

# *Vanguard*

Organ of the National Steering Committee of the  
Zimbabwe Communist Party Vol. 2 No. 3

4<sup>th</sup> November 2017



*Celebrating*  
**THE GREAT OCTOBER  
SOCIALIST REVOLUTION**

**1917-2017**



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## EDITORIAL:

# The Single Most Important Event in World History

This year we celebrate the centenary of the Great October Socialist Revolution which took place in Russia on 25<sup>th</sup> October 1917 (Old Style) 7<sup>th</sup> November 1917 (New Style). To all those familiar with historical materialism, this is the single most important event in human history.



Why?

Because it represents the not only the first major step in the movement away from capitalism and the dawn of socialism, it was also the first step away from class society towards non-class society.

Human beings of the species *Homo Sapiens* have been in existence for ± 250,000 years. For most of that time we have been living in various stages of primitive communism, of non-class society. The emergence of class society emerged only about 10,000 years ago concurrent with the rise of civilisation. Even then, for most of the subsequent period, those living within a class society were a minority of the world's population.

The young Marx and Engels in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1848) said famously:

**“The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.”**

Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1848) MECW Vol.6 p.482

to which the mature Engels, in a later footnote to a later edition, added

**“That is, all *written* history...”**

Frederick Engels, Footnote to English Edition of *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1888)  
MECW Vol.6 p.482

Engels and Stalin talk about 5 *main* modes of production, italicising the word ‘main’: these are: primitive communism, slave society, feudalism, capitalism and socialism; to these categories is often added the Asiatic mode of production used in ancient Mesopotamia (Iraq and Eastern Turkey) which is described by Marx. Only the first and the last are categories of non-class society.

When these writers talk about “*main* modes of production” they are recognising that within these main modes there have been variations — quite considerable ones — and that between these main modes there have been transitional forms. If we read Engels and if we study real history, we see that class struggle produces both revolution and counter-revolution, we see also that although one mode of production becomes dominant, that older modes still continue and also that new modes start to take shape, to emerge from the bosom of the old. Or as Lenin says in a number of places: “History does not move in a straight line: it zig-zags.”

We hear from some uneducated people that “Communism was tried and failed”. What a wealth of ignorance there is in that brief statement!

**Firstly: COMMUNISM HAS NEVER BEEN TRIED.** This is not because people do not want to try communism but because the social and economic conditions for the advance to communism do not yet exist. Since the time of Marx and Engels, communists have always been clear that there will be two stages, the first stage, which we now refer to as ‘Socialism’ will be

**“stamped with the birth-marks of the old society from whose womb it emerges”**

Karl Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme* (1875) MECW Vol.24 p.85

‘Communism’ is the second stage which can only emerge after the worldwide defeat of capitalism in its imperialist stage and after the socialist mode of production becomes predominant in most countries. The process will inevitably stretch across an entire historical epoch. The alternative, of course, is for the majority to accept increasing impoverishment while a tiny élite basks in luxury and conspicuous consumption.

Thus we talk about the Union of Soviet **Socialist** Republics (not ‘Communist Republics’) because as communists our analysis is not based on idealistic fantasy but on material reality. In fact, the concrete experience of the organising economies following the political independence of former colonies from the imperialist centre has shown us that, prior to even the building of socialism, it is, in most cases, necessary to build national democratic economies autonomous from imperialist control as an intermediate stage.

**Secondly:** Socialism in the USSR was immensely successful! It did not fail. In a few years a country the size of the whole of sub-Saharan Africa — a country in which the majority of people were peasants just as primitive in their production methods and as superstitious in their ideas as their African counterparts — was, under Communist leadership, propelled from the middle-ages into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Even before the Civil War (1917-1922) was over, Lenin and the Communist technician Gleb Krzhizhanovsky (1872-1959) launched a plan for the electrification of the whole country; starting in 1920, it was completed in 1932. Industrial growth rates during the 1930s averaged 16% per annum and electrical generation more than doubled from the 1932 level. The living standards of the people advanced with the growth of production.

Then in 1941, came the German Nazi invasion which had the explicit intention of exterminating a large section of the Soviet people and enslaving others to make way for German settlement. By the time of the invasion the Soviet Union was building bigger and better tanks than Germany. These tanks were wholly designed and built by the Soviet people to Soviet designs using Soviet steel smelted with Soviet coal. This war is known to us as the Second World War or World War II and to the Soviet people as the Great Patriotic War. Although other nations participated in the Second World War, it was the Red Army of the Soviet Union which engaged 70% of the German Army and defeated it, most spectacularly at Stalingrad in 1942, the biggest battle in human history and again at Kursk in 1943, the biggest tank battle in human history. It was the Red Army which took Berlin on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1945, forcing Hitler to commit suicide.

Despite the devastation of such a huge swathe of Soviet territory and the loss of at least 20 million citizens, the Soviet Union rapidly reconstructed only to be faced with the Cold War — the isolation of the Soviet Union and its allies by the USA and its satellites. After the Chinese Communist victory of 1949, the Soviets gave immense assistance to help China industrialise. In 1959 the USSR backed the Cuban revolution against US aggression and began giving massive aid to the African liberation movements without asking for anything in return.

True, by 1991 counter-revolutionary forces both internal and external as well as errors by the Soviet leadership created the conditions for the overthrow of Soviet power.

But did that lead to an improvement of the living conditions of the people of the former Soviet Republics?

No it did not.

Has this led to an improvement of the living standards and the reduction of war globally?

No it has not.

The conquest if state power by the working-class in Russia in 1917 not only immensely improved the living standards of the people who had previously lived in the backward Russian Empire but created the basis for successful socialist and national liberation struggles elsewhere, including Africa, including Zimbabwe. Soviet socialism was immensely successful.

**Thirdly:** the socialism of the Soviet Union was not produced from some kind of one-size-fits-all utopian ideal but had of necessity to fit the time and place. Anyone who has read the article *Land Reform in the USSR* in the August 2017 issue of *Vanguard* will realise that the land reform was a response to the conditions of the time and that in carrying it out, the traditional Russian co-operative known as the ‘artel’ gave it a form understood by the people.

Neither socialism nor capitalism can be built according to rigid formulas — in fact one of the disturbing features of the current era is the idealisation of the ‘Free Market’ which has pervaded the thinking of Western ‘economists’ since the 1980s and has led to the introduction of devastating ‘economic structural adjustment programmes’ now rejected even by such prominent bourgeois economists as Joseph Stiglitz, former head of the World Bank and former Harvard Business School lecturer David C. Korten.

It should be further noted that the ‘Free Market’ ideal has **not** been rejected by **any** of our leading Zimbabwean politicians, either in the ruling party or the or the ‘opposition’. As the great African writer, Frantz Fanon noted in his famous book *The Wretched of the Earth* in 1961:

**“This economy has always developed outside the limits of their knowledge. They have nothing more than an approximate, bookish acquaintance with the actual and potential resources of their country’s soil and mineral deposits; and therefore they can only speak of these resources on a general and abstract plane.”**

In terms of the socialism of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: we value and defend the pioneering work of the Soviet Union in which socialism was successfully built under the most appallingly difficult conditions. But although we have to learn from both the successes and the failures of our heroic predecessors, we have no intention of trying to mechanically reproduce the socialism of the USSR which began 100 years ago in 21<sup>st</sup> century Zimbabwe!

