> Bauer, *The National Question*, p. 422.

<sup>b</sup> Springer, *The National Problem*, pp. 281-282.

parliamentarism prevails under present conditions, no development in Austria is possible without parliament. But parliamentary life and legislation in Austria are frequently brought to a complete standstill by severe conflicts between the national parties. This explains the chronic political crisis from which Austria has for a long time been suffering. Hence, in Austria the national problem is the very hub of political life; it is the vital problem. It is therefore not surprising that the Austrian Social-Democratic politicians should first of all try in one way or another to find a solution for these national conflicts — of course on the basis of the existing parliamentary system, by parliamentary methods ...

Not so with Russia. In the first place, in Russia “there is no parliament, thank God”.<sup>109</sup> In the second place — and this is the main thing — the hub of the political life of Russia is not the national but the agrarian problem. Consequently, the fate of the Russian problem, and, accordingly, the “liberation” of nations too, is bound up in Russia with the solution of the agrarian problem, i.e., with the destruction of the relics of feudalism, i.e., with the democratisation of the country. This explains why in Russia the national problem is not an independent and decisive problem, but a part of the general and more important problem of the emancipation of the country.

The barrenness of the Austrian parliament [writes Springer] is due precisely to the fact that every reform gives rise to antagonisms within the national parties which may affect their unity. The leaders of the parties, therefore, avoid everything that smacks of reform. Progress in Austria is generally conceivable only if the nations are granted indefeasible legal rights which will relieve them of the necessity of constantly maintaining national militant groups in parliament and will enable them to turn their attention to the solution of economic and social problems.<sup>a</sup>

Bauer says the same thing:

National peace is indispensable first of all for the state. The state cannot permit legislation to be brought to a standstill by a stupid question of language or by every quarrel between excited people on a linguistic frontier, or over every new school.<sup>b</sup>

All this is clear. But it is no less clear that the national question in Russia is on an entirely different plane. It is not the national, but the agrarian question that will decide the fate of progress in Russia. The national question is a subordinate one.

And so we have different presentations of the problem, different prospects and methods of struggle, different immediate tasks. Is it not clear that, such being the state of affairs, only pedants who “solve” the national problem without reference to space

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<sup>a</sup> Springer, *The National Problem*, p. 36.

<sup>b</sup> Bauer, *The National Question*, p. 401.

and time can think of taking an example from Austria and of borrowing programs?

To repeat: the concrete historical conditions as the starting point, and the dialectical presentation of the problem as the only correct way of presenting it — such is the key to the national problem. ■

## IV. Cultural-National Autonomy

We spoke above of the formal aspect of the Austrian national program and of the methodological considerations which prevent the Russian Marxists from simply following the example of the Austrian Social-Democrats and from taking their program as their own.

Let us now examine the program itself.

What is the national program of the Austrian Social-Democrats?

It is expressed in two words: cultural-national autonomy.

This means, first, that autonomy is granted, let us say, not to Bohemia or Poland, which are inhabited mainly by Czechs and Poles, but to Czechs and Poles generally, irrespective of territory, no matter what part of Austria they inhabit.

That is why this autonomy is called *national* and not territorial.

It means, secondly, that the Czechs, Poles, Germans, and so on, scattered over the various parts of Austria, taken personally, as individuals, are to be organised into integral nations, and are as such to form part of the Austrian state. In this way Austria will represent not a union of autonomous regions, but a union of autonomous nationalities, constituted irrespective of territory.

It means, thirdly, that the national institutions which are to be created for this purpose for the Poles, Czechs, and so forth, are to have jurisdiction only over “cultural”, not “political” questions. Specifically political questions will be left to the Austrian parliament (the Reichsrat).

That is why this autonomy is also called *cultural*, cultural-national autonomy.

And here is the text of the program adopted by the Austrian Social-Democratic Party at the Brünn Congress in 1899.<sup>a</sup>

Having referred to the fact that “national dissension in Austria is hindering political progress”, that “the final solution of the national problem ... is primarily a cultural necessity”, and that this solution “is possible only in a genuinely democratic society, constructed on the basis of universal, direct and equal suffrage”, the program goes on

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<sup>a</sup> The representatives of the South-Slav Social-Democratic Party also voted for it. See *Proceedings of the Brünn Social-Democratic Party Congress* (1906, Russian edition), p. 72.

to say:

*The preservation and development of the national peculiarities<sup>a</sup> of the peoples of Austria is possible only on the basis of equal rights and by avoiding all oppression. Hence, all bureaucratic state centralism and the feudal privileges of individual provinces must first of all be rejected.*

Under these conditions and only under these conditions, will it be possible to establish national order in Austria in place of national dissension, namely, on the following principles:

1. Austria must be transformed into a democratic state federation of nationalities.
2. The historical crown territories must be replaced by nationally delimited self-governing corporations, in each of which legislation and administration shall be entrusted to national parliaments elected on the basis of universal, direct and equal suffrage.
3. All the self-governing regions of one and the same nation must jointly form a single national union, which shall manage its national affairs on an absolutely autonomous basis.
4. The rights of national minorities must be guaranteed by a special law passed by the Imperial Parliament.

The program ends with an appeal for the solidarity on the part of all the nations of Austria.<sup>b</sup>

It is not difficult to see that this program retains certain traces of “territorialism”, but that in general it is a formulation of the idea of national autonomy. It is not without good reason that Springer, the first agitator on behalf of cultural-national autonomy, greets it with enthusiasm;<sup>c</sup> Bauer also supports this program, calling it a “theoretical victory”<sup>d</sup> for national autonomy; only, in the interests of greater clarity, he proposes to replace Point 4 by a more definite formulation, which would declare the necessity of “constituting the national minority within each self-governing region into a public corporation” for the management of educational and other cultural affairs.<sup>e</sup>

Such is the national program of Austrian Social-Democracy.

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<sup>a</sup> In M. Panin’s Russian translation (see his translation of Bauer’s book), “national individualities” is given in place of “national peculiarities”. Panin translated this passage incorrectly. The word “individuality” is not in the German text, which speaks of *nationalen Eigenart*, i.e., *peculiarities*, which is far from being the same thing.

<sup>b</sup> See *Verhandlungen des Gesamtparteitag*es in Brünn, 1899.

<sup>c</sup> Springer, *The National Problem*, p. 286.

<sup>d</sup> *The National Question*, p. 549.

<sup>e</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 555.

Let us examine its scientific foundations.

Let us see how the Austrian Social-Democratic Party justifies the cultural-national autonomy it advocates.

Let us turn to the theoreticians of cultural-national autonomy, Springer and Bauer.

National autonomy proceeds from the conception of a nation as a union of individuals without regard to a definite territory.

According to Springer:

Nationality is not essentially connected with territory; [nations are] autonomous unions of persons.<sup>a</sup>

Bauer also speaks of a nation as a “community of persons” which does not enjoy “exclusive sovereignty in any particular region”.<sup>b</sup>

But the persons constituting a nation do not always live in one compact mass; they are frequently divided into groups, and in that form are interspersed among foreign national organisms. It is capitalism which drives them into other regions and cities in search of a livelihood. But when they enter foreign national territories and there form minorities, these groups are made to suffer by the local national majorities in the way of restrictions on their language, schools, etc. Hence national collisions. Hence the “unsuitability” of territorial autonomy. The only solution to such a situation, according to Springer and Bauer, is to organise the minorities of the given nationality dispersed over various parts of the state into a single, general, inter-class national union. Such a union alone, in their opinion, can protect the cultural interests of national minorities, and it alone is capable of putting an end to national discord.

“Hence the necessity”, says Springer, “to organise the nationalities, to invest them with rights and responsibilities ...”<sup>c</sup> Of course, “a law is easily drafted, but will it be effective?” ... “If one wants to make a law for nations, one must first create the nations ...”<sup>d</sup> “Unless the nationalities are constituted it is impossible to create national rights and eliminate national dissension.”<sup>e</sup>

Bauer expressed himself in the same spirit when he proposed, as “a demand of the working class”, that “the minorities should be constituted into public corporations based on the personal principle”.<sup>f</sup>

But how is a nation to be organised? How is one to determine to what nation any

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<sup>a</sup> Springer, *The National Problem*, p. 19.

<sup>b</sup> *The National Question*, p. 286.

<sup>c</sup> *The National Problem*, p. 74.

<sup>d</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 88-89.

<sup>e</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89.

<sup>f</sup> *The National Question*, p. 552.

given individual belongs?

Nationality [says Springer] will be determined by certificates; every individual domiciled in a given region must declare his affiliation to one of the nationalities of that region.<sup>a</sup>

The personal principle [says Bauer] presumes that the population will be divided into nationalities ... On the basis of the free declaration of the adult citizens national cadasters must be drawn up.<sup>b</sup>

Further Bauer says:

All the Germans in nationally homogeneous districts and all the Germans entered in the national cadasters in the dual districts will constitute the German nation and elect a National Council.<sup>c</sup>

The same applies to the Czechs, Poles, and so on.

The *National Council*, [according to Springer], is the cultural parliament of the nation, empowered to establish the principles and approve the methods of, that is, to assume guardianship over, national education, national literature, art and science, the formation of academies, museums, galleries, theatres ...<sup>d</sup>

Such are the organisation of a nation and its central institution.

According to Bauer, the Austrian Social-Democratic Party is striving, by the creation of these interclass institutions “to make national culture ... the possession of the whole people and thereby *fuse all the members of the nation into a national-cultural community*” (my italics).<sup>e</sup>

One might think that all this concerns Austria alone. But Bauer does not agree. He emphatically declares that national autonomy is essential for all states which, like Austria, consist of several nationalities.

According to Bauer,

In the multinational state, the working class of all nations opposes the national power policy of the propertied classes with the demand for national autonomy.<sup>f</sup>

Then, imperceptibly substituting national autonomy for the self-determination of nations, he continues:

Thus, national autonomy, the self-determination of nations, will necessarily become the constitutional program of the proletariat of all nations in a multinational state.<sup>g</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> *The National Problem*, p. 226.

<sup>b</sup> *The National Question*, p. 368.

<sup>c</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 375.

<sup>d</sup> *The National Problem*, p. 234.

<sup>e</sup> *The National Question*, p. 553.

<sup>f</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 337.

<sup>g</sup> *The National Question*, p. 333.

But he goes still further. He profoundly believes that the inter-class “national unions” “constituted” by him and Springer will serve as a sort of prototype of the future socialist society. For he knows that “the socialist system of society ... will divide humanity into nationally delimited communities”;<sup>a</sup> that under socialism there will take place “a grouping of humanity into autonomous national communities”;<sup>b</sup> that thus, “socialist society will undoubtedly present a chequered picture of national unions of persons and territorial corporations”;<sup>c</sup> and that accordingly “the socialist principle of nationality is a supreme synthesis of the national principle and national autonomy”.<sup>d</sup>

Enough, it would seem ...

These are the arguments in favour of cultural-national autonomy as given in the works of Bauer and Springer.

The first thing that strikes the eye is the entirely inexplicable and absolutely unjustifiable substitution of national autonomy for self-determination of nations. One or the other: either Bauer failed to understand the meaning of self-determination, or he did understand it but for some reason or other deliberately narrowed its meaning. For there is no doubt (a) that cultural-national autonomy presupposes the integrity of the multinational state, whereas self-determination transgresses this integrity, and (b) that self-determination endows a nation with sovereign rights, whereas national autonomy endows it only with “cultural” rights. That in the first place.

In the second place, a combination of internal and external conditions is fully possible at some future time by virtue of which one or another of the nationalities may decide to secede from a multinational state, say from Austria — did not the Ruthenian Social-Democrats at the Brünn Party Congress announce their readiness to unite the “two parts” of their people into one whole?<sup>e</sup> What, in such a case, becomes of national autonomy, which is “*inevitable for the proletariat of all nations*”? What sort of “solution” of the problem is it that mechanically squeezes nations into the Procrustean bed of an integral state?

Further: National autonomy is contrary to the whole course of development of nations. It calls for the organisation of nations; but can they be artificially welded together if in actual reality economic development tears whole groups from them and disperses them over various regions? There is no doubt that in the early stages of capitalism nations become welded together. But there is also no doubt that in the

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<sup>a</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 555.

<sup>b</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 556.

<sup>c</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 543.

<sup>d</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 542.

<sup>e</sup> See *Proceedings of the Brünn Social-Democratic Party Congress*, (Russian edition), p. 48.

higher stages of capitalism a process of dispersion of nations sets in, a process whereby whole groups separate off from nations and go off in search of a livelihood and subsequently settle permanently in other regions of the state, in the course of which these settlers lose their old contacts, acquire new contacts in their new domicile, and from generation to generation acquire, new habits and new tastes, and possibly a new language. One asks: Is it possible to unite into a single national union groups that have grown so distinct? Where are the magic hoops to unite what cannot be united? Is it conceivable that, for instance, the Germans of the Baltic Provinces and the Germans of Transcaucasia can be “welded into a single nation”? But if it is not conceivable and not possible, wherein does national autonomy differ from the utopia of the old nationalists, who endeavoured to turn back the wheel of history?

But the unity of a nation diminishes not only as a result of migration. It diminishes also from internal causes, owing to the growing acuteness of the class struggle. In the early stages of capitalism one may still speak of a “common culture” of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. But as large-scale industry develops and the class struggle becomes more and more acute, this “common culture” begins to melt away. One cannot seriously speak of the “common culture” of a nation when the masters and the workers of that nation cease to understand each other. What “common destiny” can there be when the bourgeoisie thirsts for war, and the proletariat declares “war on war”? Can a single inter-class national union be formed from such antithetical elements? And, after this, can one speak of the “fusion of all the members of the nation into a national-cultural community”?<sup>a</sup> Is it not obvious that national autonomy is contrary to the whole course of the class struggle?

But let us assume for a moment that the slogan “organise the nation” is practicable. One might understand bourgeois-nationalist parliamentarians endeavouring to “organise” a nation for the purpose of securing additional votes. But since when have social-democrats begun to occupy themselves with “organising” nations, “constituting” nations, “creating” nations?

What sort of social-democrats are they who in the epoch of extreme intensification of the class struggle organise inter-class national unions? Until now the Austrian, as well as every other social-democratic party, had one task before it, namely, to organise the proletariat. This task has apparently become “antiquated”. Springer and Bauer are now setting a “new” task, a more thrilling task, namely, to “create”, to “organise” a nation.

However, logic has its obligations: he who adopts national autonomy must also

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<sup>a</sup> Bauer, *The National Question*, p. 553.

adopt this “new” task; but to adopt the latter means to abandon the class position and to adopt the path of nationalism.

Springer’s and Bauer’s cultural-national autonomy is a subtle form of nationalism.

And it is by no means fortuitous that the national program of the Austrian Social-Democrats enjoins a concern for the “*preservation and development* of the national peculiarities of the peoples.” Just think: to, “preserve” such “national peculiarities” of the Transcaucasian Tatars as self-flagellation at the festival of *Shakhsei-Vakhsei*; or to “develop” such “national peculiarities” of the Georgians as the vendetta!

A demand of this character is quite in place in an outright bourgeois nationalist program; and if it appears in the program of the Austrian Social-Democrats it is because national autonomy tolerates rather than precludes such demands.

But if national autonomy is unsuitable now, it will be still more unsuitable in the future, socialist society.

Bauer’s prophecy regarding the “division of humanity into nationally delimited communities”<sup>a</sup> is refuted by the whole course of development of present-day human society. National partitions are being demolished and are falling, rather than becoming firmer. As early as the forties Marx declared that “national differences and antagonisms between peoples are daily more and more vanishing” and that “the supremacy of the proletariat will cause them to vanish still faster.”<sup>110</sup> The subsequent development of mankind, accompanied as it was by the colossal growth of capitalist production, the shuffling of nationalities and the amalgamation of people within ever larger territories, emphatically corroborates Marx’s thought.

Bauer’s desire to represent socialist society as a “chequered picture of national unions of persons and territorial corporations” is a timid attempt to substitute for Marx’s conception of socialism a revised version of Bakunin’s conception. The history of socialism proves that every such attempt harbours the elements of inevitable failure.

We shall not dwell on the “socialist principle of nationality” glorified by Bauer, which, in our opinion, substitutes for the socialist principle of the *class struggle* the bourgeois “*principle of nationality*”. If national autonomy is based on such a dubious principle, it must be confessed that it can only cause harm to the working-class movement.

True, such nationalism is not so transparent, for it is skilfully masked by socialist phrases, but it is all the more harmful to the proletariat for that reason. We can always cope with open nationalism, for it can easily be discerned. It is much more difficult to combat nationalism when it is masked and unrecognisable beneath its mask. Protected

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<sup>a</sup> See the beginning of this chapter.

by the armour of socialism, it is less vulnerable and more tenacious. Implanted among the workers, it poisons the atmosphere and spreads noxious ideas of mutual distrust and segregation among the workers of the different nationalities.

But this does not exhaust the harm caused by national autonomy. It prepares the ground not only for the segregation of nations, but also for breaking up the united labour movement. The idea of national autonomy creates the psychological conditions that make for the division of the united workers' party into separate parties built on national lines. The break-up of the party is followed by the break-up of the trade unions, and complete segregation is the result. In this way the united class movement is broken up into separate national rivulets.