It is under the conditions of economic collapse that the Zimbabwe Communist Party calls for a National Dialogue for economic reconstruction.

In Zimbabwe, the ZCP has picked up the mantle of Marxism-Leninism hastily dropped by the bourgeois nationalist political leadership soon after they achieved National Independence and is simultaneously the Zimbabwean section of the worldwide communist movement started by Marx and Engels in 1848 and which launched itself as a serious world force in Petrograd in 1917.

A Luta Continua!

Without Revolutionary Theory there can be No Revolutionary Movement!

Viva Socialism! Viva!

iSando le Sikele!

Sando ne Sikere!

**Ian Patrick Beddowes**  
**Editor**

## GENERAL SECRETARY'S REPORT



As we publish our 3<sup>rd</sup> issue of *Vanguard* since our unification it is critical that as the ZCP we reflect on the work we have been doing since our launch on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2017. In our 1<sup>st</sup> issue of *Vanguard*, we published our founding press statement, announcing the formation of the Zimbabwe Communist Party.

Since April, we have been able to set up interim political structures in the following provinces; Bulawayo, Mashonaland Central, Manicaland and Gauteng in South Africa. We have also recruited a few comrades in the following provinces who are working towards the setting up of political structures; Mashonaland West, Harare, Masvingo, Matabeleland South and Matabeleland North. We have had challenges in Mashonaland East though we have comrades who live in Harare whom we are seeking to utilise to recruit in that province.

We have been able to attract young people in our ranks who are mainly drawn from the National University of Science and Technology (NUST) in Bulawayo and the Midlands State University, some of them are former leaders of the SRC.

With the high rate of unemployment leading to the weakening of the trade union movement over the years, our focus is in recruiting mainly the workers in the informal sector. Most of the workers in the informal sector remain unorganised, although the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions has taken a resolution in its last congress to focus in this growing sector which, by the way, is, for the most part, not engaged in productive work. Most of the goods sold in the streets are bought from neighbouring countries and were manufactured in Asia; this has increased cross border trade in the region. Zimbabweans will collect second-hand Japanese vehicles from the ports of Tanzania, Mozambique or South Africa. Most of the vehicles in our roads are either imported from Japan or brought in by migrant workers based in South Africa.

The informal sector faces serious challenges mainly from the municipal police. At the time of writing, Harare has resembled a police state, with both the Zimbabwe Republic Police and the Municipal Police working together to push out vendors. As a party we must intensify our work with this sector.

The unity of organised labour remains elusive. Our task in building this unity, is to create a militant class-oriented trade union movement.

We are currently working closely with the Amalgamated Rural Teachers Union (ARTUZ) in Mashonaland Central where part of its leadership constitutes the ZCP leadership in that province. In our 2<sup>nd</sup> issue of *Vanguard*, we published a story of one of our members who is also a member of the union who continues to face harassment from the regime due to his union work in the province.

In Bulawayo, some of our comrades have established a new teachers' union although we have not been able so far to engage in discussion with them at national level. We hope to engage the comrades in due course. We have been able to recruit the President of the Zimbabwe Diamond and Allied Workers' Union (ZIDAWU) based in Manicaland and we are looking forward to assisting in the development of that union. We are engaged in discussions with unions in Gweru with a view of assisting them in setting up study groups. They have shown interest in us providing political education to their members.

Discussions with the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions are ongoing, our Treasurer General Comrade Fabian Nkomo managed to have a meeting with the ZCTU Secretary-General Cde Japhet Moyo in Harare recently. We hope that these discussions will lead to a bilateral between the Zimbabwe Communist Party and the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions.

The split in ZCTU which happened some few years back is not assisting the workers and we need to engage with the Congress of Zimbabwe Trade Unions (COZITU) and others who were part of that split. We must also reach out to the ZANU(PF)-led Zimbabwe Federation of Trade Unions (ZFTU) as we build working-class unity.

In the process of building a militant and united trade union movement it is essential that we recruit the best class-conscious workers into the vanguard party.

Although the ZCP has taken a decision not to field any candidates in the coming elections in 2018, we call on Zimbabweans in both Zimbabwe and the Diaspora to register to vote. In the absence of the implementation of the electoral reforms as contained in the 2013 Constitution, the 2018 elections will be held under the same pre-2013 conditions. That is to say, the election outcome will be contested. Our call for a National Economic Dialogue is based on this reality.

So what is the National Economic Dialogue?

From the time of our launch, the Zimbabwe Communist Party has maintained that the central issue in Zimbabwe is production:

**“There can be no long term solution for the problems of Zimbabwe unless production is put first. Zimbabwe has abundant natural resources and it is the harnessing of these resources with an understanding of priorities through a national plan that there can be any national recovery.”**

ZCP, *Political Economy Policy Document*, Section 43

Although we have our *Political Economic Policy Document* from which the above quotation is taken, we cannot hope to implement this or any other policy on our own, we also know that others have their own ideas on how to revive our economy; we are therefore calling for a National Economic Dialogue **before** the 2018 General Election. This dialogue can take place both in the form of serious, regular discussion among Zimbabweans and in the form of a National Conference.

In pursuing this programme, we are engaging various stakeholders who have shown interest in the National Economic Dialogue. Last month, I met informally with the ZANU(PF) Secretary for Administration, Ignatius Chombo who seemed to agree with our view. Since our meeting was informal, his party is yet to commit to the National Economic Dialogue.

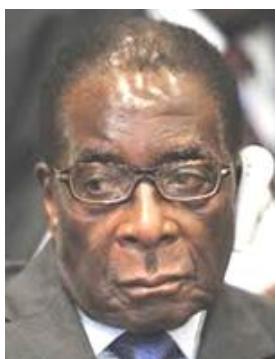
In Bulawayo, our comrades recently held a fruitful meeting with ZAPU where a great deal of mutual understanding was reached. We have also had interaction with MDC, MDC-T, Liberal Democrats, National People’s Party (Joice Mujuru) and the United Democratic Front (Andrew Nyathi).

In pursuing the National Economic Dialogue, we are not talking only to political parties. We also see trade unions and street trader associations as being critically important as are various farmers associations, business associations, NGOs and religious bodies.

We are aware that some will join us to make opportunist political capital, others simply to disrupt and make noise. But if they do so, they will be exposing their own political and intellectual backwardness. Even if there is initial chaos, there will emerge a core of patriotic Zimbabweans who are determined that they will construct a production-based economy. On the 11<sup>th</sup> November 2017, we will be celebrating the Great October Socialist Revolution in Mutare. We will use this occasion to launch the National Economic Dialogue.

**Ngqabutho Nicholas Mabhena**  
**General Secretary**  
**Zimbabwe Communist Party**

## MUGABE ORDERS ATTACK ON STREET TRADERS



HARARE — President Robert Mugabe has ordered a crackdown on street traders in Harare, 12 years after a similar exercise, known as 'Murambatsvina' [Refuse the Dirt] left hundreds of thousands of people without livelihoods or homes and was condemned by a United Nations Fact Finding Mission.

Mugabe complained to a ZANU(PF) meeting that even a road bearing his name is the site of illegal vending. At a weekend meeting of his party's youth assembly, President Mugabe denounced street traders for blocking roads. He said the city had become dirty and that roads should be cleared.