Austria, the home of "national autonomy," provides the most deplorable examples of this. Since 1897 (the Wimberg Party Congress<sup>111</sup>) the one-time united Austrian Social-Democratic Party has been breaking up into separate parties. The break-up became still more marked after the Brünn Congress (1899), which adopted national autonomy. Matters have finally come to such a pass that in place of a united international party we now have six national parties, of which the Czech Social-Democratic Party will even have nothing to do with the German Social-Democratic Party.

But with the parties are associated the trade unions. In Austria, both in the parties and in the trade unions, the main brunt of the work is borne by the same social-democratic workers. There was therefore reason to fear that separatism in the party would lead to separatism in the trade unions and that the trade unions would also break up. That, in fact, is what happened: the trade unions have also divided according to nationality. Now things frequently go so far that the Czech workers will even break a strike of German workers, or will unite at municipal elections with the Czech bourgeois against the German workers.

It will be seen from this that cultural-national autonomy is no solution of the national problem. Nay more, it only serves to aggravate and confuse the problem by creating a soil which favours the destruction of the unity of the labour movement, fosters the segregation of the workers according to nationality [and] intensifies friction among them.

Such is the harvest of national autonomy. ■

## V. The Bund, Its Nationalism & Separatism

We said above that Bauer, while granting the necessity of national autonomy for the Czechs, Poles, and so on, is opposed to similar autonomy for the Jews. In answer to the question, “Should the working class demand autonomy for the Jewish people?” Bauer says that “national autonomy cannot be demanded by the Jewish workers”.<sup>a</sup> According to Bauer, the reason is that “capitalist society makes it impossible for them [the Jews — JS] to continue as a nation.”<sup>b</sup>

In brief, the Jewish nation is coming to an end, and hence there is nobody to demand national autonomy for. The Jews are being assimilated.

This view of the fate of the Jews as a nation is not a new one. It was expressed by Marx as early as the forties,<sup>c,112</sup> in reference chiefly to the German Jews. It was repeated by Kautsky in 1903,<sup>d</sup> in reference to the Russian Jews. It is now being repeated by Bauer in reference to the Austrian Jews, with the difference, however, that he denies not the present but the future of the Jewish nation.

Bauer explains the impossibility of preserving the existence of the Jews as a nation by the fact that “the Jews have no closed territory of settlement”.<sup>e</sup> This explanation, in the main a correct one, does not however express the whole truth. The fact of the matter is primarily that among the Jews there is no large and stable stratum connected with the land, which would naturally rivet the nation together, serving not only as its framework but also as a “national” market. Of the five to six million Russian Jews only 3-4% are connected with agriculture in any way. The remaining 96% are employed in trade, industry, in urban institutions, and in general are town dwellers; moreover, they are spread all over Russia and do not constitute a majority in a single gubernia.

Thus, interspersed as national minorities in areas inhabited by other nationalities,

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<sup>a</sup> *The National Question*, pp. 381, 396.

<sup>b</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 389.

<sup>c</sup> See his “The Jewish Question”, 1906.

<sup>d</sup> See “The Kishinev Pogrom and the Jewish Question”, 1903.

<sup>e</sup> *The National Question*, p. 388.

the Jews as a rule serve “foreign” nations as manufacturers and traders and as members of the liberal professions, naturally adapting themselves to the “foreign nations” in respect of language and so forth. All this, taken together with the increasing reshuffling of nationalities characteristic of developed forms of capitalism, leads to the assimilation of the Jews. The abolition of the Pale would only serve to hasten this process of assimilation.

The question of national autonomy for the Russian Jews consequently assumes a somewhat curious character: autonomy is being proposed for a nation whose future is denied and whose existence has still to be proved!

Nevertheless, this was the curious and shaky position adopted by the Bund when at its Sixth Congress (1905)<sup>113</sup> it adopted a “national program” based on national autonomy.

Two circumstances impelled the Bund to take this step.

The first circumstance is the existence of the Bund as an organisation of Jewish, and only Jewish, social-democratic workers. Even before 1897 the social-democratic groups active among the Jewish workers set themselves the aim of creating “a special Jewish workers’ organisation”.<sup>a</sup> They founded such an organisation in 1897 by uniting to form the Bund. This was at a time when Russian Social-Democracy as an integral body virtually did not yet exist. The Bund steadily grew and spread, and stood out more and more vividly against the background of the sunless days of Russian Social-Democracy ... Then came the 1900s. A *mass* labour movement came into being. Polish Social-Democracy grew and drew the Jewish workers into the mass struggle. Russian Social-Democracy grew and attracted the “Bund” workers. Lacking a territorial basis, the national framework of the Bund began to be too restrictive. The Bund was faced with the problem of either merging with the general international tide, or of upholding its independent existence as an extraterritorial organisation. The Bund chose the latter course.

Thus grew up the “theory” that the Bund is “the sole representative of the Jewish proletariat”.

But to justify this strange “theory” in any “simple” way became impossible. An underlining of “principle”, a justification on “principle” was needed. Cultural-national autonomy was such an underlining. The Bund seized upon it, borrowing it from the Austrian Social-Democrats. If the Austrians had not had such a program the Bund would have invented it in order to provide a justification for its independent existence “on principle”.

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<sup>a</sup> See *Forms of the National Movement*, etc., edited by Kastelyansky, p. 772.

Thus, after a timid attempt in 1901 (the Fourth Congress), the Bund finally adopted a “national program” in 1905 (the Sixth Congress).

The second circumstance is the peculiar position of the Jews as separate national minorities within integral regions of compact majorities of other nationalities. We have already said that this position is undermining the existence of the Jews as a nation and puts them on the road to assimilation. But this is an objective process. Subjectively, in the minds of the Jews, it provokes a reaction and gives rise to the demand for a guarantee of the rights of a national minority, for a guarantee against assimilation. Preaching as it does the virility of the Jewish “nationality,” the Bund could not avoid being in favour of a “guarantee”. And, having taken up this position, it could not but accept national autonomy. For if the Bund could seize upon any autonomy at all, it could only be national autonomy, i.e., *cultural-national* autonomy; there could be no question of territorial-political autonomy for the Jews, since the Jews have no definite and integral territory.

It is noteworthy that the Bund from the outset stressed the character of national autonomy as a guarantee of the rights of national minorities, as a guarantee of the “free development” of nations. It was not for nothing, that the representative of the Bund at the Second Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Party, Goldblatt, defined national autonomy as “institutions which *guarantee* them [i.e., nations — JS] complete freedom of cultural development”.<sup>a</sup> A similar proposal was made by supporters of the ideas of the Bund to the Social-Democratic group in the Fourth Duma ...

In this way the Bund adopted the curious position of national autonomy for the Jews.

We have examined above national autonomy in general. The examination showed that national autonomy leads to nationalism. We shall see later that the Bund has come to a similar end. But the Bund also regards national autonomy from a special angle, namely, as a *guarantee* of the rights of national minorities. Let us also examine the question from this special angle. This is all the more necessary since the problem of national minorities — and not of the Jewish minorities alone — is one of serious moment for social-democracy.

And so, it is a question of “*institutions which guarantee*” nations “complete freedom of cultural development.” (Our italics — JS.)

But what are these “institutions which guarantee”, etc.?

They are primarily the “National Council” of Springer and Bauer, something in the nature of a diet for cultural affairs.

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<sup>a</sup> See *Minutes of the Second Congress*, p. 176.

But can these institutions guarantee the nations “complete freedom of cultural development”? Can a diet for cultural affairs guarantee a nation against nationalist persecution?

The Bund believes it can.

But history proves the contrary.

At one time a diet existed in Russian Poland. It was a political diet and, of course, endeavoured to guarantee freedom of “cultural development” for the Poles. But, far from succeeding in doing so, it itself succumbed in the unequal struggle against the political conditions generally prevailing in Russia.

A diet has been in existence for a long time in Finland, and it too endeavours to protect the Finnish nationality from “encroachments”, but how far it succeeds in doing so everybody can see.

Of course, there are diets and diets, and it is not so easy to cope with the democratically organised Finnish diet as it was with the aristocratic Polish diet. But the *decisive* factor, nevertheless, is not the diet, but the general regime in Russia. If such a grossly Asiatic social and political regime existed in Russia now as in the past, at the time the Polish diet was abolished, things would go much harder with the Finnish diet. Moreover, the policy of “encroachments” upon Finland is growing, and it cannot be said that it has met with defeat ...

If this is the case with the old, historically evolved institutions — political diets — still less will young diets, young institutions, especially such feeble institutions as “cultural” diets, be able to guarantee the free development of nations.

Obviously, the point lies not in “institutions”, but in the general regime prevailing in the country. If there is no democracy in the country there can be no guarantee of “complete freedom for cultural development” of nationalities. One may say with certainty that the more democratic a country is the fewer are the “encroachments” made on the “freedom of nationalities”, and the greater are the guarantees against such “encroachments”.

Russia is a semi-Asiatic country, and therefore in Russia the policy of “encroachments” not infrequently assumes the grossest form, the form of pogroms. It need hardly be said that in Russia “guarantees” have been reduced to the very minimum.

Germany is already Europe, and she more or less enjoys political freedom. It is not surprising that in Germany the policy of “encroachments” never takes the form of pogroms.

In France, of course, the “guarantees” are still greater, for France is more democratic than Germany.

We will not mention Switzerland, where, thanks to her highly developed, although

bourgeois democracy, nationalities live in freedom, whether they are a minority or a majority.

Thus the Bund adopts a false position when it asserts that “institutions” by themselves are able to guarantee complete cultural development for nationalities.

It may be said that the Bund itself regards the establishment of democracy in Russia as a *preliminary* condition for the “creation of institutions” and guarantees of freedom. But this is not the case. From the report of the Eighth Conference of the Bund<sup>14</sup> it will be seen that the Bund thinks it can secure “institutions” *under the present system* in Russia by “reforming” the *Jewish community*.

The community [one of the leaders of the Bund said at this conference] may become the nucleus of future cultural-national autonomy. Cultural-national autonomy is a form of self-service on the part of nations, a form of satisfying national needs. The community form conceals within itself a similar content. They are links in the same chain, stages in the same evolution.<sup>a</sup>

On this basis, the conference decided that it was necessary to strive “for the *reform* of the Jewish community and its conversion by *legislative means* into a secular institution”, democratically organised.<sup>b</sup> (Our italics — JS.)

It is evident that the Bund considers that the condition and guarantee lie not in the democratisation of Russia, but in some future “secular institution” of the Jews, obtained by “reforming the Jewish community”, so to speak, by “legislative” means, through the Duma.

But we have already seen that “institutions” in themselves cannot serve as “guarantees” if the regime in the state generally is not a democratic one.

But what, it may be asked, will be the position under a future democratic system? Will not special “cultural institutions which guarantee”, etc., be required even under democracy? What is the position in this respect in democratic Switzerland, for example? Are there special cultural institutions in Switzerland on the pattern of Springer’s “National Council”? No, there are not. But do not the cultural interests of, for instance, the Italians, who constitute a minority there, suffer for that reason? One does not seem to hear that they do. And that is quite natural: in Switzerland all special cultural “institutions,” which supposedly “guarantee”, etc., are rendered superfluous by democracy.

And so, impotent in the present and superfluous in the future — such are the *institutions* of cultural-national autonomy, and such is national autonomy.

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<sup>a</sup> *Report of the Eighth Conference of the Bund*, 1911, p. 62.

<sup>b</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 83-84.

But it becomes still more pernicious when it is thrust upon a “nation” whose existence and future are open to doubt. In such cases the advocates of national autonomy are obliged to foster and preserve all the peculiar features of a “nation”, the bad as well as the good, just for the sake of “saving the nation” from assimilation, just for the sake of “preserving” it.

That the Bund should adopt this dangerous path was inevitable. And it did adopt it. We are referring to the resolutions of recent conferences of the Bund on the question of the “Sabbath”, “Yiddish”, etc.

Social-democracy strives to secure *for all nations* the right to use their native language. But that does not satisfy the Bund: it demands that “the right of the *Jewish language*” (our italics—JS) be championed with “exceptional persistence”,<sup>a</sup> and the Bund itself in the elections to the Fourth Duma declared that it would give “preference to those of them (i.e., candidates to the electoral colleges) who undertook to defend the rights of the Jewish language”.<sup>b</sup>

Not the *general* right of all nations to use their own language, but the *particular* right of the Jewish language, Yiddish! Let the workers of the various nationalities fight *primarily* for their own language: the Jews for Jewish, the Georgians for Georgian, and so forth. The struggle for the general right of all nations is a secondary matter. You need not, if you do not wish, recognise the right of all oppressed nationalities to use their native language; but if you have recognised the right of Yiddish, know that the Bund will vote for you, the Bund will “prefer” you.

But in what way then does the Bund differ from the bourgeois nationalists?

Social-democracy strives to secure the establishment of a compulsory weekly rest day. But that does not satisfy the Bund: it demands that “by legislative means ... the Jewish proletariat should be guaranteed the right to observe their Sabbath and be relieved of the obligation to observe another day”.<sup>c</sup>

It is to be expected that the Bund will take another “step forward” and demand the right to observe all the ancient Hebrew holidays. And if, to the misfortune of the Bund, the Jewish workers have discarded religious prejudices and do not want to observe them, the Bund, with its agitation in favour of “the right to the Sabbath”, will remind them of the Sabbath, it will, so to speak, cultivate among them “the Sabbatarian spirit”.

Quite comprehensible, therefore, are the “passionate speeches” of the delegates at the Eighth Conference of the Bund who demanded “Jewish hospitals”, a demand that

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<sup>a</sup> *Report of the Eighth Conference of the Bund*, p. 85.

<sup>b</sup> *Report of the Ninth Conference of the Bund*, 1912, p. 42.

<sup>c</sup> *Report of the Eighth Conference of the Bund*, p. 83.

was based on the argument that “a patient feels more at home among his own people”, that “the Jewish worker will not feel at ease among Polish workers, but will feel at ease among Jewish shopkeepers”.<sup>a</sup>

Preservation of everything Jewish, conservation of *all* the national peculiarities of the Jews, even those that are patently noxious to the proletariat, isolation of the Jews from everything non-Jewish, even the establishment of special hospitals — that is the level to which the Bund has sunk!

Comrade Plekhanov was right a thousand times over when he said that the Bund “is adapting socialism to nationalism”.<sup>115</sup> Of course, V. Kossovsky and Bundists like him may accuse Plekhanov of being a “demagogue”<sup>b</sup>,<sup>116</sup> — paper will put up with anything that is written on it — but those who are familiar with the activities of the Bund will easily realise that these doughty fellows are simply afraid to tell the truth about themselves and are hiding behind scurrilous accusations of “demagogy” ...

But since it holds such a position on the national question, the Bund was naturally obliged to demand the segregation of the Jewish workers also in the matter of organisation, to demand national sections within the Social-Democratic Party. Such is the logic of national autonomy!

And, in fact the Bund did pass from the theory of “sole representation” to the theory of “national demarcation” of workers. The Bund demands that the Russian Social-Democratic Party should “in its organisational structure introduce demarcation according to nationalities.”<sup>c</sup> From “demarcation” it made a “step forward” to the theory of “segregation”. It is not for nothing that speeches were made at the Eighth Conference of the Bund declaring that “national existence lies in segregation”.<sup>d</sup>

Organisational federalism harbours the elements of disintegration and separatism. The Bund is heading for separatism.

And, indeed, there is nothing else it can head for. Its very existence as an extraterritorial organisation drives it to separatism. The Bund does not possess a definite integral territory; it operates on “foreign” territories, whereas the neighbouring Polish, Lettish and Russian Social-Democratic parties are international territorial collective bodies. But the result is that every extension of these collective bodies means a “loss” to the Bund and a restriction of its field of action. There are two alternatives: either Russian Social-Democracy as a whole must be reconstructed on the principle of national federalism — which will enable the Bund to “secure” the Jewish proletariat for

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<sup>a</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68.

<sup>b</sup> See *Nasha Zarya*,<sup>117</sup> No. 9-10, 1912, p. 120.

<sup>c</sup> *An Announcement on the Seventh Congress of the Bund*,<sup>118</sup> p. 7

<sup>d</sup> *Report of the Eighth Conference of the Bund*, p. 72.

itself; or the territorial-international principle of these collective bodies remains in force — in which case the Bund must be reconstructed along international lines, as is the case with the Polish and Lettish Social-Democratic parties.

This explains why the Bund has always demanded that “Russian Social-Democracy should be reformed along federal lines”.<sup>a</sup>

In 1906, bending before the tide of feeling in favour of unity among the rank and file, the Bund chose a middle path and joined the ranks of the Russian Social-Democratic Party. But how did it join? Whereas the Polish and Lettish Social-Democrats joined for the purpose of peaceable joint action, the Bund joined with the purpose of waging war for a federation. That is exactly what Medem, the leader of the Bundists, said at the time:

“We are joining not for the sake of an idyll, but in order to fight. There are no idylls, and only Manilovs<sup>119</sup> can hope for them in the near future. The Bund must join the Party armed from head to foot.”<sup>b</sup>

It would be wrong to regard this as an expression of evil intent on Medem’s part. It is not a matter of evil intent, but of the peculiar position of the Bund, which compels it to fight the Russian Social-Democratic Party, which is built up on international lines. And in fighting it the Bund naturally violated the interests of unity. Finally, matters reached such a pitch that the Bund formally broke with the Russian Social-Democratic Party, violating its statutes, and in the elections to the Fourth Duma joining forces with the Polish nationalists against the Polish Social-Democrats.

The Bund apparently considered that a rupture was the best guarantee for independent activity.

And so the “principle” of organisational “demarcation” led to separatism and to a complete rupture.

In a controversy with the old *Iskra* on the question of federalism, the Bund once wrote:

The *Iskra* wants to assure us that federal relations between the Bund and Russian Social-Democracy are bound to weaken the ties between them. We cannot refute this opinion by referring to practice in Russia, for the simple reason that Russian Social-Democracy does not exist as a federal body. But we can refer to the extremely edifying experience of social-democracy in Austria, which assumed a federal character by virtue of the decision of the Party Congress of 1897.<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup> *National Autonomy and the Reform of Russian Social-Democracy on a Federal Basis*, 1902, published by the Bund.

<sup>b</sup> *Nashe Slovo*,<sup>120</sup> No. 3, Vilno, 1906, p. 24.

<sup>c</sup> *National Autonomy*, etc., 1902, p. 17, published by the Bund.

This was written in 1902.

But we are now in the year 1913. We now have both Russian “practice” and the “experience of social-democracy in Austria”.

What do they tell us?

Let us begin with “the extremely edifying experience of social-democracy in Austria”. Up to 1896 there was a united Social-Democratic Party in Austria. In that year the Czechs at the International Congress in London for the first time demanded separate representation, and got it. In 1897, at the Vienna (Wimberg) Party Congress, the united party was formally liquidated and in its place a federal league of six national “social-democratic groups” was set up. Subsequently these “groups” were converted into independent parties. The parties gradually severed contact. The parties were followed by the parliamentary groups, which also broke up — national “clubs” were formed. Next came the trade unions, which also split along national lines. Even the cooperative societies were affected, the Czech separatists calling upon the workers to split them up.<sup>a</sup> We will not dwell on the fact that separatist agitation weakens the workers’ sense of solidarity and frequently drives them to strike-breaking.

Thus “the extremely edifying experience of social-democracy in Austria” speaks *against* the Bund and for the old *Iskra*. Federalism in the Austrian party has led to the most outrageous separatism, to the destruction of the unity of the labour movement.

We have seen above that “practice in Russia” also bears this out. Like the Czech separatists, the Bundist separatists have broken with the general Russian Social-Democratic Party. As for the trade unions, the Bundist trade unions, they were always organised on national lines, that is to say, they were always cut off from the workers of other nationalities.

Complete segregation and complete rupture — that is what is revealed by the “Russian practice” in federalism.

It is not surprising that the effect of this state of affairs upon the workers is to weaken their sense of solidarity and to demoralise them; and the latter process is also penetrating the Bund. We are referring to the increasing collisions between the Jewish and the Polish workers in connection with unemployment. This is the kind of speeches that were uttered on this subject at the Ninth Conference of the Bund:

... We regard the Polish workers, who are ousting us, as pogromists, as scabs; we do not support their strikes, we break them. Secondly, we reply to being ousted by ousting in our turn: we reply to Jewish workers not being allowed into the factories by not allowing Polish workers near the benches ... *If we do not take this matter into our own*

<sup>b</sup> See the words quoted from a brochure by Vanek<sup>121</sup> in *Dokumente des Separatismus*, p. 29.

*hands the workers will follow others.*<sup>a</sup> (Our italics — JS.)

That is the way they talk about solidarity at a Bund conference.

You cannot go further than this in the way of “demarcation” and “segregation”. The Bund has achieved its aim: it is carrying its demarcation between the workers of different nationalities to the point of conflicts and strike-breaking. And there is no other course: “If we do not take this matter into our own hands *the workers will follow others ...*”

Disorganisation of the labour movement, demoralisation of the social-democratic ranks — that is whither the federalism of the Bund is leading.

Thus the idea of cultural-national autonomy, the atmosphere it creates, has proved to be even more pernicious in Russia than in Austria. ■

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<sup>a</sup> *Report of the Ninth Conference of the Bund*, p. 19.

## VI. The Caucasians & the Conference of the Liquidators

We spoke above of the waverings of one section of the Caucasian Social-Democrats who were unable to withstand the nationalist “epidemic”. These waverings were revealed in the fact that, strange as it may seem, the social-democrats mentioned followed in the footsteps of the Bund and declared in favour of cultural-national autonomy.

Regional autonomy for the Caucasus as a whole and cultural-national autonomy for the nations forming the Caucasus — that is the way these social-democrats, who, incidentally, are linked with the Russian Liquidators, formulate their demand.

Listen to their acknowledged leader, the not unknown N.<sup>122</sup>

Everybody knows that the Caucasus differs profoundly from the central gubernias, both as regards the racial composition of its population and as regards its territory and agricultural development. The exploitation and material development of such a region require local workers acquainted with local peculiarities and accustomed to the local climate and culture. All laws designed to further the exploitation of the local territory should be issued locally and put into effect by local forces. Consequently, the jurisdiction of the central organ of Caucasian self-government should extend to legislation on local questions ... Hence, the functions of the Caucasian centre should consist in the passing of laws designed to further the economic exploitation of the local territory and the material prosperity of the region.<sup>a</sup>

In a word, regional autonomy for the Caucasus.

If we abstract ourselves from the rather confused and incoherent arguments of N., it must be admitted that his conclusion is correct. Regional autonomy for the Caucasus, within the framework of a general state constitution, which N. does not deny, is indeed essential because of the peculiarity of its composition and its social conditions. This was also acknowledged by the Russian Social-Democratic Party when, at its Second Congress, it proclaimed “regional self-government for regions which in respect of

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<sup>a</sup> See the Georgian newspaper *Chveni Tskhovreba* (Our Life),<sup>123</sup> No. 12, 1912.

their social conditions and the composition of their population differ from the regions of Russia proper”.

When Martov submitted this point for discussion at the Second Congress, he justified it on the grounds that “the vast extent of Russia and the experience of our centralised administration point to the necessity and expediency of regional self-government for such large units as Finland, Poland, Lithuania and the Caucasus”.

But from this it follows that regional *self-government* is to be interpreted as regional *autonomy*.

But N. goes further than this. According to him, regional autonomy for the Caucasus covers “only one aspect of the question”.

So far we have spoken only of the material development of local life. But the economic development of a region is facilitated not only by economic activity but also by spiritual, cultural activity ... A culturally strong nation is strong also in the economic sphere ... But the cultural development of nations is possible only in the national languages ... Consequently, all questions connected with the native language are questions of national culture. Such are the questions of education, the judicature, the church, literature, art, science, the theatre, etc. If the material development of a region unites nations, national culture disunites them and places each in a separate sphere. Activities of the former kind are associated with a definite territory ... This is not the case with matters of national culture. These are associated not with a definite territory but with the existence of a definite nation. The fate of the Georgian language interests a Georgian, no matter where he lives. It would be a sign of profound ignorance to say that Georgian culture concerns only the Georgians who live in Georgia. Take, for instance, the Amenian church. Armenians of various localities and states take part in the administration of its affairs. Territory plays no part here. Or, for instance, the creation of a Georgian museum interests not only the Georgians of Tiflis, but also the Georgians of Baku, Kutais, St. Petersburg, etc. Hence, the administration and control of all affairs of national culture must be left to the nations concerned. We proclaim in favour of cultural-national autonomy for the Caucasian nationalities.<sup>a</sup>

In a word, since culture is not territory, and territory is not culture, cultural-national autonomy is required. That is all N. can say in the latter’s favour.

We shall not stop again to discuss national-cultural autonomy in general; we have already spoken of its objectionable character. We should only like to point out that, while being unsuitable in general, cultural-national autonomy is meaningless and nonsensical in relation to Caucasian conditions.

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<sup>a</sup> See the Georgian newspaper *Chveni Tskhovreba*, No. 12, 1912.

And for the following reason.

Cultural-national autonomy presumes more or less developed nationalities, with a developed culture and literature. Failing these conditions, autonomy loses all sense and reduces itself to an absurdity. But in the Caucasus there are a number of peoples each possessing a primitive culture, a separate language, but without its own literature; peoples, moreover, which are in a state of transition, partly becoming assimilated and partly continuing to develop. How is cultural-national autonomy to be applied to them? What is to be done with such peoples? How are they to be “organised” into separate cultural-national unions, such as are undoubtedly implied by cultural-national autonomy? What is to be done with the Mingrelians, the Abkhasians, the Adjarians, the Svanetians, the Lesghians, and so on, who speak different languages but do not possess a literature of their own? To what nations are they to be attached? Can they be “organised” into national unions? Around what “cultural affairs” are they to be “organised”?

What is to be done with the Ossetians, of whom the Transcaucasian Ossetians are becoming assimilated (but are as yet by no means wholly assimilated) by the Georgians, while the Caucasian Ossetians are partly being assimilated by the Russians and partly continuing to develop and are creating their own literature? How are they to be “organised” into a single national union?

To what national union should one attach the Adjarians, who speak the Georgian language, but whose culture is Turkish and who profess the religion of Islam? Shall they be “organised” separately from the Georgians *with regard to religious affairs* and together with the Georgians *with regard to other cultural affairs*? And what about the Kobuleti, the Ingushes, the Inghilois?

What kind of autonomy is that which excludes a whole number of peoples from the list?

No, this is not a solution of the national problem, but the fruit of an idle fancy.

But let us grant the impossible and assume that our N.'s national-cultural autonomy has been put into effect. Whither would it lead; what would be its results? Take, for instance, the Transcaucasian Tatars, with their minimum percentage of literates, their schools controlled by the omnipotent mullahs and their culture permeated by the religious spirit . . . It is not difficult to understand that to “organise” them into a cultural-national union would be to place them under the control of the mullahs, to deliver them over to the tender mercies of the reactionary mullahs, to create a new stronghold of spiritual enslavement of the Tatar masses to their worst enemy.

But since when have social-democrats made it a practice to bring grist to the mill of the reactionaries?

Could the Caucasian Liquidators find nothing better to “proclaim” than the confinement of the Transcaucasian Tatars within a cultural-national union which would place the masses under the thrall of vicious reactionaries?

No, this is no solution of the national problem.

The national problem in the Caucasus can be solved only *by drawing the belated nations and peoples into the common stream of a higher culture*. It is the only progressive solution and the only solution acceptable to social-democracy. Regional autonomy in the Caucasus is acceptable because it would draw the belated nations into the common cultural development; it would help them to cast off the shell of small-nation segregation; it would impel them forward and facilitate access to the benefits of higher culture. Cultural-national autonomy, however, acts in a diametrically opposite direction, because it shuts up the nations within their old shells, chains them to the lower rungs of cultural development and prevents them from rising to the higher rungs of culture.

In this way national autonomy counteracts the beneficial aspects of regional autonomy and nullifies it.

That is why the mixed type of autonomy which combines national-cultural autonomy and regional autonomy as proposed by N. is also unsuitable. This unnatural combination does not improve matters but makes them worse, because in addition to retarding the development of the belated nations it transforms regional autonomy into an arena of conflict between the nations organised in the national unions.

Thus cultural-national autonomy, which is unsuitable generally, would be a senseless reactionary undertaking in the Caucasus.

So much for the cultural-national autonomy of N. and his colleagues in the Caucasus.

Whether the Caucasian Liquidators will take “a step forward” and follow in the footsteps of the Bund on the question of organisation also, the future alone will show. So far, in the history of social-democracy federalism in organisation always preceded national autonomy in program. The Austrian Social-Democrats introduced organisational federalism in 1897, and it was only two years later (in 1899) that they adopted national autonomy. The Bundists spoke coherently of national autonomy for the first time in 1901, whereas organisational federalism had been practised by them since 1897.

The Caucasian Liquidators have begun from the end, from national autonomy. If they continue to follow in the footsteps of the Bund they will first have to demolish the existing organisational edifice, which was erected at the end of the nineties on the principles of internationalism.

But, easy though it may be to adopt national autonomy, which is as yet not understood by the workers, it will be difficult to demolish an edifice which it has taken

years to build and which has been raised and cherished by the workers of all the nationalities of the Caucasus. This Herostratian undertaking has only to be begun and the eyes of the workers will be opened to the nationalist character of cultural-national autonomy.



While the Caucasians are settling the national question in the usual manner, by means of verbal and written discussion, the All-Russian Conference of the Liquidators has invented a most unusual method. It is a simple and easy method. Listen to this:

Having heard the communication of the Caucasian delegation to the effect that ... it is necessary to demand national-cultural autonomy, this conference, while expressing no opinion on the merits of the demand, declares that such an interpretation of the clause of the program which recognises the right of every nationality to self-determination does not contradict the precise meaning of the latter.

Thus, first they “do not express an opinion on the merits” of the question, and then they “declare”. An original method ...

And what does this original conference “declare”?

That the “demand” for national-cultural autonomy “does not contradict the precise meaning” of the program, which recognises the right of nations to self-determination.

Let us examine this proposition.

The clause on self-determination refers to the rights of nations.<sup>124</sup> According to this clause, nations shall have the right not only of autonomy but also of secession. It is a question of *political* self-determination. Whom did the Liquidators want to fool when they endeavoured to misinterpret this right of nations to political self-determination, which has long been recognised by the whole of international social-democracy?

Or perhaps the Liquidators will try to wriggle out of the situation and defend themselves by the sophistry that cultural-national autonomy “does not contradict” the rights of nations? That is to say, if all the nations in a given state agree to arrange their affairs on the basis of cultural-national autonomy, they, the given sum of nations, are fully entitled to do so and nobody may *forcibly impose* a different form of political life on them. This is both new and brilliant. Should it not be added that, speaking generally, a nation has the right to abolish its own constitution, replace it by a system of tyranny and revert to the old order on the grounds that the nation, and the nation alone, has the right to determine its own destiny? We repeat: in this sense, neither cultural-national autonomy nor any other kind of nationalist reaction “contradicts” *the rights of nations*.

Is that what the esteemed conference wanted to say?

No, not that. It specifically says that cultural-national autonomy “does not contradict”, not the rights of nations, but “*the precise meaning*” of the program. The point here is the program and not the rights of nations.

And that is quite understandable. If it were a nation that addressed itself to the conference of Liquidators, the conference might have directly declared that the nation has a right to cultural-national autonomy. But it was not a nation that addressed itself to the conference, but a “delegation” of Caucasian Social-Democrats — bad social-democrats, it is true, but social-democrats nevertheless. And they enquired not about the rights of nations, but whether cultural-national autonomy contradicted *the principles of social-democracy*, whether it did not “contradict” “*the precise meaning*” of the program of the Social-Democratic Party.

Thus, *the rights of nations* and “*the precise meaning*” of the program of the Social-Democratic Party are not one and the same thing.

Evidently, there are demands which, while they do not contradict the rights of nations, may yet contradict “the precise meaning” of the program.

For example. The program of the social-democrats contains a clause on freedom of religion. According to this clause any group of persons *have the right* to profess any religion they please: Catholicism, the religion of the Orthodox Church, and so forth. social-democrats will combat all forms of religious persecution, be it of members of the Orthodox Church, Catholics or Protestants. Does this mean that Catholicism, Protestantism, etc., “do not contradict the precise meaning”, of the program? No, it does not. social-democrats will always protest against persecution of Catholicism or Protestantism, they will always defend the right of nations to profess any religion they please; but at the same time, on the basis of a correct understanding of the interests of the proletariat, they will carry on agitation against Catholicism, Protestantism and the religion of the Orthodox Church in order to achieve the triumph of the socialist world outlook.

And they will do so just because there is no doubt that Protestantism, Catholicism, the religion of the Orthodox Church, etc., “contradict the precise meaning” of the program, i.e., the correctly understood interests of the proletariat.

The same must be said of self-determination. Nations have a right to arrange their affairs as they please; they have a right to preserve any of their national institutions, whether beneficial or pernicious — nobody can (nobody has a right to!) *forcibly* interfere in the life of a nation. But that does not mean that the Social-Democratic Party will not combat and agitate against the pernicious institutions of nations and against the inexpedient demands of nations. On the contrary, it is the duty of the Social-Democratic Party to conduct such agitation and to endeavour to influence the will of nations so

that the nations may arrange their affairs in the way that will best suit the interests of the proletariat. For this reason the Social-Democratic Party, while fighting for the right of nations to self-determination, will at the same time agitate, for instance, against the secession of the Tatars, or against cultural-national autonomy for the Caucasian nations; for both, while not contradicting the *rights* of these nations, do contradict “*the precise meaning*” of the program, i.e., the interests of the Caucasian proletariat.

Obviously, “the rights of nations” and the “precise meaning” of the program are on two entirely different planes. Whereas the “precise meaning” of the program expresses the interests of the proletariat, as scientifically formulated in the program of the latter, the rights of nations may express the interests of any class — bourgeoisie, aristocracy, clergy, etc. — depending on the strength and influence of these classes. The former sets forth the *duties* of Marxists, the latter the *rights* of nations, which are made up of various classes. The rights of nations and the principles of social-democracy may or may not “contradict” each other, just as, say, the pyramid of Cheops may or may not contradict the famous conference of the Liquidators. They are simply incommensurable.