Harare Town Clerk Josephine Ncube has since issued a statement, saying city authorities will launch a blitz called 'Operation Restore Order' to clear the city of illegal traders and tear down their stalls. It has become popularly known as 'Murambatsvina 2' or simply 'V2'.

A similar operation 12 years ago was condemned by human rights groups.

The Vendors Initiative for Social and Economic Transformation says if it goes ahead, this eviction exercise could affect the livelihoods of 100,000 people.

**Main Source: Eyewitness News 10<sup>th</sup> October 2017**



**Police in Harare being transported to attack unemployed workers now working as vendors as part of the Zimbabwe governments ongoing black disempowerment programme**

## MURAMBATSVINA 2

### The war on street vendors and the urban poor in Zimbabwe. A reflection on the role of law and the state — and the fightback.

Zimbabwe's vendors and urban poor have been under severe attack since early October 2017 at the hands of bourgeois local authorities, the state and their law enforcement agencies. The onslaught began with a warning from Harare's acting Town Clerk on 8<sup>th</sup> October in a statement purporting to launch a city decongestion campaign code-named *Operation Restore Order*. The recent attack on vendors highlight naked class co-operation between opposition run local governments and the ruling central government. In Harare, the alliance is fronted by businessman Mayor Ben Manyenyeni (MDC) and the billionaire Minister of Local Government, Public Works and National Housing (and ex-Central Intelligence Organisation operative) Saviour Kasukuwere (ZANU(PF)).

The recent waves of attacks by state and municipal police on vendors on people eking a living from the streets of Zimbabwe's urban areas are heart-rending, but they also present an opportunity for political introspection. The attack themselves remain the expected result of the operation of bourgeois law and state. Street vendors have never been part of the ruling class and hence they do not have a stack in decision making and in the crafting of Zimbabwe's laws, by-laws or economic blueprints.

The ongoing attacks on vendors bear close reference to the infamous first *Operation Murambatsvina/Restore Order 1*, a massive government clampdown upon the urban poor in 2005. The operation resulted in internal displacements of over 700,000 poor working class people and affected over 2.4 million people [according to United Nations report] and involved the violent destruction of housing and business structures. Like in the current onslaught, *Operation Murambatsvina/Restore Order 1* was executed through the combined power of state organs such as the riot police, municipal police and other state security agents.

The ruling élites are once again able to hide behind the fiction of 'rule of law', that is, giving excuses for an onslaught through lame reference to council by-laws and the national laws and claims towards hygiene. Whilst some of the claims are made to appear legitimate, it remains an open secret that even the mainstream supermarkets are crowded and do not offer any ablution facilities.

### Fightback Lessons from *Operation Murambatsvina/Restore Order 1*

There are some interesting (and sad) comparisons and lessons to be drawn between the circumstances and fightback against *Operation Restore Order 2* and those against *Operation Murambatsvina/Restore Order 1*. Fightback by the urban poor in 2005 failed to gain any traction as a result of lack of solidarity between the urban poor at the time with other social groups in the student and workers movement, mainstream opposition parties and civil society. A majority of these fraternal groups were still reeling from the split within the main opposition Movement for Democratic Change party (MDC) as well as defeat on the parliamentary election of 2005. Some Non-Governmental Organisations tried to shed tears much later and offer a measly "we lost the Opportunity" apology. It will never be discovered whether the lost opportunity was on resistance or on fund-raising. In 2017 the ground is different, there are some organic civil society grouping working directly with organised vendors, such as the National Vendors Union of Zimbabwe (NAVUZ) and the Vendors Initiative for Socio-Economic Transformation (VISET). Furthermore there is a rising social media movement within Zimbabwe.



The government both national and local claims to be restoring ‘Law and Order’ or alternatively the ‘Rule of Law’.

But what does the supreme law, the Constitution of Zimbabwe actually say?

In 2005 Zimbabwe was using the Lancaster House constitution which was vague on socio-economic rights, but the 2013 Constitution states that:

**“The State and all institutions and agencies of government at every level must endeavour to secure the removal of restrictions that unnecessarily inhibit or prevent people from working and otherwise engaging in gainful economic activities”**

Constitution of the Republic of Zimbabwe, Section 24(2)(b)

It is clear that neither the ZANU(PF) government nor the MDC-T controlled Harare Council has any intention of upholding the Constitution, the fundamental law of the country. It is just as clear that whatever the written law states, the bourgeoisie will interpret it in a manner which suits its own class interests. The struggle for the implementation of the 2013 Constitution now becomes more than a liberal ‘Human Rights’ issue. It is now a class issue.

## Way Forward

The road ahead for vendors and the urban poor in Zimbabwe lies in organisational unity. The vendors, though organised, are divided. At present there are at least four major associations NAVUZ and VISET based in Harare and the Bulawayo Vendors and Traders Association (BVTA) and Street Wise Informal Traders Association (SWITA) in Bulawayo. These organisations need to form a United Front, The Front could then invite sympathetic civil society movements, trade unions and student associations to work with it.

The laws of the Republic of Zimbabwe are superintended by members of the bourgeoisie class, who do not have families that waiting upon the income that comes from the women and men selling vegetables and various goods on the streets of Harare, Chitungwiza , Bulawayo, Masvingo and the rest of Zimbabwe’s urban centres.

The other major hurdle that has to be overcome by the poor urban working class is the need for a political voice. At the moment the vendors have no organic ally within the mainstream neo-liberal political parties. The only political ally of the vendors is the class-conscious left and its vanguard the Zimbabwe Communist Party. The ZCP remains the only political movement that has made a political decision to dedicate time and resources towards breathing ideological fire into the rising vendors fightback against the ZANU(PF) dictatorship and its business allies within the mainstream opposition MDC-T party.

**Lenin Tinashe Chisaira  
Deputy Political Commissar  
Zimbabwe Communist Party**

## Harare vendors defiant

Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) and municipal police yesterday maintained a strong presence in Harare's central business district as they continued with their clampdown on vendors. Police last week started clearing the capital's streets of vendors and pirate taxis after President Robert Mugabe complained of chaos in the CBD.

On Thursday police deployed water cannons at various strategic places, including MDC-T headquarters in anticipation of a backlash from vendors.

Although there were pockets of resistance from vendors on Thursday, yesterday police maintained a strong presence that kept many at bay. However, Vendors Initiative for Social and Economic Transformation (Viset) leader Samuel Wadzai said they would not be intimidated by police's presence.

"Viset would like to congratulate it's members and all who defied these intimidation tactics by the government and turned out for work," he said. "This is the time for vendors to show unity and resilience in the face of these childish acts of provocation by the government and the message is that, we are not leaving the streets until adequate vending sites with all the facilities including ablution facilities are created.

"In the meantime, we are consulting with our lawyers with a view to approach the courts to seek an interdict to stop this wanton attack on livelihoods.

"We wish our four members who were injured on Thursday a speedy recovery and an unconditional release of the five who are still being held at Harare Central [police station]."

Social movement Tajamuka condemned police's move, saying they would fight in the vendors' corner.

**From Report in: *The Standard* by Obey Manayiti 15<sup>th</sup> October 2017**



**Rioting police using teargas attack peaceful vendors and other citizens in Harare, 31<sup>st</sup> October 2017**

## Armed police block vendors meeting

Armed with guns and batons the police stormed Central Harare's Anglican Cathedral, the venue of the meeting, and prevented people from entering the church. The police said they wanted a letter authorizing the meeting who argued that attending a church service did not require police authority.