But from this it follows that the esteemed conference unpardonably muddled two entirely different things. The result obtained was not a solution of the national problem but an absurdity, according to which the rights of nations and the principles of social-democracy “do not contradict” each other, and, consequently, every demand of a nation may be made compatible with the interests of the proletariat; consequently, no demand of a nation which is striving for self-determination will “contradict the precise meaning” of the program!

Logic is shown no mercy.

It was this absurdity that gave rise to the now famous resolution of the conference of the Liquidators which declares that the demand for national-cultural autonomy “does not contradict the precise meaning” of the program.

But it was not only the laws of logic that were violated by the conference of the Liquidators.

By sanctioning cultural-national autonomy it also violated its duty to Russian Social-Democracy. It most definitely did violate “the precise meaning” of the program, for it is well known that the Second Congress, which adopted the program, *emphatically repudiated* cultural-national autonomy. This is what was said at the congress in this connection:

*Goldblatt* (Bundist): ... I deem it necessary that special institutions be set up to protect the freedom of cultural development of nationalities, and I therefore propose that the following words be added to Par. 8: “*and the creation of institutions which will guarantee*

*them complete freedom of cultural development*". [This, as we know, is the Bund's definition of cultural-national autonomy — JS.]

*Martynov* pointed out that general institutions must be so constituted as to protect particular interests also. It is impossible to create a *special* institution to guarantee freedom for cultural development of the nationalities.

*Yegorov*: On the question of nationality we can adopt only negative proposals, i.e., we are opposed to all restrictions upon nationality. But we, as social-democrats, are not concerned with whether any particular nationality will develop as such. That is a spontaneous process.

*Koltsov*: The delegates from the Bund are always offended when their nationalism is referred to. Yet the amendment proposed by the delegate from the Bund is a purely nationalist one in character. We are asked to take definitely offensive measures in order to support even nationalities that are dying out.

In the end "*Goldbatt's amendment was rejected by the majority, only three votes being cast for it*".

Thus it is clear that the conference of the Liquidators did "contradict the precise meaning" of the program. It violated the program.

The Liquidators are now trying to justify themselves by referring to the Stockholm Congress, which they allege sanctioned cultural-national autonomy. Thus, V. Kossovsky writes:

As we know, according to the agreement adopted by the Stockholm Congress, the Bund was allowed to preserve its national program (pending a decision on the national question by a general party congress). This congress recorded that national-cultural autonomy at any rate does not contradict the general party program.<sup>a</sup>

But the efforts of the Liquidators are vain. The Stockholm Congress never thought of sanctioning the program of the Bund — it merely agreed to leave the question open for the time being. The brave Kossovsky did not have enough courage to tell the whole truth. But the facts speak for themselves. Here they are:

An amendment was moved by Galin: "That the question of the national program *be left open in view of the fact that it is not being examined by the congress*" (For — 50, against —32.)

Voice: What does that mean — to be left open?

Chairman: When we say that the national question is left open, it means that the Bund may retain its decision on this question until the next congress.<sup>b</sup> [Our italics —

<sup>a</sup> *Nasha Zarya*, No. 9-10, 1912, p. 120.

<sup>b</sup> *Nashe Slovo*, No. 8, 1906, p. 53.

JS.]

As you see, the congress even did “not examine” the question of the national program of the Bund — it simply left it “open”, leaving the Bund itself to decide the fate of its program until the next general congress met. In other words, the Stockholm Congress avoided the question, expressing no opinion on cultural-national autonomy one way or another.

The conference of the Liquidators, however, most definitely undertakes to give an opinion on the matter, declares cultural-national autonomy to be acceptable, and endorses it in the name of the party program.

The difference is only too evident.

Thus, in spite of all its artifices, the conference of the Liquidators did not advance the national question a single step.

All it could do was to squirm before the Bund and the Caucasian national-Liquidators. ■

## VII. The National Problem in Russia

It remains for us to suggest a positive solution of the national problem.

We start out from the assumption that the problem can be solved only in intimate connection with the present situation in Russia.

Russia is in a transitional period, when “normal,” “constitutional” life has not yet been established and when the political crisis has not yet been settled. Days of storm and “complications” are ahead. And this gives rise to the movement, the present and the future movement, the aim of which is to achieve complete democracy.

It is in connection with this movement that the national problem must be examined.

Thus the complete democratisation of the country is the *basis* and condition for the solution of the national problem.

When seeking a solution of the problem we must take account not only of the situation at home but also of the situation abroad. Russia is situated between Europe and Asia, between Austria and China. The growth of democracy in Asia is inevitable. The growth of imperialism in Europe is not fortuitous. In Europe, capital finds itself too restricted, and it is reaching out towards foreign countries in search of new markets, cheap labour and new fields of investments. But this leads to external complications and to war. Nobody will dare to say that the Balkan War<sup>125</sup> is the end and not the beginning of the complications. It is quite possible, therefore, that a combination of internal and external factors may arise in which one or another nationality in Russia may find it necessary to raise and settle the question of its independence. And, of course, it is not for Marxists to create obstacles in such cases.

But it follows from this that Russian Marxists cannot dispense with the right of nations to self-determination.

Thus *the right of self-determination is an essential element* in the solution of the national problem.

Further. What must be our attitude towards nations which for one reason or another will prefer to remain within the general framework?

We have seen that cultural-national autonomy is unsuitable. Firstly, it is artificial and impracticable, for it proposes artificially to draw into a single nation people whom the very march of events, real events, is disuniting and dispersing to every corner of

the country. Secondly, it stimulates nationalism, because it tends to the view which advocates the “demarcation” of people according to national divisions, the “organisation” of nations, the “preservation” and cultivation of “national peculiarities” — a thing that is entirely incompatible with social-democracy. It is not fortuitous that the Moravian separatists in the Reichsrat, having served themselves from the German Social-Democratic deputies, united with the Moravian bourgeois deputies to form a single, so to speak, Moravian “ring”. Nor is it fortuitous that the separatists of the Bund have got themselves involved in nationalism by acclaiming the “Sabbath” and “Yiddish”. There are no Bundist deputies yet in the Duma, but in the Bund area there is a clerical-reactionary Jewish community, in the “controlling institutions” of which the Bund is arranging, for a beginning, a “get-together” of the Jewish workers and the bourgeois.<sup>a</sup> Such is the logic of cultural-national autonomy.

Thus, *national* autonomy does not solve the problem.

What is the way out?

The only real solution is *regional* autonomy, autonomy for such crystallised units as Poland, Lithuania, the Ukraine, the Caucasus, etc.

The advantage of regional autonomy consists firstly in the fact that it does not deal with a fiction bereft of territory, but with a definite population inhabiting a definite territory. Secondly, it does not divide people according to nation, it does not strengthen national partitions; on the contrary, it only serves to break down these partitions and unites the population in such a manner as to open the way for division of a different kind, division according to class. Finally, it provides the opportunity of utilising the natural wealth of the region and of developing its productive forces in the best possible way without awaiting the decisions of a common centre — functions which are not proper to cultural-national autonomy.

Thus *regional autonomy is an essential element* in the solution of the national problem.

Of course, not one of the regions constitutes a compact, homogeneous nation, for each is interspersed with national minorities. Such are the Jews in Poland, the Letts in Lithuania, the Russians in the Caucasus, the Poles in the Ukraine, and so on. It may be feared, therefore, that the minorities will be oppressed by the national majorities. But there will be grounds for this fear only if the old order continues to prevail in the country. Give the country complete democracy and all grounds for this fear will vanish.

It is proposed to bind the dispersed minorities into a single national union. But

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<sup>a</sup> See *Report of the Eighth Conference of the Bund*, the concluding part of the resolution on the community.

what minorities want is not an artificial union, but real rights in the localities they inhabit. What can such a union give them *without* complete democracy? On the other hand, what need is there for a national union *when there is* complete democracy?

What is it that particularly agitates a national minority?

A minority is discontented not because there is no national union but because it does not enjoy the right to use its native language. Permit it to use its native language and the discontent will pass of itself.

A minority is discontented not because there is no artificial union but because it does not possess its own schools. Give it its own schools and all grounds for discontent will disappear.

A minority is discontented not because there is no national union, but because it does not enjoy liberty of conscience (religious liberty), liberty of locomotion, etc. Give it these liberties and it will cease to be discontented.

Thus *national equality in all forms (language, schools, etc.) is an essential element* in the solution of the national problem. Consequently, a state law based on complete democracy in the country is required, prohibiting all national privileges without exception and every kind of disability or restriction on the rights of national minorities.

That, and that alone, is the real, not a paper guarantee of the rights of a minority.

One may or may not deny the existence of a logical connection between organisational federalism and cultural-national autonomy. But one cannot deny the fact that the latter creates an atmosphere favouring unlimited federalism, which tends towards complete rupture, towards separatism. When the Czechs in Austria and the Bundists in Russia began with autonomy, passed to federation and ended in separatism, there can be no doubt that an important part in this was played by the nationalist atmosphere that is naturally generated by cultural-national autonomy. It is not fortuitous that national autonomy and organisational federalism go hand in hand. It is quite understandable. Both demand division according to nationality. Both presume organisation on national lines. The similarity is beyond question. The only difference is that in one case the population generally are divided, while in the other it is the social-democratic workers who are divided.

We know whither the division of workers along national lines leads. The disintegration of a united workers' party, the division of trade unions along national lines, aggravation of national friction, national strike-breaking, complete demoralisation within the ranks of social-democracy — such are the fruits of organisational federalism. This is eloquently borne out by the history of social-democracy in Austria and the activities of the Bund in Russia.

The only cure for this is organisation on international lines.

The aim must be to unite the workers in Russia into *united* and *integral* collective bodies embracing all the nationalities in the various localities and to unite these collective bodies into a *single* party.

It goes without saying that a party structure of this kind does not preclude, but on the contrary presumes, wide autonomy for the *regions* within the single integral party.

The experience of the Caucasus proves the expediency of an organisation of this type. If the Caucasians have succeeded in overcoming the national friction between the Armenian and Tatar workers, if they have succeeded in safeguarding the population against massacres and shootings, if in Baku, that kaleidoscope of national groups, national collisions are now no longer possible, and if it has been possible to draw the workers there into the single current of a powerful movement — the international structure of the Caucasian Social-Democratic Party was not the least factor in bringing this about.

Type of organisation influences not only practical work. It stamps an indelible impress on the whole mental life of the workers. The worker lives the life of his organisation, which stimulates his intellectual growth and educates him. And thus, moving within his organisation and continually meeting comrades from other nationalities, and fighting side by side with them a common struggle under the leadership of a common collective body, he becomes deeply imbued with the idea that workers are *primarily* members of one class family, members of the one army of socialism. And this cannot but have a tremendous educational value for large sections of the working class.

Therefore, the international type of organisation serves as a school of fraternal sentiments and is a tremendous agitational factor on behalf of internationalism.

But this is not the case with an organisation based on national lines. When the workers are organised according to nationality they segregate themselves within their national shells, fenced off from each other by organisational partitions. The stress is laid not on what is *common* to the workers but on what distinguishes them from each other. In this type of organisation the worker is *primarily* a member of his nation: Jew, Pole, and so on. It is not surprising that *national* federalism in organisation inculcates in the workers a spirit of national aloofness.

Therefore, the national type of organisation is a school of national narrow-mindedness and prejudice.

Thus we are confronted by two *fundamentally* different types of organisation: the type based on international solidarity and the type based on the organisational “demarcation” of the workers according to nationality.

Attempts to reconcile these two types have hitherto been vain. The compromise

rules of the Austrian Social-Democratic Party drawn up in Wimberg in 1897 were ineffective. The Austrian party fell to pieces and dragged the trade unions with it. "Compromise" proved to be not only utopian, but pernicious. Strasser is right when he says that "separatism achieved its first triumph at the Wimberg Party Congress".<sup>a</sup> The same is true in Russia. The "compromise" with the federalism of the Bund which took place at the Stockholm Congress ended in a complete fiasco. The Bund violated the Stockholm compromise. Ever since the Stockholm Congress the Bund has been an obstacle to the union of the workers in the various localities into a *single* organisation which would include the workers of all nationalities. And the Bund has obstinately persisted in its separatist tactics in spite of the fact that in 1907 and in 1908 the Russian Social-Democratic Party repeatedly demanded that unity should at last be established from below among the workers of all nationalities.<sup>126</sup> The Bund, which began with organisational national autonomy, actually passed to federalism, only to end in complete rupture and separatism. And by breaking with the Russian Social-Democratic Party it caused disharmony and disorganisation in the ranks of the latter. Let us recall the Jagiello affair,<sup>127</sup> for instance.

The path of "compromise" must therefore be discarded as utopian and harmful.

One thing or the other: *either* the federalism of the Bund, in which case the Russian Social-Democratic Party must re-form itself on a basis of "demarcation" of the workers along national lines; *or* an international type of organisation, in which case the Bund must re-form itself on a basis of territorial autonomy after the pattern of the Caucasian, Lettish and Polish Social-Democratic Parties, and thus make possible the direct union of the Jewish workers with the workers of the other nationalities of Russia.

There is no middle course: principles triumph, they do not "compromise".

Thus the principle of international solidarity of the workers is an essential element in the solution of the national problem. ■

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<sup>a</sup> See his *Der Arbeiter und die Nation*, 1912.

# Notes

## Introduction

- 1 Lenin, *“Left-wing” Communism — An Infantile Disorder* (Resistance Books: Sydney, 1999), p. 30.
- 2 Lenin, “The National Program of the RSDLP”, this edition, p. 40.
- 3 Lenin, “The Question of Nationalities or ‘Autonomisation’”, this edition, p. 188.
- 4 Lenin, “On the Manifesto of the League of Armenian Social-Democrats”, this edition, p. 13.
- 5 Lenin, “Once More on the Segregation of the Schools According to Nationality”, this edition, p. 46.
- 6 *Ibid.*, p. 46.
- 7 *Ibid.*, p. 46.
- 8 Lenin, “Critical Remarks on the National Question”, this edition, p. 64.
- 9 *Ibid.*, pp. 57-58.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 58.
- 11 Lenin, “The Question of Nationalities or ‘Autonomisation’”, this edition, p. 189.
- 12 Lenin, “The Right of Nations to Self-Determination”, this edition, p. 92.
- 13 Lenin, “Critical Remarks on the National Question”, this edition, pp. 63-64.

## On the Manifesto of the League of Armenian Social-Democrats

- 14 Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 6 (Progress Publishers: Moscow, 1961).

## The National Question in Our Program

- 15 Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 6.
- 16 Lenin is quoting from a series of articles carried in the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* in August-September 1848 under the general title of “The Frankfurt Assembly Debates the Polish Question”. See Marx & Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 7 (Lawrence & Wishart: London, 1977).
- 17 Lenin is quoting from Franz Mehring’s introduction to the third volume of the *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels*, 1841 to 1850, which he published in 1902. (*Gesammelte Schriften von Karl Marx und Friedrich Engels*, 1841 bis 1850. Dritter Band, Stuttgart. Verlag von J.H.W. Dietz, Nachf., 1902)

### The Position of the Bund in the Party

- 18 Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 7 (Progress Publishers: Moscow, 1961).
- 19 *Arbeiterstimme* (Worker's Voice) — The central organ of the Bund; it appeared from 1897 to 1905.
- 20 The reference is to the decision of the First Congress of the RSDLP that the Bund “is affiliated to the party as an autonomous organisation independent only in regard to questions specifically concerning the Jewish proletariat”. (*The CPSU in Resolutions and Decisions of Its Congresses, Conferences, and Plenary Meetings of the Central Committee*, 1954, Part I, p. 14.)
- 21 The incident of the Bund's campaign against the Ekaterinoslav party committee is described in Lenin's article “Does the Jewish Proletariat Need an ‘Independent Political Party?’” (See *Collected Works*, Vol. 6.)
- 22 Mephistopheles' injunction to the student in Goethe's *Faust*.
- 23 “*Tail-ism*” (*khvostism*), “*tail-enders*” — Expressions originally coined by Lenin to describe the Economists, who denied the leading role of the party and the importance of theory in the working-class movement; their position implied that the party should trail after the spontaneously developing movement, following in the tail of events.
- 24 The quotations are from Alfred Naquet's article “Drumont and Bernard Lazare”, published on September 24, 1903 in the Paris *La Petite République*, at that time the organ of the French reformist socialists. The paper was founded in 1875; its contributors included Jaurès, Millerand and other well-known personalities.

### The Working Class & the National Question

- 25 Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 19 (Progress Publishers: Moscow, 1963).

### Resolution on the National Question

- 26 Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 19.
- 27 The resolution refers here to the decision adopted by the liquidator's August Conference in 1912 to the effect that “cultural-national autonomy” was compatible with the RSDLP program.

### ‘Cultural-National’ Autonomy

- 28 Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 19.

### The National Program of the RSDLP

- 29 Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 19.
- 30 The reference is to Stalin's *Marxism and the National Question* (see the appendix to this

edition).

- 31 Lenin is referring to Plekhanov's article "Draft Program of the Russian Social-Democratic Party", published in *Zarya*, No. 4, August 1902.

*Zarya* — A Marxist scientific and political journal published legally in Stuttgart in 1901-02 by the Editorial Board of *Iskra*. Altogether three issues of *Zarya* appeared. The aims of the journal were set forth in the "Draft of a Declaration of the Editorial Board of *Iskra* and *Zarya*" written by Lenin in Russia. In 1902, during the disagreement and conflicts that arose on the Editorial Board of *Iskra* and *Zarya*, Plekhanov proposed a plan for separating the newspaper from the journal (with *Zarya* remaining under his editorship), but this proposal was not accepted, and the two publications continued under a single editorial board.

*Zarya* criticised international and Russian revisionism, and defended the theoretical principles of Marxism. It published numerous articles by Lenin.

### Once More on the Segregation of the Schools ...

- 32 Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 19.

- 33 A reference to §8 of the RSDLP program adopted at the second congress of the party.

### Critical Remarks on the National Question

- 34 Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 20 (Progress Publishers: Moscow, 1964).

The article "Critical Remarks on the National Question" was written by Lenin in October-December 1913 and published the same year in the Bolshevik legal journal *Prosvescheniye* Nos. 10, 11 and 12.

The article was preceded by lectures on the national question which Lenin delivered in a number of Swiss cities — Zurich, Geneva, Lausanne and Berne — in the summer of 1913.

In the autumn of 1913 Lenin made a report on the national question at the "August" ("Summer") Conference of the Central Committee of the RSDLP with party workers. A resolution on the report drafted by Lenin was adopted. After the conference Lenin started work on his article "Critical Remarks on the National Question".

- 35 *Severnaya Pravda* (Northern Truth) — One of the names of the newspaper *Pravda*, a legal Bolshevik daily published in St. Petersburg from April 1912.
- 36 *Zeit* (Time) — The weekly organ of the Bund, published in Yiddish in St. Petersburg from December 20, 1912 (January 2, 1913) to May 5(18), 1914.
- 37 *Dzvin* (The Bell) — A monthly legal nationalist journal of Menshevik orientation, published in the Ukrainian language in Kiev from January 1913 to the middle of 1914.
- 38 *Russkoye Slovo* (Russian Word) — A daily, published in Moscow from 1895 (the first trial issue appeared in 1894) to July 1918. Formally non-party, the paper defended the interests

of the Russian bourgeoisie from a moderate-liberal platform. News was given a wide coverage in the paper, which was the first in Russia to send special correspondents to all the large cities at home and to many foreign capitals.

- 39 This refers to the congress of the Austrian Social-Democratic Party held in Brünn (Austria) from September 24 to 29, 1899. The national question was the chief item on the agenda. Two resolutions expressing different points of view were submitted to the congress: (1) the resolution of the party's central committee supporting the idea of the territorial autonomy of nations, and (2) the resolution of the committee of the South-Slav Social-Democratic Party supporting the idea of extra-territorial cultural-national autonomy.

The congress unanimously rejected the program of cultural-national autonomy, and adopted a compromise resolution recognising national autonomy within the boundaries of the Austrian state. (See Lenin's article "A Contribution to the History of the National Program in Austria and in Russia", *Collected Works*, Vol. 20.)

- 40 JSLP (Jewish Socialist Labour Party) — A petty-bourgeois nationalist organisation, founded in 1906. Its program was based on the demand for national autonomy for the Jews — the creation of extra-territorial Jewish parliaments authorised to settle questions concerning the political organisation of Jews in Russia. The JSLP stood close to the Socialist-Revolutionaries, with whom it waged a struggle against the RSDLP.
- 41 *Luch* (Ray) — A legal daily of the Menshevik liquidators, published St. Petersburg from September 16(29), 1912 to July 5(18), 1913; 237 issues were published. The newspaper was maintained chiefly by contributions from the liberals. Ideological leadership was in the hands of P.B. Axelrod, F.I. Dan, L. Martov, and A.S. Martynov. The liquidators used the columns of the paper to oppose the revolutionary tactics of the Bolsheviks, advocate the opportunist slogan of an "open party", attack the revolutionary mass strikes of the workers, and attempt to revise the most important points of the party program. Lenin wrote that *Luch* was "enslaved by a liberal policy" and called the paper a mouthpiece of the renegades.
- 42 Lenin refers to Stalin's article "Marxism and the National Question" published in the legal Bolshevik journal *Prosveshcheniye*, Nos. 3, 4 and 5 for 1913 under the title "The National Question and Social-Democracy". Chapter 4 of Stalin's article quotes the text of the national program adopted at the 1899 Brünn Congress of the Austrian Social-Democratic Party. (See this volume, pp. 214-215.)
- 43 *Novaya Rabochaya Gazeta* (New Workers' Paper) — A legal daily of the Menshevik liquidators, published in St. Petersburg from August 1913. From January 30 (February 12), 1914 it was superseded by *Severnaya Rabochaya Gazeta* (Northern Workers' Paper) and subsequently by *Nasha Rabochaya Gazeta* (Our Workers' Paper). Lenin repeatedly referred to this newspaper as the *Novaya Likvidatorskaya Gazeta* (New Liquidationist Paper).
- 44 Lenin obtained these figures from the statistical handbook *One-Day Census of Elementary*

*Schools in the Empire, Made on January 18, 1911. Issue I, Part 2, St. Petersburg Educational Area. Gubernias of Archangel, Vologda, Novgorod, Olonets, Pskov and St. Petersburg* (St. Petersburg, 1912) p. 72.

- 45 *Przegląd Socjaldemokratyczny* (Social-Democratic Review) — A journal published by the Polish Social-Democrats in close cooperation with Rosa Luxemburg in Cracow 1902-04 and 1908-10.
- 46 *Vestnik Yevropy* (European Messenger) — A bourgeois-liberal monthly historico-political and literary magazine; appeared in St. Petersburg 1866-1910.
- 47 Lenin is referring to an article he was planning on “The Right of Nations to Self-Determination”. The article was written in February-May 1914. (See this edition, p. 78.)

### The Right of Nations to Self-Determination

- 48 Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 20.
- 49 *Nauchnaya Mysl* (Scientific Thought) — A journal of a Menshevik trend, published in Riga in 1908.
- 50 See Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1 (Penguin Books: Harmondsworth, 1976), pp. 580 and 931.
- 51 For the Brünn Congress, see notes 39 and 42 above.
- 52 L.VI. — L. Vladimirov, pseudonym of M.K. Sheinfinkel, a Social-Democrat.
- 53 This refers to the Second All-Ukraine Students’ Congress held in Lvov on June 19-22 (July 2-5), 1913, to coincide with anniversary celebrations in honour of Ivan Franko, the great Ukrainian writer, scholar, public figure, and revolutionary democrat. A report “The Ukrainian Youth and the Present Status of the Nations” was made at the Congress by the Ukrainian Social-Democrat Dontsov, who supported the slogan of an independent Ukraine.
- 54 *Shlyakhi* (Paths) — Organ of the Ukrainian Students’ Union, published in Lvov from April 1913 to March 1914.
- 55 “Grab ’em and hold ’em” was an expression of Constable Mymretsov, a character in Gleb Uspensky’s “Sentry Box”, a vulgar and ignorant policeman in a small provincial town in tsarist Russia.
- 56 Lenin is quoting from Griboyedov’s comedy *Wit Works Woe*.
- 57 *Naprzód* (Forward) — Central organ of the Social-Democratic Party of Galicia and Silesia, published in Cracow beginning with 1892. The newspaper, which was a vehicle of petty-bourgeois nationalist ideas, was described by Lenin as “a very bad, and not at all Marxist organ”.
- 58 This refers to the abolition of serfdom in Russia in 1861.
- 59 Lenin is referring to the Polish national liberation insurrection of 1863-64 against the tsarist autocracy.

The original cause of the rising was the tsarist government’s decision to carry out a

special recruitment aimed at removing the revolutionary-minded youth *en masse* from the cities. At first the rising was led by a Central National Committee formed by the “Reds”, the party of the petty nobility, in 1862. Its program demanding national independence for Poland, equal rights for all men in the land, irrespective of religion or birth, transfer to the peasants of the land tilled by them with full right of ownership and without redemption payments, abolition of the *corvée*, compensation for the landlords or the alienated lands out of the state funds, etc., attracted to the uprising diverse sections of the Polish population — artisans, workers, students, intellectuals from among the gentry, part of the peasantry, and the clergy.

In the course of the insurrection, elements united around the party of the “Whites” (the party of the big landed aristocracy and the big bourgeoisie) joined it with the intention of using it in their own interests and, with the help of Britain and France, securing a profitable deal with the tsarist government.

The attitude of the revolutionary democrats of Russia towards the rebels was one of deep sympathy, the members of *Zemlya i Volya* (Land and Freedom) secret society associated with N.G. Chernyshevsky trying to give them every possible assistance. The Central Committee of *Zemlya i Volya* issued an appeal “To the Russian Officers and Soldiers” which was distributed among the troops sent to suppress the insurrection. A.I. Herzen and N.P. Ogaryov published a number of articles in *Kolokol* devoted to the struggle of the Polish people, and rendered material aid to the rebels.

Owing to the inconsistency of the “Reds”, who failed to hold the revolutionary initiative, the leadership of the uprising passed into the hands of the “Whites” who betrayed it. By the summer of 1864, the insurrection was brutally crushed by the tsarist troops.

Marx and Engels, who regarded the Polish insurrection of 1863-64 as a progressive movement, were fully in sympathy with it and wished the Polish people victory in its struggle for national liberation. On behalf of the German emigrant colony in London, Marx wrote an appeal for aid to the Poles.

60 Lenin refers to Wilhelm Liebknecht’s reminiscences of Marx.

61 See Marx’s letter to Engels dated July 5, 1870, *Collected Works*, Vol. 43 (Progress Publishers: Moscow, 1988).

62 Lenin is quoting from G.V. Plekhanov’s article “The Draft Program of the Russian Social-Democratic Party” published in *Zarya* No. 4, 1902.

63 A quotation from the sketch “Abroad” by the Russian satirist Shchedrin (Saltykov).

64 Lenin quotes an expression from *Sketches of Seminary Life* by the Russian writer N.G. Pomyalovsky.

65 Lenin quotes the words of a Sevastopol soldiers’ song written by Leo Tolstoy. The song is about the unsuccessful operation of the Russian troops at the river Chornaya on August 4,

1855, during the Crimean War. In that action General Read commanded two divisions.

## The Revolutionary Proletariat & the Right of Nations to Self-Determination

66 Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 21 (Progress Publishers: Moscow, 1964).

67 See Marx's letters to Engels of June 7 and 20, 1866 and of November 2, 1867, Marx & Engels, *Selected Correspondence* (Progress Publishers: Moscow, 1975)

## The Socialist Revolution & the Right of Nations to Self-Determination

68 Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 22 (Progress Publishers: Moscow, 1964).

69 The incident was caused by the brutality of a Prussian officer towards Alsatians in Zabern, Alsace, in November 1913, and resulted in a burst of indignation among the local, mainly French, population against the Prussian militarists. (See Lenin's article "Zabern", *Collected Works*, Vol. 19.)

70 See Marx's letters to Engels of November 2 and 30, 1867, Marx & Engels, *Selected Correspondence*.

71 See Marx, "Confidential Communication", Marx & Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 2 (Progress Publishers; Moscow, 1969).

72 See Engels, "The Prague Uprising" [June 18, 1848], Marx & Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 7.

73 Marx's proposition on the Irish question was stated in his letters to Kugelmann on November 29 and to Engels on December 10, 1869; Lenin quotes from Marx's letter to Engels on November 2, 1867 (see Marx & Engels, *Selected Correspondence*).

74 *Die Glocke* (The Bell) — A magazine published in Munich and later in Berlin from 1915 to 1925 by the social-chauvinist Parvus (A. L. Helfand), a member of the German Social-Democratic Party.

75 Engels, "Democratic Pan-Slavism", Marx & Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 8 (Lawrence & Wishart: London, 1977). Lenin used *Aus dem literarischen Nachlass von Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels und Ferdinand Lassalle*, hrsg. von Franz Mehring, Stuttgart, 1902, Bd. III, S. 246-64, in which the author of the article is not named.

76 The resolution was on the national question; it was written by Lenin and adopted by the meeting of the RSDLP Central Committee and party officials, which was held at Poronin, near Cracow, on October 6-14, 1913. For reasons of secrecy it was known as the "Summer" or "August" Meeting. For the text of the resolution, see *Collected Works*, Vol. 19, pp. 427-29.

## The Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up

77 Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 22.

- 78 The theses were compiled by the Editorial Board of *Gazeta Robotnicza* and published in *Sbornik Sotsial-Demokrata* No. 1 in October 1916.
- 79 For an assessment of the three views on Poland's independence, see Lenin's article in this volume, "The Right of Nations to Self-Determination".
- 80 Marx & Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 3 (Progress Publishers: Moscow, 1970), p. 26.
- 81 Engels, "Po and Rhine", Marx & Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 16 (Lawrence & Wishart: London, 1980).
- 82 Engels, "Democratic Pan-Slavism", Marx & Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 8
- 83 See article by Engels, "What Have the Working Classes to Do with Poland?", Section II, in Marx & Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 20 (Progress Publishers: Moscow, 1985).
- 84 *Lichtstrahlen* (Rays of Light) — A monthly put out by left-wing social-democrats in Germany, edited by Borchartd. It appeared in Berlin irregularly from 1913 to 1921.
- 85 Rosa Luxemburg's article, "The National Question and Autonomy", in Nos. 6, 7, 8-9, 10, 12 and 14-15 of the magazine *Przegląd Socialdemokratyczny* (Social-Democratic Review) for 1908 and 1909.
- 86 *Fraczy* — Popular name for the Polish Socialist Party, a petty-bourgeois nationalist party founded in 1892.
- 87 Marx & Engels, *Selected Correspondence*, p. 331.
- 88 Karl Radek.
- 89 *Rech* (Speech) — A daily, the central organ of the Cadet Party published in Petersburg from February 1906; closed down by the Petrograd Soviet's Revolutionary Military Committee on October 26 (November 8), 1917; publication continued under another title until August 1918.
- 90 *Libre Belgique* (Free Belgium) — An illegal journal of the Belgian Labour Party, Brussels (1915-18).

### Reply to P. Kievsky

- 91 Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 23 (Progress Publishers: Moscow, 1964).

This article was written in reply to one by P. Kievsky (Y. L. Pyatakov), "The Proletariat and the 'Right of Nations to Self-Determination' in the Era of Finance Capital" (August 1916). The manuscript bears Lenin's marginal note: "Kievsky's article on self-determination and Lenin's reply". Both articles were meant for No. 3 of *Sbornik Sotsial-Demokrata*. Somewhat later, Lenin wrote another article in reply to Kievsky, "A Caricature of Marxism and Imperialist Economism" (see *Collected Works*, Vol. 23). Due to financial difficulties, No. 3 was not published and the articles did not appear in print. Lenin's article, however, was widely known in manuscript to Bolsheviks living abroad and to a number of left social-democrats.

92 Lenin is alluding to the article “Miliz oder Abrüstung?” (Militia or Disarmament?) by Henriette Roland-Holst, a left-wing Dutch Social-Democrat, in the Swiss Social-Democratic journal *Neues Leben* (New Life) No. 10-11 (October-November) and No. 12 (December) 1915.

In referring to the Swiss young Social-Democrats Lenin had in view chiefly the magazine *Jugend-Internationale* (The Youth International), organ of the International League of Socialist Youth Organisations, published in Switzerland; it spoke for the left forces in the Swiss Social-Democratic Party. Issue No. 3 of the magazine carried an editorial “Volkshेर oder Entwaffnung?” (A People’s Army or Disarmament?).

The attitude of the Scandinavian (Swedish and Norwegian) left social-democrats on this issue was set out in articles by Karl Kilbom, “Swedish Social-Democracy and the World War”, and Arvid Hansen, “Certain Aspects of the Present-Day Norwegian Labour Movement”, both of which appeared in *Sbornik Sotsial-Demokrata* No. 2.

Lenin discusses the “disarmament” slogan in “The Military Program of the Proletarian Revolution” and “The ‘Disarmament’ Slogan” (see *Collected Works*, Vol. 23).

## Report on the Party Program to the 8th Congress of the Russian Communist Party

93 Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 29 (Progress Publishers: Moscow, 1965), pp. 170-175.

94 The program adopted by the Second Party Congress in 1903 consisted of two parts — the minimum and maximum programs. The minimum program contained demands that could be effected within the framework of the capitalist system — the overthrow of tsarism, the establishment of a democratic republic, the introduction of the eight-hour day, etc. The maximum program formulated the final aims of the working class — the socialist revolution, the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the transition to socialism.

95 See Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26 (Progress Publishers: Moscow, 1964), pp. 169-173.

96 On December 18 (31), 1917, Lenin handed to Svinhufvud, head of the Finnish bourgeois government, the decision of the Council of People’s Commissars to recognise the independence of Finland. The decision was confirmed by a session of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee on December 22, 1917 (January 4, 1918).