One of the organizers of the vendors' meeting, Sten Zvorwadza, posted on social media complaining about the police's behaviour.

"Police should not pounce on innocent citizens with guns because Zimbabwe is not a war situation," posted Zvorwadza.

The police later allowed the meeting to go ahead without giving reasons.



## Reprise for Mutare

Vendors in Mutare got a temporary reprieve on Monday after Minister of State for Manicaland Provincial Affairs Mandi Chimene instructed council and police to allow them to sell their wares from the edges of pavements in the evenings only, in order to allow free movement of people. Minister Chimene said the temporary move was meant to allow vendors to continue getting an income, as the majority of them depended on the trade, while council and her office would explore ways of establishing proper market stalls for organised business.

“I want council to put demarcations outlining where people will be allowed to display their wares and should anyone be caught on the wrong side of that line, then all vendors will be summarily removed from the streets because that’s a clear sign that they do not want to be orderly. This is not going to remain like that for a long time, as my office has already started engaging council on the possibility of establishing proper market facilities like the ones some of these vendors are shunning, arguing that the tables are too high for easy conducting of business and that there are no toilets and running water to maintain the place smart,” she said.

When Minister Chimene toured the streets of Mutare, vendors seized the opportunity to tell her that the market stalls which council had set up in the past were physically detached from the people, which made it difficult for them to conduct meaningful business.

“We want market stalls similar to those at *Manica Post* where there is water and toilets plus they are close to the road and people can easily spot what they want from there, which makes them ideal for business,” a vendor told Minister Chimene during the meeting.

Market stalls at *Manica Post* were constructed by the Zimbabwe Newspapers Group (1980), as part of its corporate social responsibility to the Mutare community and their opening in September brought lots of relief to vendors that managed to get space there.

Mutare City acting town clerk, Mr Cephas Vuta told the gathering that council had started engaging reputable financiers such as banks with a view to partnering them in establishing state-of-the-art market stalls.

“We want to establish market stalls similar to those constructed along Simon Mazorodze in Harare if you have seen them,” he said. “Our intention is to make sure vending is done properly with proper health facilities and without fears of disease outbreaks that are typical of poor hygienic conditions associated with haphazard vending.”

**Main Source: *The Herald*, 19<sup>th</sup> October 2017**



**Vendors in Mutare**

## Bulawayo: statement by vendors

### VENDORS ARE NOT A MENACE

Bulawayo Vendors and Traders Association (BVTA) and Street Wise Informal Traders Association (SWITA) are shocked by utterances made by President Mugabe when he referred to vendors as a menace and causing disorder in the City of Harare. We pledged our unequivocal solidarity with vendors and informal traders in Harare.

We strongly condemn and take this as a slap on citizens of Zimbabwe who are bearing the brunt of economic meltdown, industrial collapse among many myriad of economic challenges. The ordinary women, youth and the disabled are eking a livelihood on the streets as desperate survival strategy since the economy is on the doldrums. Statistics reveal that over US\$ 7 billion is circulating in the informal sector.

It is mind boggling that President Mugabe when was addressing delegates at the Small to Medium Enterprises (SME Expo) in April 2017 at the ZANU(PF) headquarters urged Zimbabweans to create their own jobs in the Small to Medium Enterprises (SME) sector instead of waiting to be employed. In light of his advice for people to create their own jobs and his current attack on the informal traders and vendors clearly demonstrates a state of confusion and policy proclamation inconsistencies. In addition these utterances also fly in the face of state owned parastatals like NetOne who have also hired scores of young people to be vendors of their One Fusion products.

It is our considered view that the threats on vendors by the President is:

- 1) An affront to Section 14 Subsection (2) of the Constitution of Zimbabwe which states that at all times, the State and all institutions and agencies of government at every level must ensure that appropriate and adequate measures are undertaken to create employment for all Zimbabweans, especially women and youths.
- 2) Violation of Section 24 of the Constitution which says that state and all institutions and agencies of government at every level must adopt reasonable policies and measures and provide everyone with an opportunity to work in a freely chosen activity, in order to secure a decent living for themselves and their families.
- 3) His threats also undermine Section 64 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe which states that “Every person has a constitutional right to choose and carry on any profession, trade or practice of a profession, trade or occupation may be regulated by law.”

We therefore call on Civil Society Organizations, Human Rights Lawyers, Residents Associations to come out and stand in solidarity with vendors and informal traders in this hour of need as this is an attack on the only livelihood of the already burdened and suffering citizens.

We are convinced that an attack on the informal sector will have far reaching consequences such as increasing crime rate, prostitution, spread of HIV and AIDS and people will not be able to fend for their families.

We call upon the President to exercise restraint when talking about issues affecting people's lives without proffering any meaningful alternatives.

We urge for a National Dialogue on the Informal Sector involving all relevant stakeholders.

## NEWS AND VIEWS *from Zimbabwe and the Diaspora*

### GRACE MUGABE'S SON BUYS 2 ROLLS ROYCES AND AN ASTON MARTIN

Russel Goreraza recently landed two brand new Rolls Royces at Harare International Airport. Goreraza reportedly told his friends that his next vehicle due to arrive in the capital Harare was an Aston Martin. Russel Goreraza, 33, is Grace Mugabe's eldest son from her first marriage to Air Force of Zimbabwe intelligence officer Wing Commander Stanley Goreraza.

This came just a few months after Grace's two sons with Robert Mugabe, Robert Jnr. and Bellarmine Chatunga were reportedly evicted from The Regent Apartment Hotel in June for their 'unacceptable behaviour'. They later moved to another hotel, where Grace was alleged to have attacked a young model Gabriella Engels in August.

Goreraza himself was in 2015 found guilty of killing a pedestrian. He was driving a BMW vehicle when he knocked down an unidentified pedestrian who died on the spot. It is believed that Goreraza was ordered by the magistrate to pay a fine of \$800 or alternatively spend two months in jail.

Goreraza does not have either known business interests nor any impressive educational qualifications. The cars are believed to cost around \$240,000 each.

**Main Source: News 24**



**Top: New Rolls Royce belonging to Russel Goreraza.**

**Bottom: Goreraza driving one of his new toys.**



## **VOTER INTIMIDATION**

### **Mashonaland East**

In Uzumba Ward 12 on the 9<sup>th</sup> October 2017, Bob Muswe the ZANU(PF) Chairperson called for a meeting at a local Hall. The meeting was attended by Muswe, Mukombe and Musanhi villages. At the meeting, Muswe urged Village heads to ensure that they compile names of people as they go to register and capture serial numbers of their voter registration slips.

Villagers in Maramba Pfungwe Ward 2 have reportedly been forced by ZANU(PF) activists to pay 50 cents towards the certification of their proof of residence in order to register as voters. ZANU(PF) District Chairperson, Jofias Chiropo forced community members to pay 50 cents for them to get ZEC VR9 registration forms which he had photocopied. This took place on the 16<sup>th</sup> of October 2017 at Kamvire Primary School. Chiropo also ordered people to submit serial numbers of their voter registration slips to him. In the same ward village head Edward Kafura ordered opposition supporters to pay 50 cents for proof of residence. The village head highlighted that he was given the directive to do so by the ZANU(PF) leadership in the ward.

In Murehwa Ward 16 on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2017, ZANU(PF) District Chairman, Charles Chitsote directed all village heads in the ward to deny opposition supporters proof of residence.