97 Here Lenin refers to the negotiations in Moscow in March 1919 with a Bashkirian delegation on the question of forming an autonomous Bashkirian Soviet Republic. On March 23, 1919 the newspaper *Izvestia* published the “Agreement Between Central Soviet Power and the Bashkirian Government on the Formation of Autonomous Soviet Bashkiria”. The agreement set up an Autonomous Bashkirian Soviet Republic on the basis of the Soviet Constitution, defined the Republic’s frontiers and its administrative divisions.

98 The Warsaw Soviet of Workers’ Deputies was established on November 11, 1918. Soviets of Workers’ Deputies were also set up in many Polish towns and industrial districts. The

Warsaw Soviet of Workers' Deputies set about the factual introduction of the eight-hour day in factories, began a struggle against the sabotage of the factory owners, took a decision on contacts with revolutionary Russia, etc. The soviets were abolished in the summer of 1919 by the Polish bourgeois government.

### The Question of Nationalities or 'Autonomisation'

99 Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 36.

These notes, part of a series dictated at the end of 1922 and the beginning of 1923 in the form of a letter to the 12th Congress of the RCP(B), due in April 1923, were among Lenin's last writings (his so-called testament). They were read out at a meeting of leaders of delegations to the congress but were not published in the Soviet Union until 1956.

100 Autonomisation was the idea of uniting the Soviet republics through their entry into the RSFSR on the principle of autonomy. This was at the basis of the "Draft Resolution on Mutual Relations of the RSFSR and Independent Republics", which was proposed by Stalin and adopted, in September 1922, by a Central Committee commission set up to work out for the CC plenum the question of further relationships between the RSFSR, the Ukrainian Republic, the Byelorussian Republic and the Transcaucasian Federation. In a letter to the members of the Political Bureau on September 26, 1922, Lenin seriously criticised the project. He proposed a totally different solution of the question, namely, voluntary union of all the Soviet republics, including the RSFSR, in a new state entity, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, based on complete equality.

He wrote: "We recognise ourselves equal with the Ukrainian Republic, and the others, and join the new union, the new federation together with them and on an equal footing ...". The CC Commission, in accordance with Lenin's instructions, revised the draft resolution, which was approved by a plenary meeting of the Central Committee in October 1922. Preparatory work for the unification of the republics was started on the basis of the CC decision. On December 30, 1922, the First Congress of Soviets of the USSR adopted its historic decision on the formation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Lenin attached exceptional importance to the correct conduct of national policy and the implementation of the declaration and treaty, adopted by the Congress of Soviets. On December 30 and 31, he dictated his letter "The Question of Nationalities or 'Autonomisation'".

101 The plenary meetings of the Central Committee of the RCP(B) held in October and December 1922 had on their agenda questions of the formation of the USSR.

### Marxism and the National Question

102 Stalin, *Marxism and the National Question* (Foreign Languages Publishing House: Moscow,

1950).

103 The reference is to the so-called August Conference of the liquidators held in Vienna in August 1912, which was called as a counterblast to the Prague Conference of the Bolsheviks.

“Liquidators” was the name given in the years of reaction that followed the defeat of the 1905-07 Revolution to the Mensheviks, who renounced the revolutionary slogans of the party and endeavoured to liquidate the revolutionary, underground party of the proletariat.

104 The Ninth Conference of the Bund was held in Vienna in June 1912 and discussed the elections to the Fourth State Duma and the summoning of the August (Liquidator) Conference (see note 103 above), in which the Bundists took part. The decisions of the Ninth Conference of the Bund were of an extremely opportunist and liquidationist character (the demand for a republic was abandoned, illegal work was pushed into the background and the revolutionary aims of the proletariat were forgotten). The conference sanctioned an open alliance of the Bund with the Menshevik liquidators and the left wing of the Polish Socialist Party.

105 That is, prior to the abolition of serfdom in Georgia (1863-67).

106 This expression is taken from the story “The Police Station” by Russian writer Gleb Uspensky (1843-1902), depicting an over-zealous policeman who is ready to “arrest and prevent” on the most trifling pretext.

107 The Fourth Congress of the Bund was held at the end of April 1901 in Byelostok. The congress declared that “the concept nationality is also applicable to the Jewish people”, and that Russia should be transformed into a federation of nationalities, each of which should enjoy complete autonomy, irrespective of the territory it occupied. In place of the former demand for civil equality, the congress demanded national equality and the reconstruction of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party on federal lines. These decisions, as well as the demand for national cultural autonomy advanced at this congress and then supported in Bund literature, called forth the severe criticism of the old *Iskra* and particularly of Lenin.

108 The Brünn Parteitag, or Congress, of the Austrian Social-Democratic Party was held on September 24-29, 1899. For the resolution on the national question adopted by this congress see this edition, pp. 214-215.

109 “Here there is no parliament, thank God” — the words uttered by V. Kokovtsev, tsarist Minister of Finance (later Prime Minister), in the State Duma on April 24, 1908.

110 Marx & Engels, *The Communist Manifesto and Its relevance for Today* (Resistance Books: Chippendale, 1998), p. 61.

111 The Vienna — or Wimberg as it was called after the name of the hotel in which it met — Congress of the Austrian Social-Democratic Party was held June, 6-12, 1897.

112 The reference is to an article by Karl Marx entitled “On the Jewish Question”, published in

- 1844 in the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbucher*. See Marx & Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 3 (Lawrence & Wishart: London, 1975).
- 113 The Sixth Congress of the Bund, was held in October 1905 in Zurich, Switzerland. At this congress the Bund gave final form to its national program, which demanded “the creation of public institutions” which “can only result in extra-territorial autonomy in the form of national cultural autonomy ... which presumes: (1) That all functions connected with cultural matters (popular education, etc.) shall be removed from the control of the state and local and territorial government bodies and (2) That these functions shall be transferred to the nation itself as represented by specific institutions, both local and central, elected by all the members on the basis of universal, equal, direct and secret suffrage.”
- 114 The Eighth Conference of the Bund was held in September 1905 in Lvov.
- 115 “Adapting socialism to nationalism” — This phrase was used of the Bundists and the Caucasian Social-Democrats by Plekhanov in an article entitled “Another Schismatic Conference,” printed in *Za Partiyu* (For the Party — the organ of the Plekhanovist Party Mensheviks and the conciliationist Party Bolsheviks, published in 1912-14) of October 2, 1912, No. 3. In this article Plekhanov severely condemned both the fact of convocation and the resolutions of the August Conference of the Liquidators.
- 116 In an article entitled “Another Splitters’ Conference”, published in the newspaper *Za Partiyu*, October 2 (15), 1912, Plekhanov condemned the “August” Conference of the Liquidators and described the stand of the Bundists and Caucasian Social-Democrats as an adjustment of socialism to nationalism. Kossovsky, leader of the Bundists, criticised Plekhanov in a letter to the Liquidators’ journal *Nasha Zarya*.
- 117 *Nasha Zarya* (Our Dawn) — A legal monthly magazine, the organ of the liquidationist Mensheviks, published in St. Petersburg from 1910 to 1914.
- 118 The Seventh Congress of the Bund was held in August-September 1906 in Lvov.
- 119 *Manilov* — A character in Gogol’s *Dead Souls* who was a sentimental dreamer.
- 120 *Nashe Slovo* (Our Word) — A legal weekly of the Bund which was published in Vilna in 1906; only nine numbers appeared.
- 121 *Vanek, Karl* — A Czech Social-Democrat who took an openly chauvinist and separatist stand.
- 122 N — The pseudonym of Noah Jordania, leader of the Georgian Mensheviks, former head of the Menshevik government in Georgia and then a White emigre and rabid advocate of intervention against the USSR.
- 123 *Chveni Tskhovreba* (Our Life) — A daily newspaper published by the Georgian Mensheviks in Kutais from July 1 to 22, 1912.
- 124 The clause on self-determination in the program of the RSDLP adopted at the Second

Congress in 1903 runs as follows: “§9. The right of self-determination for all nations forming part of the state.”

- 125 The reference is to the first Balkan War, which broke out in October 1912 between Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece and Montenegro on the one hand, and Turkey on the other.
- 126 See the resolutions of the Fourth (the “Third All-Russian”) Conference of the RSDLP held November 5-12, 1907, and of the Fifth (the “All-Russian 1908”) Conference of the RSDLP held December 21-27, 1908 (January 3-9, 1909). (See *The CPSU (B.) in the Resolutions and Decisions of Its Congresses, Conferences and Plenums of the Central Committee*, Vol. I, 6th edition, 1940, pp. 118, 131.)
- 127 Jagiello, a member of the Polish Socialist Party, was elected to the Fourth State Duma as deputy from Warsaw with the help of a bloc of the Bund and the Polish Socialist Party with the bourgeois nationalists in opposition to the Polish Social-Democrats. By a vote of the seven Menshevik Liquidators against the six Bolsheviks, the Social-Democratic group in the Duma adopted a resolution that Jagiello be accepted as a member of the group. ■

# Glossary

- Austerlitz, Friedrich** (1862-1931) — A leader of the Austrian Social-Democratic Party and editor of its central organ, *Arbeiter Zeitung*.
- Axelrod, Pavel** (1850-1928) — A Menshevik leader. After the February revolution of 1917 he was a member of the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' Deputies.
- Bauer, Otto** (1883-1938) — Pseudonym: Heinrich Weber. A leader of the right-wing Austrian Social-Democrats and the Second International; chief theorist of so-called Austro-Marxism, which used Marxist terminology to cover the non-Marxist, reformist politics of the Austrian Social-Democratic Party. In 1918-19 Bauer was minister of foreign affairs of the Austrian bourgeois republic; was active in suppressing the revolutionary actions of the Austrian working class.
- Beilis case** — A provocative trial engineered by the tsarist government in 1913 in Kiev. Beilis, a Jew, was falsely accused of having murdered a Christian boy named Yushchinsky for ritual purposes (actually, the murder was organised by the Black Hundreds). The aim of this frame-up was to fan anti-semitism and incite pogroms so as to divert the masses from the mounting revolutionary movement. The trial excited great public feeling, workers' protest demonstrations were held in a number of cities and Beilis was acquitted.
- Berdayev, Nikolai** (1874-1948) — Originally "legal" Marxist; became reactionary idealist philosopher and mystic.
- Bernstein, Eduard** (1850-1932) — German opportunist social-democrat; founder of an anti-Marxist trend in international social-democracy. After the death of Engels in 1895, Bernstein publicly advocated revision of Marx's revolutionary theory in the spirit of bourgeois liberalism (see his article "Problems of Socialism" and his book *The Premises of Socialism and the Tasks of Social-Democracy*) in an attempt to convert the Social-Democratic Party into a petty-bourgeois party of social reform. In Russia this trend was represented by the "legal Marxists", the Economists, the Bundists; and the Mensheviks.
- Bismarck, Otto von** (1815-98) — Prussian and German politician, championed the interests of Prussian junkers; prime minister of Prussia 1862-71 and then prime

minister of the German Empire 1871-90; introduced anti-socialist law in 1878.

**Black Hundreds** — The popular name for the Union of the Russian People, an organisation of pro-monarchist reactionaries who carried out violent attacks against revolutionaries and organised anti-Jewish pogroms.

**Bolsheviks** — Majority faction of Russian Social Democratic Labor Party formed at 1903 Second Congress; led by Lenin; became separate party in 1912; led the 1917 October revolution that established first workers state; later changed name to Communist Party.

**Bonaparte, Louis** (1808-73) — Nephew of Napoleon Bonaparte; following 1848 revolutionary events, became president later that year; carried out a coup d'état in 1851 and assumed title of emperor (Napoleon III) of Second Empire; based on financial and industrial bourgeoisie, he carried out an anti-labour policy at home and supported reaction abroad; declared war on Prussia in 1870 but was crushed, especially at battle of Sedan; his defeat led to formation of republic.

**Bukharin, Nikolai** (1888-1938) — Bolshevik publicist and economist, member of the RSDLP from 1906 onwards. In 1918 when the Brest peace was discussed he headed the group of "Left Communists"; editor of Russian Communist Party central organ *Pravda* 1919-29; succeeded Zinoviev as president of the Comintern 1926-29; after 1923 became the major spokesperson for right-wing pro-kulak policies; formed Right Opposition 1928; expelled from party 1929; executed after March 1938 frame-up trial ("trial of the 21").

**Bulgakov, Sergei** (1871-1944) — "Legal Marxist" in 1890s, then idealist philosopher and bourgeois economist.

**Bund, The** — The General Jewish Workers' Union of Lithuania, Poland, and Russia; founded in 1897 at the Inaugural Congress of Jewish Social-Democratic groups in Vilna. It consisted mainly of semi-proletarian Jewish artisans of Western Russia. At the First Congress of the RSDLP in 1898 the Bund joined the latter "as an autonomous organisation, independent only in respect of questions affecting the Jewish proletariat specifically".

The Bund was a vehicle of nationalist and separatist ideas in Russia's working-class movement. In April 1901 the Bund's Fourth Congress resolved to alter the organisational ties with the RSDLP as established by the latter's First Congress: in a resolution, the congress declared that it regarded the RSDLP as a federation of national organisations, of which the Bund was one.

Following the rejection by the Second Congress of the RSDLP of the Bund's demand for recognition as the sole representative of the Jewish proletariat, the Bund left the Party, but rejoined in 1906 on the basis of a decision of the Fourth

(Unity) Congress.

Within the RSDLP the Bund constantly supported the party's opportunist wing (the Economists, Mensheviks, and liquidators), and waged a struggle against the Bolsheviks and Bolshevism. To the Bolsheviks' programmatic demand for the right of nations to self-determination the Bund counterposed the demand for autonomy of national culture. During the years of the Stolypin reaction and the new revolutionary upsurge, the Bund adopted a liquidationist stand and played an active part in the formation of the August anti-party bloc. During World War I the Bundists took a social-chauvinist stand. In 1917 the Bund supported the bourgeois Provisional Government and opposed the revolution movement. During the foreign military intervention and the Civil War, the Bundist leaders made common cause with the counterrevolution. At the same time a tendency towards cooperation with the Soviets became apparent among the Bund rank and file. In March 1921 the Bund dissolved itself, part of the membership joining the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) in accordance with the general rules of admission.

**Cadets** — Members of the Constitutional-Democratic Party, the principal party of the liberal-monarchist bourgeoisie in Russia. It was formed in October 1905 and consisted of representatives of the bourgeoisie, landlord members of the Zemstvos, and bourgeois intellectuals. Prominent leaders of the Cadets were: P.N. Milyukov, S.A. Muromtsev, V.A. Maklakov, A.I. Shingaryov, P.B. Struve and F.I. Rodichev. To mislead the masses the Cadets called themselves the “party of people's freedom”, but actually they went no further than the demand for a constitutional monarchy. They considered the fight against the revolutionary movement their chief aim, and strove to share power with the tsar and the feudalist landlords. During World War I the Cadets actively supported the tsarist government's aggressive foreign policy, and during the February 17 bourgeois-democratic revolution they tried to save the monarchy. Holding key posts in the bourgeois Provisional Government, the Cadets pursued an anti-popular and counterrevolutionary policy. After the victory of the October Revolution, the Cadets opposed the new regime and took part in all armed counterrevolutionary acts and campaigns of the interventionists. Living abroad as émigrés after the defeat of the interventionists and whiteguards, the Cadets continued their anti-Soviet activities.

**Chernyshevsky, Nikolai** (1828-89) — Russian revolutionary democrat and utopian socialist, scientist, writer and literary critic.

**Chkheidze, Nikolai** (1864-1926) — Georgian Social-Democrat and leader of the Menshevik group in the tsarist parliament (Duma). First president of the Petrograd Soviet in 1917; supporter of bourgeois Provisional Government.

- Chkhenkeli, Akaky I.** (1874-1959) — Leading Menshevik; social-chauvinist during World War I; after February 1917 revolution, representative of the bourgeois Provisional Government in Transcaucasia; foreign minister of the Menshevik-led Georgian government 1918-1921.
- Cunow, Heinrich** (1862-1936) — A leader of German SPD; part of “centre” current before 1914; on editorial boards of *Vorwärts* and *Neue Zeit*; chauvinist during World War I and principal theoretician of Ebert-Scheidemann group in SPD leadership.
- Dan, Fyodor I.** (1871-1947) — Menshevik leader; member of presidium of Petrograd Soviet after February 1917 revolution; emigrated to Berlin 1922 where he edited *Sotsialistichesky Vestnik*; died in the US.
- David, Eduard** (1863-1930) — One of leaders of the German SPD right-wing; outspoken apologist for German imperialism during World War I.
- Dombrowski, Jaroslaw** (1836-71) — Polish revolutionary democrat; took part in the national liberation movement in Poland in the 1860s; a general of the Paris Commune and commander-in-chief of all its forces from early May 1871; killed on the barricades.
- Dontsov, Dmitro** — Ukrainian nationalist.
- Duma, State** — As part of concessions introduced following 1905 Russian Revolution, the State Duma, a quasi-parliamentary body, was established with progressively limited constitutional powers. Four Dumas were elected between 1906 and 1917 when the institution was abolished.
- Dzherzinsky, Felix E.** (1877-1926) — A founder of the Social Democratic Party of Poland and Lithuania; Old Bolshevik; after 1917 October Revolution first head of the Cheka.
- Economism** — An opportunist trend in Russian Social-Democracy at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries, a Russian variety of international opportunism. The newspaper *Rabochaya Mysl* (Workers’ Thought) (1897-1902) and the magazine *Rabocheye Dyelo* (Workers’ Cause) (1899-1902) were organs of the “economists”. They limited the tasks of the working class to an economic struggle for higher wages and better working conditions, asserting that the political struggle was the business of the liberal bourgeoisie. Lenin polemicised against this trend through *Iskra* and by his March 1902 book *What Is to Be Done?*
- Ellenbogen, Wilhelm** (1863-1951) — A founder and leader of the Austrian Social-Democratic Party; pacifist during World War I; participated in Zimmerwald movement; entered Social-Democratic government in 1919.
- Engels, Frederick** (1820-95) — Co-founder with Karl Marx of the modern socialist

workers movement; co-author of the *Communist Manifesto* (1848), a leader of the revolutionary-democratic movement in Germany in 1848-49, outstanding theorist and populariser of scientific socialism.

**Fabian Society** — Reformist organisation founded in 1884 by a group of bourgeois intellectuals in Britain. It was called after the Roman general Fabius Cunctator (the “delayer”) known for his cautious tactics and avoidance of decisive battles. The Fabians renounced the class struggle and set themselves the task of “permeating” the bourgeoisie with “socialist” ideas. They maintained that it was possible to effect transition to socialism by means of petty reforms. In 1900 the Fabian Society joined the Labour Party.

**Garibaldi, Giuseppe** (1807-82) — Italian national hero, leader of the Italian revolutionary democrats; outstanding military leader; in 1848-67 headed Italian people’s struggle against foreign oppression and for the unification of Italy.

**Goldblatt** (Medem, Vladimir Davidovich) (1879-1923) — Principal theoretician of the Bund. At the Second Congress of the RSDLP he opposed *Iskra*; in 1906 he was elected to the Bund central committee and took part in the Fifth Congress of the RSDLP; supported the Mensheviks.

**Gvozdyov, Kuzma Antonovich** (1883-?) — A leading Menshevik; social-chauvinist and chair of the Workers’ Group in the tsarist government’s Central War Industries Committee during World War I; after 1917 February Revolution, member of Executive Committee of Petrograd Soviet and then Minister for Labour in bourgeois Provisional Government.

**Hanecki (Fürstenburg), Yakub** (1879-1937) — Prominent leader of Russian and Polish revolutionary movement. After 1917 October Revolution worked in the People’s Commissariat of Finance and then as a diplomat.

**Hansen, Arvid** (1894-?) — Norwegian left socialist; a leader of the Socialist Youth International; supported affiliation by Norwegian Labor Party to Communist International; after party broke with Comintern in 1923, he became a central leader of the Communist Party.

**Herzen, Alexander Ivanovich** (1812-70) — Russian revolutionary democrat, materialist philosopher and writer; with N.P. Ogaryov published the journal *Kolokol*.

**Hindenburg, Paul von** (1847-1934) — Prussian militarist; fought in 1870-71 Franco-Prussian War; from 1916 (with Ludendorff) German supreme commander in World War I; elected president of the Weimar Republic 1925 and as such appointed Hitler chancellor in January 1933.

**Hohenzollern** — The ruling dynasty of Brandenburg-Prussia (1415-1918) and of Germany following 1871 unification by Bismarck. Hohenzollern rule ended when

1918 revolution established a republic and sent Kaiser Wilhelm II into exile in the Netherlands.

**Hyndman, Henry** (1842-1921) — A leader of the British socialist movement; co-founder of Social-Democratic Federation (1884) and of British Socialist Party (1911); led a pro-war split (National Socialist Party) during World War I and was on the extreme right of the Labour Party.

**Independents** — Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany (USPD). Formed in April 1917 as a pacifist breakaway from the pro-war SPD. Among its leaders were Eduard Bernstein and Karl Kautsky. At its founding it had 120,000 members. It participated in the bourgeois-republican provisional government headed by SPD leader Freidrich Ebert in November-December 1918. It attained a maximum membership of 750,000 by November 1919. In December 1920, following the party's Halle Congress in October, the USPD majority fused with the Communist Party of Germany (KPD), while the minority retained the party name until rejoining the SPD in 1922.

**International Working Men's Association** (First International) — Founded in London in 1864. Marx wrote its inaugural address and rules and was its acknowledged leader. In the period of reaction that followed the suppression of the Paris Commune in 1871, the International's centre was transferred to the United States and the organisation ceased to exist in 1876.

**Iskra** (The Spark) — The first all-Russian illegal Marxist newspaper, founded by Lenin, which played a decisive role in creating the revolutionary Marxist party of the working class. The first issue was published in December 1900 in Leipzig. The Second Congress of the RSDLP (July-August 1903) voted to make *Iskra* the party's official newspaper. However, subsequent disputes over the paper's direction caused Lenin to leave the editorial board on November 1 and from issue 52 *Iskra* became a Menshevik organ.

**Jaurès, Jean** (1859-1914) — Prominent leader of the French and international socialist movement. While a reformist in his views, his unremitting struggle for peace, against imperialist oppression and aggressive wars earned him the hatred of the ruling class; he was killed by hired assassins of the reactionaries on the eve of World War I.

**Jordania, Noi Nikolayevich** (1870-1953) — Social-democrat, leader of the Caucasian Mensheviks. After the February 1917 bourgeois-democratic revolution was chairman of the Tiflis Soviet of Workers' Deputies and from 1918 to 1921 headed the counter-revolutionary Georgian Menshevik government.

**June Third** — The coup d'état of June 3 (16), 1907 by which the Russian tsarist

government disbanded the Second Duma and amended the law on elections to the Duma. The new electoral law greatly increased the representation of landed proprietors, merchants and industrialists and reduced the number of peasant and worker representatives which was already very small. The law deprived the greater part of the inhabitants of Asiatic Russia of their franchise and reduced the representation of Poland and the Caucasus to one half. The Third Duma that was elected under this law and which first met in November 1907 was, in composition, a Black-Hundred-Cadet Duma.

The June Third coup d'état marked the beginning of the period of the Stolypin reaction which was also known as the "June Third regime".

**Kautsky, Karl** (1854-1938) — One of the leaders and theoreticians of the German Social Democrats and the Second International; in 1914, when World War I broke out, adopted a pacifist position; chief ideologist of centrism (Kautskyism), an opportunist trend that used Marxist terminology to justify the class-collaborationist reformism of the SPD; founding member of the centrist Independent Social Democratic Party (USPD) in 1917; an undersecretary in Germany foreign ministry after November 1918 revolution; opponent of the 1917 Russian Revolution; rejoined the SPD in 1922.

**Kerensky, Aleksandr** (1881-1970) — A leading right-wing figure in the Russian Socialist-Revolutionary Party; during World War I he was a rabid social-chauvinist; after the February Revolution of 1917 he was successively, minister of justice, of war and then prime minister in the bourgeois Provisional Government (holding this office at the time of the October 1917 Bolshevik insurrection); emigrated from Russia in 1918.

**Kievsky, P.** — See *Pyatakov, Yuri*.

**Kilbom, Karl** (1895-?) — Swedish communist; participated in founding of Left Social-Democratic Party (1917) and its transformation into Swedish Communist Party (1921). Elected to Executive Committee of Comintern after Third Congress. In 1929 accused of rightist deviation and expelled from Comintern; he then founded oppositional communist group which became Swedish Socialist Party (1934), but later left it.

**Kosovsky, V.** (V.M. Levinson) (1870-1941) — A leader of the Bund. At the Second Congress of the RSDLP he represented the Foreign Committee of the Bund and opposed *Iskra*, becoming a Menshevik after the congress; a liquidator during the years of reaction 1907-10 and a social-chauvinist during World War I.

**Kristan, Etbin** — Slovene member of Austrian Social-Democracy; argued for "cultural-national" autonomy at 1899 Brünn Congress.

- Lafargue, Paul** (1842-1911) — Prominent leader of French workers' movement; member of the General Council of the First International; a founder the French Workers Party (1879); collaborated closely with Marx and Engels; husband of Marx's daughter Laura.
- Lassalle, Ferdinand** (1825-64) — German writer and lawyer. Participated in the 1848-49 revolution. In 1863 he founded the General Association of German Workers but his energetic work was compromised by his dealings with the Prussian chancellor Bismarck. He called on the state to provide aid to establish workers' cooperatives.
- Legien, Karl** (1861-1920) — Leading member of the right-wing of the Social-Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) and outspoken apologist for German imperialism during World War I; head of the SPD-aligned trade union movement.
- Lenin, V.I.** (1870-1924) — Founder and leader of the Bolshevik Party; principal leader of the October 1917 Russian revolution; founder of the Communist International; outstanding Marxist theorist of 20th century.
- Lensch, Paul** (1873-1926) — Left-wing SPD member who adopted a pro-war stand during World War I.
- Liebman, F.** (1882-?) — A leader of the Jewish nationalist organisation, the Bund; a centrist during World War I.
- Longuet, Jean** (1876-1938) — Prominent figure in the Second International, one of the leaders of the centrist wing in the French Socialist Party. During World War I, Longuet and his followers pursued a conciliatory policy toward the social-chauvinists, rejected revolutionary struggle and advocated "defence of the fatherland". After the October Revolution, the Longuetists declared that they supported the dictatorship of the proletariat but in practice they were against it; after the 1920 Tours congress where the communists gained a majority for joining the Third International, he split; later rejoined Second International.
- Lopatin, Hermann Alexandrovich** (1845-1918) — Russian revolutionary; member of the Narodnaya Volya party and the General Council of the First International. Translated into Russian part of Volume I of Marx's *Capital*.
- Luxemburg, Rosa** (1871-1919) — Outstanding figure in the international working-class movement; author of a number of important works on economic theory, politics and culture; helped initiate Polish social-democratic movement; from 1897 actively participated in the German social-democratic movement and played a leading role in the struggle against Bernstein and the revisionists; from 1910 led the revolutionary opposition within German Social-Democratic Party; jailed February 1915 but played key role in formation of the Spartacus League; from prison authored the famous antiwar "Junius" pamphlet; freed by the 1918 revolution, she was a

founder of the Communist Party of Germany and the editor of its paper, *Die Rote Fahne*; in January 1919 she was arrested and murdered by counterrevolutionary troops of the right-wing social-democratic government.

**Malakhov, Nikolai Nikolayevich** (1827-?) — Tsarist general, commander of the Moscow military district; one of those responsible for the bloody suppression of the Moscow armed uprising of December 1905.

**Martov, Julius** (1873-1923) — A leader of the RSDLP and of the Mensheviks after 1903; after the February 1917 revolution he led the centrist “Menshevik Internationalist” group; opposed both Bolshevik revolution and counterrevolutionary White Guards; led Menshevik legal opposition to Bolshevik government 1918-20; emigrated from Russia in 1920 for Berlin where he founded the main publication of the Mensheviks in emigration, *Sotsialistichesky Vestnik*.

**Martynov, A.** (1865-1935) — Theoretician and leader of Economism; actively opposed Lenin’s *Iskra* and was later one of the ideologists of Menshevism; a liquidator during the years of reaction 1907-10; joined Bolshevik Party 1923 as a supporter of Stalin; architect of the “bloc of four classes” in China; Comintern functionary.

**Marx, Karl** (1818-83) — Co-founder with Frederick Engels of scientific socialism; leader of the Communist League 1847-52; co-author of the *Communist Manifesto*; central leader of the International Working Men’s Association (the First International) 1864-76; author of *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*.

**Mazzini, Giuseppe** (1805-72) — Italian revolutionary, bourgeois democrat, a leader of the national liberation movement in Italy; when the First International was being founded sought to bring it under his influence; hampered the development of an independent workers’ movement in Italy.

**Medem** — See *Goldblatt*.

**Mehring, Franz** (1846-1919) — Outstanding figure in the German working-class movement; a leader of the left wing of the German Social-Democratic Party; theoretician, historian, writer and literary critic; a founder of the Communist Party of Germany.

**Mensheviks** — Literally “of the minority”; originated in split at 1903 2nd congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party in opposition to the Bolsheviks (literally, “of the majority”) led by Lenin. Afterwards, it was used to designate the pseudo-Marxist petty-bourgeois reformist current within the Russian socialist movement. The Mensheviks claimed allegiance to Marxism, but believed that the working class should combine with the liberal bourgeoisie to overthrow Tsarism and establish a bourgeois “democratic republic”. In 1912 the Bolshevik faction led by Lenin expelled the Mensheviks from the RSDLP. They supported and

participated in the bourgeois Provisional Government in 1917. During the civil war that followed the Bolshevik-led overthrow of the Provisional Government by the soviets (councils) of workers', soldiers' and peasants' deputies in November 1917, one wing of the Mensheviks supported the counterrevolutionary White armies.

**Millerand, Alexandre Etienne** (1859-1943) — French politician; in the 1890s, betrayed the cause of socialism in 1899, becoming a member of the reactionary bourgeois Waldeck-Rousseau government of France; subsequently expelled from the Socialist Party; formed Independent Socialist Party; president of French Republic 1920-24.

**Napoleon III** — See *Bonaparte, Louis*.

**Narodniks** — Representatives of an ideological and political trend which arose in Russia in the 1870s. The distinctive features of the Narodnik ideology were the denial of the leading role of the proletariat in the revolutionary movement and the erroneous belief that socialist revolution could be carried out by the small proprietors, the peasants. They regarded the village commune, which was actually a relic of feudalism and serfdom in the Russian countryside, as a nucleus of socialism, etc. Narodnik socialism was divorced from the actual development of society and was merely a phrase, a dream, a pious wish. In the 1880s and 1890s the Narodniks reconciled themselves to tsarism, began to champion the interests of the kulaks and fought furiously against Marxism.

**Neue Rheinische Zeitung** (New Rhineland Times) — A revolutionary democratic daily newspaper founded by Marx and Engels in Cologne. Marx was the chief editor, Engels a member of the editorial board. The first issue was dated June 1, 1848 and the last May 19, 1849. It had a great influence among the German working class during the 1848-49 revolution.

**Neue Zeit, Die** — Theoretical journal of the German Social-Democratic Party, published in Stuttgart from 1883 to 1923. It was edited by Karl Kautsky until October 1917, and then by H. Cunow. Some of the writings of the founders of Marxism were first published in this journal, among them Marx's "Critique of the Gotha Program" and Engels's "Criticism of the Draft Social-Democratic Program of 1891". Engels often gave advice to the editors of *Die Neue Zeit* and criticised their deviations from Marxism. Other prominent leaders of the German and international labour movement who contributed to the journal at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries were August Bebel, Wilhelm Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg, Franz Mehring, Clara Zetkin, Georgi Plekhanov and Paul Lafargue. Beginning with the late nineties, after the death of Engels, the journal regularly published articles by revisionists, including a series of articles by Bernstein "Problems of Socialism", which launched a revisionists' campaign against Marxism. During World War I

the journal took a centrist stand and supported the social-chauvinists.

**Octobrists** — Members of Russian Union of October 17, formed after tsar's manifesto of October 17 (30), 1905 which conceded a Duma; represented big bourgeoisie and landlords; leaders were industrialist A. Guchkov and the owner of huge landed estates, M. Rodzyanko; moderate bourgeois opposition prior to 1917; ruling party in first stage of 1917 Provisional Government.

**Ogaryov, Nikolai Platonovich** (1813-77) — Russian public figure, journalist and poet; together with Herzen published the journal *Kolokol*.

**Ordzhonikidze, G.** (1886-1937) — Old Bolshevik; Stalinist; from 1926 head of Central Control Commission of CPSU; from 1930, headed Supreme Economic Council; reportedly opposed purges; died in mysterious circumstances, possibly murdered.

**Pale of Settlement** — The only areas in tsarist Russia where Jews were permitted permanent residence.

**Parabellum** — See *Radek, Karl*.

**Parvus A.L.** — Pseudonym of Alexander Helphand (1867-1924); active in Russian and German social-democratic movements; along with Rosa Luxemburg initiated fight against revisionism in SPD in 1899; supported Mensheviks and collaborated with Trotsky; before World War I enriched himself through speculating in war supplies to Balkans; became German social chauvinist.

**Peshkhnov, Alexei Vasilyevich** (1867-1933) — Russian bourgeois public figure and journalist; from 1906 a leader of the petty-bourgeois Popular Socialist Party.

**Plehkanov, Georgi Valentinovich** (1856-1918) — Leader of the Russian and international working-class movement, first propagandist of Marxism in Russia; he formed the Emancipation of Labour group, the first Russian Marxist organisation, in Geneva in 1883. After the Second Congress of the RSDLP he adopted a conciliating stand towards opportunism, and later joined the Mensheviks; during the first Russian revolution he shared the Menshevik views on all the major questions; during the First World War (1914-18) he was a social-chauvinist; he adopted a hostile attitude towards the Bolshevik-led October Revolution, but did not take part in the struggle against the Soviet government.