On 19<sup>th</sup> October 2017, ZANU(PF) District Chairperson, Tichaona Madzonzoni ordered teachers at Kafura Primary and Secondary School to submit serial numbers of their voter registration slips to him. Madzonzoni also instructed them to vote resoundingly for ZANU(PF) in the 2018 elections.

**From the report by Heal Zimbabwe Trust  
forwarded to Vanguard from ZCP Harare Province**

### **Chitungwiza**

Political violence flared up in Chitungwiza on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2017. We understand that about two weeks ago, ZANU(PF) youths allegedly teamed up with rogue members of the army and terrorised people in the same area.

The issue of 22<sup>nd</sup> September, however, revolved around voter registration slip serial numbers. Apparently ZANU(PF) youths were recording registration slip serial numbers and MDC-T youths started urging people not to produce the slips.

ZANU(PF) youths retaliated by stoning MP Godfrey Sithole's car and MDC-T youths retaliated by stoning ZANU(PF) Ward 23 councillor's car. The ZANU(PF) youths eventually got hold of one Delma (an MDC-T member) and attacked him.

**From the Report by CitizensZW  
forwarded by ZCP National Organiser, Comrade Trust Mwanza**

## Advice on intimidation

Citizens, the serial number on voter registration slips is useless. It will never reveal which party you voted for. In fact, it will not even reveal if you voted or not. It is there so that ZEC can confirm, using the whole slip, that you are a registered voter in your ward, in the event of BVR system failing.

The BVR system will simply be there to identify you as a registered voter. You will vote manually using ballot papers. What you will do with the ballot paper in the voting booth is between you and God.

**YOUR VOTE IS AND WILL ALWAYS BE YOUR SECRET**

Do not be intimidated. If someone wants to write down your serial number, let them. If someone is recording serial numbers, leave them alone. It is useless, futile and worthless. Tell friends not to be bothered by that. If you don't want to show anyone your slip, it is your right too.

**Please share this information to all groups you are a member, to Facebook and other social media sites.**

**From the Report by CitizensZW  
forwarded by ZCP National Organiser, Comrade Trust Mkwananzi**

*The Zimbabwe Communist Party urges all Zimbabweans to register to vote. The old Voters' Roll has been scrapped. The dead will no longer be able to vote. This is a small but definite step forward, the ZEC, established under the terms of the new Constitution, is NOT under the total control of ZANU(PF).*

*It is possible to register to vote anywhere in Zimbabwe so long as you have an ID or a receipt for your ID. You should have proof of residence, or if not, sign an affidavit confirming your address. Voting will be strictly according to your place of residence, but you may register anywhere in the country. Those living in South Africa, therefore, can register to vote in Beitbridge even if their address and polling station is in Mount Darwin. Although there is a court decision pending, it is unlikely that there will be voting outside the country.*

*Although the ZCP is not participating directly in the coming elections and although we do not think any substantial change is likely following the 2018 elections, we nevertheless urge Zimbabweans to keep up the pressure on the régime by registering and voting.*



**Zimbabweans at rural polling station**

## **COMMUNITY WATER ALLIANCE, HARARE**

### **Update on Policy Discussions with Councillor H. Gomba (City of Harare Environment Committee Chairperson)**

Community Water Alliance hosted Councillor H. Gomba as a guest on the Water Service Delivery WhatsApp group. The discussion was held on 19/10/2017. The Agenda of the discussion was as follows:

- 1.** Writing off of interest charges on consumer accounts. Residents had an opportunity to ask questions on how this works and what they need to do to realize this.
- 2.** Fall of fixed water charges. Residents had an opportunity to ask about terms and conditions that council will set on payment plans.
- 3.** Floating of international tenders for the procurement of imported water treatment chemicals. Questions were asked on what the council's plan is on this.
- 4.** Any other water issues.

### **QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS FROM CITIZENS**

- 1.** Concern was raised on subjecting removal of interest rates to fulfilment of payment plan. Citizens had issues on whether council will not demand half of amount owed as they did with payment plans last time.
- 2.** Concern was raised on Warren Park area around Mutomba shopping centre which hardly gets water but at the end of the month water is billed.
- 3.** Hiking of water charges from 0,25c per cubic meter to 0,70c per cubic meter.
- 4.** Preservation of wetlands was raised and why council was not taking the issue seriously.
- 5.** Is water account ring fenced?
- 6.** Council's position regarding clean feeder streams into Lake Chivero *vis a vis* discharge of raw effluent into Marimba and Mukuvisi rivers. Questions were raised on what council is doing to guarantee access to safe clean potable water from Morton Jeffrey water works right into households.
- 7.** Kuwadzana/Crow borough paddock has been allocated stands yet it is a wetland as well place that council used to offload effluent.
- 8.** Budiriro 5 Cabs houses has had no running water for more than 2 months.
- 9.** Whether council demands any percentage of money owed up-front before agreeing on payment plan.
- 10.** Whether the China loan is administered by City of Harare or it's the national government.

**11.** Whether there is any token or gesture of appreciation for those who have cleared their arrears as a way to also encourage payment.

**12.** Whether China Exim bank is not in breach of the \$US144 water loan agreement and whether this will not affect the repayment agreement also?

**13.** Well-cash issue.

**14.** Adopting same payment issue as ZESA where when one pays the debt is deducted from the payment made.

## **RESPONSES FROM COUNCILOR GOMBA**

**1.** City of Harare water funds were ring fenced in 2011.

**2.** Council does not condone construction on wetlands however some of them are on privately owned land which makes it difficult to assert authority. Some applications for development on wetlands are coming to City of Harare attached with the Environmental Management Agency EIA permits making it very difficult for council to do anything.

**3.** Council is simply asking ratepayers to come to council and agree on payment plans on debts and upon agreement council remove interest on rates.

**4.** Through China Exim bank \$US144m funds and other grants from African Development Bank, council is working on a program to refurbish sewer plants/outflows to ensure sewer discharge is not polluting the rivers.

**5.** The issue of increasing water charges was a policy direction from the Ministry of Local Government. Last year in 2016 Ministry of Local Government threatened to disapprove City of Harare budget proposal until water charges are increased.

**6.** The agreement with CABS on construction of houses in Budiriro 5 involved CABS commitment to build a big water reservoir meant for that project at Lochnivar.

**7.** Construction on wetlands and parks is mainly done through invasion by unauthorized people desperate for accommodation.

**8.** It is difficult to have timelines on China Exim bank loan because Zimbabwean & Chinese governments are having some problems in the procession of the balance of these funds. \$US 72 million of the \$US144 million has been disbursed.

**9.** Those who owe huge bills must go and agree on a payment plan with City of Harare. Councillors have asked officials not to make it difficult through demanding huge deposits from residents.

**10.** Issues on breach or compliance of the terms of agreement in the China loan is a Government to Government Issue that cannot be answered by City of Harare.

**11.** The ZESA pre-payment model has resistance from some residents.

**12.** Those with ideas of what can be done are open to send their proposals through Community Water Alliance.

**Community Water Alliance will be working on the following areas as a response to citizen concerns:**

1. Wetland preservation to improve raw water quality. Citizens should support such initiatives.
2. Engaging Ministry of Local Government to reconsider their proposal to increase water tariffs.
3. Engaging CABS to ensure it addresses its commitment that will ensure access of water for Budiriro 5 CABS house scheme.
4. Push for implementation of removal of interest charges and fixed water charges.
5. Progress with #WellcashMustFall Campaign.
6. Proper ring fencing of water account and not the 2011 framework.
7. Promoting the right to water.
8. Demanding progress report on the \$US144m China Exim Bank loan and transparency on the newly acquired \$US3b on Kunzvi dam.

**From: Community Water Alliance Information Department [Harare].**  
**Thanks to Comrade Hardlife Mudzingwa**



**Above: Tap water in Harare**

**Below Left: Accessing water in peri-urban Harare**

**Below Right: Children play with filthy water**



## SOLUSI UNIVERSITY

Students at Solusi University on the outskirts of Bulawayo recently boycotted lectures in protest over the university's fees increase after the institution introduced a \$90 development levy. The new levy was introduced without the knowledge of the students at the Seventh Day Adventist Church run institution.

There is an impasse between the students and the university management over the fees issue with university authorities allegedly intimidating students.

The students on Thursday demanded an audience with the university's management led by its Vice Chancellor Professor Joel Musvosvi who allegedly did not address the students concerns. Instead of addressing the students, the university's management allegedly called the anti-riot police who came and dispersed the protesting students.

The fees at the university are pegged at \$900 for students studying humanities and commercials while those studying science courses pay close to \$1,000. In a statement, Prof. Musvosvi confirmed that the university increased its fees by \$90 but said this was the university council's decision.

"The fee structure for 2017 was placed on the University website but there was no written communication sent to the students. Thus when students saw the charge on their statements of accounts there was surprise and consternation. As a result we held a meeting in the Cafeteria with the whole student body in which attempts were made to answer questions. It was stated that the fee structure is a creation of Council and cannot be changed by administration," said Prof Musvosvi. He said the university noted its mistake and apologised to the students for not communicating the fees increase.

Students said the levy was not justified. They said the university was now resorting to intimidating students trying to force them into writing reports implicating themselves for causing the chaos.

"The protest is a result of the students' bottled up frustrations caused by management. The university smuggled a \$90 levy which we don't understand why it was imposed. Our fees are very high but it seems the university authorities do not appreciate this fact," said one of the students. He said on Thursday the university authorities called police to disperse them yet they were not violent.

Another student said the university was even charging them medical aid fees yet it does not offer any medical aid facility. Other students said it was mind boggling why the university was intimidating them instead of addressing their concerns.

"Why are they calling the anti-riot police when we are demonstrating peacefully? The university wants to employ intimidating tactics. Today it is forcing some students to write reports stating that they are the ones inciting other students to riot," said another student.

Zimbabwe Congress of Students' Unions (Zicosu) Secretary General Cde. Godknows Mdhari condemned victimisation of students saying the university was violating students' rights.

**Main Source: *The Chronicle*, report by Nqobile Tshili 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2017**

## ZIMBABWE NATIONAL LIBERATION WAR VETERANS' ASSOCIATION

Veterans of the liberation struggle will convene a gathering in Harare at Gwanzura Stadium, Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association (ZNLWVA) spokesperson Douglas Mahiya said:

"We want war veterans to agree on how to deal with the old man. The association wants to get guidance from war veterans. They must tell us if we have strayed and sold out the ideal of the struggle by demanding a clear succession plan from Mugabe,"

According to Mahiya, the Gwanzura meeting is likely to be held on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2017 'depending on police clearance'.

Despite the fact that the top executive of the war veterans was expelled from ZANU(PF), Mahiya said the former fighters are firmly involved in ZANU(PF) politics. The war veterans have demanded that Mugabe hands over power to Vice-President Emmerson Mnangagwa, although First Lady Grace Mugabe is now demanding that Mnangagwa be expelled from the ruling party.

"Zanu PF's umbilical cord with the masses is through the war veterans so it would be folly for anyone to suggest that we do not have a say in what happens in that party. If indeed Mugabe does not want war veterans to be part of the party, he must drop the PF (Patriotic Front) part to the name. PF belongs to war veterans, Mugabe was never at the war front and never part of the Patriotic Front," Mahiya said.

When Grace mocked Mnangagwa declaring that she did not consider him important "because he got a job from my husband" Mahiya hit back, "Our wives, the wives of war veterans are now saying Mugabe was given a job by their husbands and we now want to see how Grace can be First Lady if we take away her husband's job," he said.

Mahiya said that the war veterans with support from 'the people' will also assess ZANU(PF)'s proposal for an elective congress in December. "We would want to take an assessment of the congress and see whether it has been called to solve the country's crisis or a personal problem," he said.

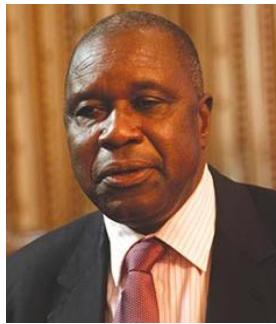
In a more recent statement, the former freedom fighters have called on Rhodesians "scattered across the world" to come back and help rebuild Zimbabwe..

"We want them [Rhodesians] to be part of the next governance in Zimbabwe because this country has been run on a scorched earth policy by the G40. We want it to recover and for us to build a new country," ZNLWVA's Chairperson, Chris Mutsvangwa said while addressing journalists in Harare over the weekend.

[G40 (Generation 40) is a faction within Zanu(PF) party made up of younger members of the political élite linked to First Lady Grace Mugabe. Robert Mugabe is thought to be the patron.]



**Douglas Mahiya**  
Spokesperson  
ZNLWVA



**Chris Mutsvangwa**  
Chairperson  
ZNLWVA

## HILLBROW FAMILY LIFE — EVILS OF THE CAPITALIST SYSTEM!

Someone once said, “If you throw a stone in Hillbrow, you are likely to hit a Zimbabwean.”

During apartheid, Hillbrow was home to that section of the white middle class which needed to live and work in central Johannesburg. Black people were allowed there only as domestic workers; some lived in the servants quarters (rooms located at the top of the high rise buildings) while others came to work in the morning returning to the township in the evening.

The late Mr Samson Nkala, a builder by trade who came from my village Mbizingwe in Umzingwane, once said to me “You see my boy, it’s us who built Sandton.”

The building of Sandton City began in 1976, and as the white community moved to Sandton, black migrant workers slowly began take their place in Hillbrow; by 1985 some had started to make Hillbrow their permanent home. At the time, migrant black workers could not occupy the flats but would be allowed to rent the servants’ quarters; but as the movement of white people to Sandton accelerated, black people began to occupy the flats previously reserved for whites. By 1994, the majority in Hillbrow were either migrants from neighbouring countries or South Africans who came from outside Gauteng to look for work.

The ownership of property did not change substantially. High-rise flats were not sold to black people, but remained in the hands of companies or individuals who hired estate agents to run the buildings, renting out to the black community, who had moved into Hillbrow and surrounding areas of Berea, Yeoville and the inner city.

In a few cases blocks of flats were purchased by black people under sectional title, including the Seven Buildings and New Town bought by Joe Slovo when he was Minister of Housing for the benefit of the people of the inner city. All of these properties plus a number of others purchased under separate schemes have been appropriated by sophisticated hi-jacking syndicates involving high-level corruption.