**Polish Socialist Party** (*Polska Partia Socjalistyczna*) — A reformist nationalist organisation founded in 1892. Adopting the slogan of struggle for an independent Poland, the PSP, under Pilsudski and his adherents, carried on separatist nationalist propaganda among the Polish workers, whom they tried to divert from the joint struggle with the Russian workers against the autocracy and capitalism. Throughout the history of the PSP left-wing groups kept springing up within the party, as a result of the activities of the rank-and-file workers. Some of these groups eventually

joined the revolutionary wing of the Polish working-class movement.

In 1906 the party split into a left wing and right, chauvinist wing (the so-called “revolutionary faction”). Under the influence of the Bolsheviks and the Social-Democratic Party of Poland and Lithuania, the left wing gradually adopted a consistent revolutionary stand.

During the World War I some of the PSP left wing adopted an internationalist stand. In December 1918 it united with the Social-Democrats of Poland and Lithuania to form the Communist Workers’ Party of Poland (as the Communist Party of Poland was known up to 1925). During the World War I, the PSP right wing continued its policy of national chauvinism, organising Polish legions on the territory of Galicia to fight on the side of Austro-German imperialism. With the formation of the Polish bourgeois state, the right PSP in 1919 united with the PSP organisations existing on Polish territories formerly seized by Germany and Austria, and resumed the name of the PSP. At the head of the government, it arranged for the transfer of power to the Polish bourgeoisie, systematically carried on anti-communist propaganda, and supported a policy of aggression against the Soviet Union, a policy of conquest and oppression against Western Ukraine and Western Byelorussia. Various groups in the PSP who disagreed with this policy joined the Communist Party of Poland.

After Pilsudski’s fascist coup d’état (May 1926), the PSP was nominally a parliamentary opposition, but actually it did not carry on any active fight against the regime, and continued its anti-communist and anti-Soviet propaganda. During that period the left-wing elements of the PSP collaborated with the Polish Communists and supported united-front tactics in a number of campaigns.

**Potresov, Aleksandr** (1869-1934) — An early Russian Marxist and after 1903 a leading Menshevik; social-chauvinist during World War I; emigrated from Russia after October 1917 Revolution.

**Pravda** (Truth) — A legal Bolshevik daily published in St. Petersburg; founded on the initiative of the city’s workers in April 1912.

*Pravda* was a popular working-class newspaper, published with money collected by the workers themselves. A wide circle of worker-correspondents and worker-publicists formed around the newspaper. Over 11,000 correspondence items from workers were published in a single year. *Pravda* had an average circulation of 40,000 with some issues running into 60,000 copies.

Lenin directed *Pravda* from abroad, where he was living. He wrote for the paper almost daily, gave instructions to the editorial board and rallied the party’s best literary forces around the newspaper.

Pravda was subjected to constant police persecution. During the first year of its existence it was confiscated 41 times, and 36 legal actions were brought against its editors, who served prison sentences totalling over 47 months. In the course of two years and three months *Pravda* was closed down eight times by the tsarist government, but reissued under new names: *Babochaya Pravda*, *Severnaya Pravda*, *Pravda Truda*, *Za Pravdu*, *Proletarskaya Pravda*, *Put Pravdy*, *Rabochy*, and *Trudovaya Pravda*. On July 8 (21), 1914, on the eve of World War I, the paper was closed down.

Publication was not resumed until after the February Revolution. Beginning from March 5(18), 1917, *Pravda* appeared as the central organ of the RSDLP. Lenin joined the editorial board on April 5(18), on his return from abroad, and took over the paper's management. In July-October 1917 *Pravda* changed its name frequently owing to persecution by the Provisional Government, appearing successively as *Listok Pravdy*, *Proletary*, *Rabochy* and *Rabuchy Put*. On October 27 (November 9) the newspaper began to appear under its old name — *Pravda*.

**Progressists** — A party of the national-liberal monarchist bourgeoisie that took shape in the period of reaction after defeat of 1905 revolution; they stood for a moderate constitution with severely restricted rights and a narrow franchise and championed a strong government which could carry out the aggressive acquisition of new markets for Russian industry.

**Proudhon, Pierre-Joseph** (1809-65) — French economist and ideologist of petty-bourgeois socialism. Author of *What Is Property?* (1840) and *The Philosophy of Poverty* (1846). An opponent of Marxist communism, he opposed strikes and participation in the political struggle, advocating instead various schemes (such as a people's bank) to overcome the contradictions of capitalist society.

**Prosveshcheniye** (Enlightenment) — A Bolshevik legal theoretical monthly, published in St. Petersburg from December 1911 to June 1914, with a circulation of up to 5000 copies.

The journal was founded on Lenin's initiative to replace the Moscow-published *Mysl*, a Bolshevik journal which was closed down by the tsarist government. Lenin enlisted the services of Maxim Gorky to run the journal's literary section. Lenin directed *Prosveshcheniye* from Paris and subsequently from Cracow and Poronin. He edited articles and regularly corresponded with the editorial staff.

The journal exposed opportunism and bourgeois nationalism. It highlighted the struggle of the working class under conditions of a new revolutionary upsurge, propagandised Bolshevik slogans in the Fourth Duma election campaign, and came out against revisionism and centrism in the parties of the Second International.

The journal played an important role in the Marxist internationalist education of the advanced workers of Russia.

On the eve of World War 1, *Prosveshcheniye* was closed down by the tsarist government. It resumed publication in the autumn of 1917, but only one issue (a double one) appeared, containing Lenin's "Can the Bolsheviks Retain State Power?" and "A Review of the Party Program".

**Purishkevich, V. M.** (1870-1920) — A big landlord and rabid reactionary (a Black-Hundred monarchist).

**Pyatakov, Yuri (Georgi) Leonidovich** (1890-1937) — Used pseudonym *P. Kievsky* in prewar writings; Old Bolshevik; mentioned in Lenin's testament as one of the "two ablest young men in the party"; member of Left Opposition 1923-28; expelled from Communist Party 1927 but quickly capitulated and was reinstated; defendant in Stalin's second Moscow show trial in January 1937 ("trial of the 17"), found guilty and executed.

**Radek, Karl** (1885-1939) — Used pseudonym *Parabellum* in some pre-war writings. Joined Social-Democracy of Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania 1904; moved to Germany in 1908 and was active in SPD left-wing; expelled from SPD in 1913; internationalist stand during World War I and participated in Zimmerwald and Kientahl antiwar conferences; joined Russian Bolsheviks 1917; Bolshevik emissary to Germany December 1918; arrested by German authorities 1919, released January 1920; elected to Bolshevik Central Committee 1919; Comintern executive committee member during 1920s; participated in Left Opposition; expelled from CPSU at 1927 15th Congress but capitulated in 1929; defendant in January 1937 Moscow frame-up trial ("trial of the 17"); sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment.

**Renan, Ernest Joseph** (1823-92) — French theologian, Semitist and idealist philosopher, know for his works on the early Christians. In politics he was an avowed enemy of democracy and of the Paris Commune of 1871.

**Renaudel, Pierre** (1871-1935) — Originally a leader of the left-wing of the French Socialist Party who defected to the party's right-wing at the beginning of World War I; editor of the SP's daily paper, *l'Humanité* 1914-18; part of right-wing split in 1920 that retained name SP.

**Renner, Karl** (1870-1950) — Prominent opportunist leader and theorist of Austrian Social-Democracy; one of the authors of the petty-bourgeois nationalist theory of "cultural-national autonomy" (wrote under pseudonym *R. Springer*); Austrian chancellor 1919-20. Supported 1938 anchluss (forced union) with Hitler Germany. Chancellor again in 1945 and then elected first president of postwar republic 1945-50.

**Revolution, Finnish** (1918) — The revolution began in the middle of January 1918 in the southern industrial districts of the country. On January 15 (28) the Finnish Red Guard captured the capital, Helsinki and the bourgeois government of Svinhufvud was overthrown. The workers seized power and set up a revolutionary government, the Council of People's Representatives based on workers councils.

Among the most important decisions of the new government were the adoption of a law on the transfer without compensation of the lands tilled by the peasants to their ownership, exemption from taxation of the poor sections of the population, expropriation of enterprises whose owners had fled the country, establishment of state control over private banks (their functions were transferred to the state bank).

On March 1, 1918, a treaty was signed in Petrograd between the Finnish Socialist Workers Republic and the RSFSR.

However the revolution was victorious only in the towns and countryside of the south of Finland. The Finnish social-democratic leaders (such as O. Kuusinen) were not really prepared for an all-out struggle. Furthermore, under the terms of the Brest-Litovsk peace treaty, the Russian Red forces were obliged to withdraw and could no longer render direct aid. The Finnish bourgeoisie had been preparing for civil war for a long time and had organised special military units.

The Svinhufvud government established itself in the north and appealed to the German government for assistance. As a result of the intervention of German armed forces and the development of Finnish counterrevolutionary armed forces led by Carl Mannerheim, a former general in the tsarist army, the revolution was defeated in May 1918 after a bitter civil war. A White terror was imposed and tens of thousands were massacred; about a quarter of the Finnish proletariat was killed or jailed.

**Roland-Holst, Henriette** (1869-1952) — Dutch left socialist; founding member of Communist Party in 1918, resigned several years later; eventually became a Christian socialist.

**Rubanovich, Ilya Adolfovich** (1860-1920) — A leader of the right wing of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party; a social-chauvinist during World War I.

**Ruge, Arnold** (1802-80) — German publicist, Young Hegelian, bourgeois radical; left-wing deputy in the Frankfurt National Assembly in 1848; in the 1850s one of the leaders of the German petty-bourgeois émigrés in England; National-Liberal after 1866.

**Scheidemann, Philip** (1865-1939) — A leader of the right-wing of German social-democracy; rabid patriot during war; entered last government under monarchy to

try and stabilise the situation; member of SPD-led provisional government 1918-19; one of the organisers of the brutal suppression of the German working-class movement in early 1919; chancellor 1919.

**Semkovsky, S.Y.** (1882-1937) — Leading Menshevik; one of the five members of the Menshevik Secretariat Abroad (among the other members were Pavel Axelrod and Yuri Martov) which operated from 1912 to 1917; broke with Mensheviks in 1920 and joined Russian Communist Party; executed in Stalin purges.

**Shchedrin** — Pseudonym of Mikhail Yevgrafovich Saltykov (1851-1920), a Russian satirist and revolutionary democrat.

**Socialist-Revolutionary Party** — SRs or Social Revolutionaries; founded in 1901-02; emerged as the political expression of the earlier Narodnik (populist) currents. They advocated a revolution to overthrow tsarism and achieve “socialism”, by which they meant not the abolition of capitalist ownership of industry by the proletariat but the “socialisation” (egalitarian distribution) of land by the labouring classes in general (wage workers, the urban petty-bourgeoisie, and the peasantry). The Bolsheviks described the SRs as petty-bourgeois democrats expressing the outlook and interests of the peasantry. The right-wing of the SRs, which oriented toward an alliance with the liberal bourgeois Constitutional Democrats (Cadets), was led by Alexander Kerensky, who became head of the landlord-capitalist Provisional Government in 1917. Toward the end of 1917 the SR Party split into pro- and anti-Bolshevik wings. The Left SRs supported the October Revolution and participated in the Soviet government until July 1918 when they organised an attempted coup against the Bolsheviks. During the Russian Civil War both wings of the SRs aligned themselves with the monarchist-led White armies against the Soviet workers’ and peasants’ republic.

**Spartacists** — Originated as a revolutionary current in the German Social-Democratic Party (SPD) during World War I, opposing the SPD leadership’s pro-war position. Among its leaders were Karl Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg, Franz Mehring, Leo Jogiches and Clara Zetkin.

In April 1915, Luxemburg and Mehring started publication of the magazine *Die Internationale*. In 1916 the *Internationale* group began to publish illegally and circulate “political letters” over the name Spartacus and assumed the name of the Spartacus group. On November 11, 1918 the group constituted itself as an independent organisation, the Spartacus League, operating as public faction within the Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany (USPD). On January 1, 1919 the Berlin-based Spartacus League fused with other revolutionary groups in Germany to form the Communist Party (KPD). In January 1919 the best known

leaders of the Spartacists, Luxemburg and Liebknecht, were arrested and murdered by troops of the SPD-led provisional government.

**Springer, R.** — See *Renner, Karl*.

**Stalin, Joseph** (1879-1953) — Joined the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party in 1896 and sided with the Bolsheviks in the 1903 split. He became general secretary of the Russian Communist Party in 1922. He was the central leader and spokesperson for the privileged party-state bureaucracy that came to power in the Soviet Union in the 1920s.

**Stirner, Max** (1806-56) — Pseudonym of Kaspar Schmidt; German philosopher; Young Hegelian; an ideologist of bourgeois individualism and anarchism, author of *The Ego and His Own*.

**Stolypin, Pyotr Arkadyevich** (1862-1911) — Tsarist statesman and landowner, Chairman of the Council of Ministers and Minister of the Interior 1906-11. His name has become synonymous with a period of extreme political reaction in Russia (1907-10). Stolypin introduced an agrarian reform advantageous to the rich kulaks and disastrous for the rural poor.

**Struve, Pyotr** (1870-1944) — Russian bourgeois economist and liberal publicist. In the 1890s he was a leading representative of the reformist “legal Marxism”, the Russian variety of Bernsteinian reformism; leading member of the liberal-monarchist Constitutional Democratic Party (Cadets) from its inception in 1905; after 1917 Bolshevik revolution, a member of the Wrangel counterrevolutionary government.

**Svinhufvud, Pehr Eyvind** (1861-1944) — Finnish reactionary politician; head of the bourgeois government 1917-18, which conducted a policy of terror against the Finnish proletarian revolution. (See *Revolution, Finnish*.) President of Finland 1931-37.

**Trotsky, Leon** (1879-1940) — A leading member of the RSDLP. He aligned himself with the Mensheviks in 1903-04, after which he took an independent position within the RSDLP. In the 1905 revolution he became chairman of the St. Petersburg Soviet. He played a central role in organising the August 1912 conference of anti-Bolshevik Russian Social-Democrats in Vienna that set up the Organising Committee, which soon became dominated by the Mensheviks. During the first world war he took an anti-war position but opposed the Bolshevik party’s policy of calling for an organisational break with the Kautskyite “centre” current in the socialist movement. In July 1917 he joined the Bolsheviks and became a central leader. Chief organiser of October insurrection; first commissar of foreign affairs after revolution; leader of Red Army (1918-25). After Lenin’s death, led communist opposition to Stalinism; exiled in 1929; founded Fourth International in 1938;

assassinated in Mexico by Stalinist agent August 21, 1940.

**Tugan-Baranovsky, Mikhail** (1865-1919) — Russian bourgeois economist and prominent “legal Marxist”, subsequently a leader of the liberal-monarchist Constitutional-Democratic Party.

**Vandervelde, Émile** (1866-1938) — Right-wing leader of the Belgian Workers’ Party and chairperson of the International Bureau of the Second International; during World War I he adopted a pro-war position and became a minister in the Belgian government; signed Versailles Treaty; participated in number of coalition governments in the 1920s.

**Warszawski, A.S.** (1868-1937) — Party name: *Adolf Warski*. A founder of the Polish Social Democracy; delegate to the Fourth (Unity) Congress of the RSDLP in 1906 at which he was elected to the central committee; a founder of the Communist Workers Party of Poland 1918; active in Comintern Executive Committee 1921-24; supported Stalin faction but removed from posts in 1924; elected as a Communist deputy to the Polish parliament in 1926; took refuge in USSR 1929; arrested in Stalin purge of foreign communists and shot (at the age of 70).

**Wilhelm II** — See *Hohenzollern*.

**Wróblewski, Walery** (1836-1908) — Polish revolutionary democrat; a leader of the Polish liberation uprising of 1863; a general of the Paris commune; member of the General Council of the International Working Men’s Association and Corresponding Secretary for Poland 1871-72; delegate to the Hague Congress of 1872.

**Yurkevich, L.** (1885-1918) — Ukrainian bourgeois nationalist.

**Zimmerwald Conference** — Called on the initiative of the Swiss and Italian socialist parties to bring together the antiwar elements of the European socialist movement, it was held in the Swiss mountain village of Zimmerwald on September 5-8, 1915. It was the first international gathering of socialists during the war.

A struggle developed at the conference between the revolutionary internationalists headed by Lenin and the centrist, Kautskian majority. Lenin organised a “Zimmerwald left” group, but even in this only the Bolshevik Party held a consistent Marxist position.

Overall, the conference decisions were vague and semi-pacifist in character. The conference adopted a manifesto, drafted by Trotsky, which recognised that the world war was an imperialist one; it condemned the “socialists” who had voted war credits and had taken part in bourgeois governments; it called on the European workers to launch a struggle against the war and for a peace without annexations or indemnities.

For the significance of the Zimmerwald Conference see Lenin's articles "The First Step" and "Revolutionary Marxists at the International Socialist Conference, September 5-8, 1915" (*Collected Works*, Vol. 21).

**Zionism** — A reactionary Jewish nationalist trend founded by Theodor Herzl (1869-1904) in the 1890s; it had followers among the Jewish bourgeoisie and intellectuals and the more backward sections of the Jewish workers. Zionism argues that anti-semitism is innate in gentile society and that the only solution is to have a separate homeland for the Jews. The Zionists thus endeavoured to isolate the Jewish working-class masses from the general struggle of the working class and concentrated all their energies on establishing a Jewish state in Palestine. ■

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