For one to rent an apartment in Hillbrow, one has to sign a lease agreement with the owner of the building through an estate agent. Assuming the monthly cost of renting a one bed room apartment is R5000 , the tenant must show proof of being able to pay the monthly rental and other levies. This is done by producing a financial statement or payslip (some which are forged in internet cafés), and payment of a two or three month deposit to the estate agent. Normally, the worker who signs the lease agreement would have spent months saving money to deposit a flat. In many cases, the tenant is unable to afford the monthly rental alone.

High monthly rentals, have over the years, forced the legal tenant to sub-let space to sub-tenants, in the process creating a new caste called Umastanda (the official tenant). The official tenant or Umastanda is the one who collects money from the sub-tenants towards paying monthly rentals and rates to the estate agent through the banks. Assuming the monthly rental is R5,000 for a one bedroom flat, Umastanda will parcel out the sitting room to three families. This is done by allocating a space that allows a double bed to each family. Normally, three beds will fit in the sitting room, that is three families will now have to share a sitting room at a cost of ±R1,500 a space. This means that in this apartment, Umastanda will collect R4,500 from the sub-tenants, who are not registered with the landlord and then top up with R500 to pay off the monthly rent of R5000.

Meanwhile Umastanda occupies a bedroom and has all the privacy but pays far less than the sub-tenant pays. On other occasions Umastanda will stay in one flat occupying a bedroom , while sub-tenants occupy the sitting room while in his/her other flat, bedrooms will be rented out at R2 500 a month, sometimes with two families sharing one room which is then divided by a curtain.

It is common that each family sharing a room, will not watch one TV or play one radio. It is common when entering such a room to find one family watching Generations, the next watching soccer and the third watching the news.

Some Umastanda abuse sub-tenants by charging them high rentals while they simply top up, but the majority of Umastanda are unable to afford the monthly rentals alone and have little choice but to sub-let.

Curtain division in the flats have created serious challenges for families. Those workers who work shifts will find it difficult to have privacy during the day.

How can partners be intimate in broad day- light when the curtain-neighbour will hear the sounds of love-making in the same room?

Those most affected are children brought up under this environment. While the couple will sleep on the bed, their children will be sleeping on the floor next to the bed. The couple will delay their love-making waiting for the kids to fall asleep; but some of these kids will pretend to be asleep so that they can observe what the adults are doing. You can imagine the stories they share with their friends who live in similar environment.

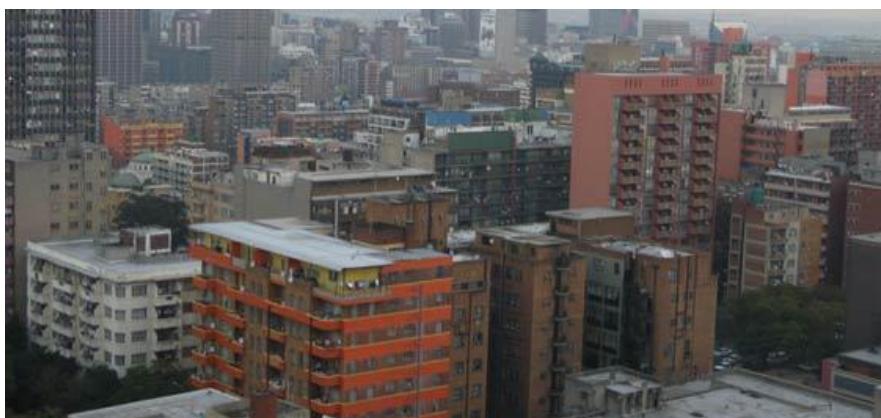
But why all this?

As I have said, the high rise buildings in Greater Johannesburg and in all metropolitan cities are privately owned. The landlords are only interested in making a profit by exploiting the working class. The hi-jacking of buildings in the inner city by poor people has its roots in high rentals with poor services provided by landlords only interested in collecting rentals. In most cases, the media reports only on this kind of hi-jacking and does not report on the more sophisticated forms of hijacking and property fraud perpetrated by the rich and 'respectable.'

South Africa remains a capitalist society. The life we live in Hillbrow exposes us to the evils of a capitalist system that denies families privacy, and is interested only in collecting the hard-earned money of the working class. A worker does not decide where he/she has to stay, the economic conditions do.

The only solution to restore dignity to families in Hillbrow and in other metropolitan cities around the world, is for the working class to take power and to dispossess the landlord class. Even if socialism, the social ownership of the means of production, may not be an immediate option, the establishment of a people's government with a National Democratic programme which includes the municipal control of rented housing, especially in the inner cities will go a long way to the restoration of human dignity and be a huge step towards the establishment of socialism.

**Ngqabutho Nicholas Mabhena,  
General Secretary, Zimbabwe Communist Party**



**Hillbrow Flats**

## MEETING BETWEEN ZAPU AND ZCP

On the 20<sup>th</sup> October 2017, we met with the ZAPU delegation at their invitation; the ZCP delegation was comprised of Comrade Benny Moyo, Secretary for International Affairs, Comrade Trust Mwananzi, National Organiser and Comrade Fabian Nkomo, Treasure General; the ZAPU delegation was comprised of Comrade John Zolani Dlamini, Deputy National Organiser and Comrade Iphiethule Maphosa, Deputy Spokesperson, Comrade Mark Mbayiwa was unable to attend.,

The meeting was both formal and friendly. In his opening remarks Comrade Dlamini said that they have been asked by the ZAPU leadership to discuss with friendly progressive political stakeholders about formalisation of relations in the quest to dislodge the parasitic bourgeois régime in our country, and that they wanted to know us and our position.

We asked to know who else they were engaged with, and they said they were in discussion with pressure groups and religious movements, and also in coalition talks with a number of political players.

We told them that we are a young political formation based on Marxist-Leninist principles, We explained that our membership comes from different political parties in Zimbabwe and who believe that the exploitation of one person by another should be eradicated — hence our belief that only the Communist path is the correct path.

The ZAPU Comrades agreed with us saying that ZAPU was during the Liberation Struggle was supported by the Socialist countries.

We explained that our worry was that the revived ZAPU had taken the neo-liberal path through its ideology of Human Rightism, but because we know that many of their cadres have some knowledge of Marxist-Leninist principles, we believe that, nevertheless, we can work together.

We explained that the ZCP accepts dual membership and that our comrades who are also members of other parties would work to see that Zimbabwean parties would not move to the Right and become tools of the oppressors. We asked ZAPU to see to it that ZCP members in ZAPU are free to play their role in both parties, to this the ZAPU delegation said they would report to their leadership about our concerns, we further explained that ZCP would not contest the 2018 elections but would support and campaign for Communists standing for election in progressive friendly parties. In our own analysis the meeting was good and fruitful

Finally we agreed that we were all thankful that ZAPU had invited us to meet and that we should engage further, exchanging notes from time to time as we had much in common. We analysed the meeting as being progressive and fruitful.

### Report by Comrade Trust Mwananzi, ZCP National Organiser



**Comrade Joshua Nkomo  
President of ZAPU  
with  
Comrade Fidel Castro  
President of Cuba  
and  
First Secretary  
of the  
Communist Party of Cuba  
(1970s)**

## RIOT POLICE AT BHALAGWE TORTURE CAMP



On 21<sup>st</sup> October 2017, mourners went to the site of the former Bhalagwe Torture Camp in Kezi Matabeleland South to say prayers for those who died there.

Bhalagwe Camp was in existence from 1982-1987 during the era of Gukurahundi terror against the people of Matabeleland. The worst atrocities there happened in 1984. There were just under 2000 inmates at any one time forced to sleep on the floors of the hits into which they were packed 136 at a time without any bedding of any kind. Torture tended to be of a sexual nature with women having sharp sticks thrust into them and men being beaten on the private parts. Deaths were many. Often people were buried in shallow graves which were dug up later to hide the evidence of brutality. The exercise was mainly carried out to destroy ZAPU and prevent Zimbabwe being used as a rear base by Umkhonto we Sizwe [see: *Gukurahundi: an atrocity carried out by the Mugabe government on behalf of apartheid South Africa and Britain* ZimCom Publishers].

The mourners were mainly members of Ibhetshu likaZulu organisation and ZAPU who went there under the theme “Dispossessed in Life and Dishonoured in Death”. They were stopped by riot police. When Comrade Dumisi Dabengwa, President of ZAPU and Soviet-trained former Chief of Intelligence of Zipra tried to light a memorial candle, a policeman knocked the candle with his baton-stick.

## STORY FOR THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE GIRL CHILD

Some years ago, I was with a group of friends, all girls. This well meaning woman came into our midst, and in an attempt to reign ‘blessings’ on us, she said:

“I see wives of Commissioners, I see wives of Doctors, I see wives of Governors, I see wives of Senators, I see wives of Ministers, I see wives of Presidents, in Jesus name I pray”.

Half of the girls said amen! I didn’t. I decided to tell her,

“Mummy, thank you for the prayers, but didn’t you see Commissioners, Doctors, Senators, Governors, Ministers, and Presidents? Mummy, would you tell a group of boys that you see husbands of Governors, husbands of Ministers, husbands of Senators, husbands of Presidents? Then why say that to girls?”

And this brings me to the point.

Ours is a society that raises the girl child for a man. Almost every single stage of the life of a girl is aimed at raising her to make a good wife. The ultimate aim in the life of a girl child is marriage. It wouldn’t be so bad if the boy child was also raised for a woman. It wouldn’t be so bad if the society puts in as much efforts in preparing the boy child to be a husband as much as they put in preparing the girl child to be a wife.

We give girls the impression that their success has to be linked to marriage.

I will never tell my daughter that she will be a wife of the president, just same way I won’t tell my son that he will be husband of the President. I will tell my sons and daughters that they will be Presidents. We need to stop killing the zeal and drive of the girl child.

When you tell your daughter she can be wife of a President, you push her to aspire to marry and ambitious man. But when you tell her that she can be President, you push her to be ambitious.

This is psychological. My parents never told me that I will marry a successful man or a President. Even till this very day, my parents still tell my sisters and I that we can be Presidents and Governors. Exactly the way they tell my brother.

If you can’t tell your son that he would be husband of president, STOP telling your daughter that she will be wife of a President.

There is nothing wrong with being a wife of a President, just as much as there’s nothing wrong with being the husband of a President.

Dear parents of this generation, the past generation didn’t get it quite right, and we need to do better. While you raise you girls to make good wives, also remember to raise your sons to make good husbands. Because those who are daughters will end up with those who are sons.

Also, let your girl understand that marriage is only one of the many things to accomplish in life.

Tell her she can be President, tell her that people like Angela Merkel, Theresa May, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala are female human-beings with one head each and that these people achieved much more than just marriage.

Tell her that even though you wish her to get married someday, that her happiness and sanity come first. That she shouldn’t stop living just in order to be married.

Tell her that her primary purpose on earth is NOT to exist for a man.

Tell her to be bold.

Tell her to remain true to herself.

Make her understand that she isn't jollof rice or ice cream, so she can't be liked by everyone. Tell her not to live to be liked, because no matter how much she tries, she can't please everyone, even in death.

Make her understand that SHE IS NOT IN ANY SINGLE WAY INFERIOR TO A MAN. That all humans are equal as human, irrespective of gender, and deserve equal opportunities.

Let her understand that weakness is not femininity.

Teach her to have a healthy self-esteem.

Teach her to love and respect, teach her that she also deserves love and respect, and nothing less.

**Submitted by Comrade Leonard Phiri.**

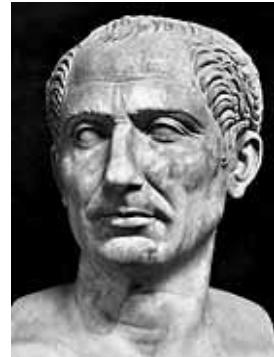
*The reference to “jollof rice” suggests that this is of Nigerian origin. Admittedly, Angela Merkel and Theresa May are neither our favourite politicians nor role models for our daughters — but the point still remains.*



## *Explanatory Notes*

# **Why Do We Celebrate the Great October Socialist Revolution on 7<sup>th</sup> November?**

At the time of the Bolshevik Revolution, the Julian Calendar was still in use in Russia as opposed to the Gregorian Calendar used in most of the rest of the world. The Julian Calendar (introduced by Julius Caesar in 45 BCE), was based on the idea that an actual year consisted of 365 days and 6 hours, and therefore had three Calendar years of 365 days followed by a leap year of 366 days. More scientific calculation gives the length of a year as 365 days, 5 hours, 49 minutes, 12 seconds, that is the number of times the earth revolves on its axis against the time it takes to circle the sun).



**Julius Caesar**



**Pope Gregory XIII**

By 1582, the calendar was out by 9 days, and the calendar revised by Pope Gregory XIII came into force in most of Europe. From that time, century years have not been leap years unless they can be divided by 400 — therefore, 1900 was not a leap year but 2000 was. Those countries, in particular Russia, which followed the Eastern Orthodox Church rather than the Roman Catholic Church, continued to use the old Julian Calendar long after the Gregorian Calendar had been accepted in the rest of Europe and most of the world. By the time of the Revolution the calendar was out by 13 days; because of this, the Great October Socialist Revolution which was on 25<sup>th</sup> October of the Julian calendar is therefore now celebrated on the 7<sup>th</sup> November.

The Soviet government adopted the Gregorian Calendar in February 1918. When reading the literature of the period, it is customary for dates to be referred to as 'Old Style' — Julian Calendar or 'New Style' — Gregorian Calendar.

*Unless otherwise stated, in the following articles all dates pertaining to the Russian Revolution up to February 1918 are Old Style. Add 13 days to correlate those dates with the Gregorian calendar.*

## **Russian Capitals**

The Revolution of 25<sup>th</sup> October 1917 started in Petrograd, then the capital of Russia. The Revolution was successful in Moscow a few days later. A few words of explanation are needed about what Lenin referred to as "...both capitals".

Moscow became the capital of Russia in 1480, when Ivan III, Prince of Moscow (better known as Ivan the Terrible), became the first Tsar of Russia. Following the capture of part of the Baltic coast from Sweden in 1703, the progressive Tsar Peter the Great decided to build a new, purpose built capital there which would be closer to Western Europe. He built St. Petersburg which became the capital of Russia from 1712 until the Bolsheviks moved the capital back to Moscow in March 1918, fearing foreign invasion during the Civil War. Peter the Great gave the new capital the German sounding name 'St. Petersburg' because at the time it sounded modern. In 1914, however, when Russia started fighting Germany in the First World War, the name was changed to the more Russian sounding 'Petrograd'. Three days after the death of Lenin in January 1924, the name was changed again, this time to 'Leningrad'. Finally, in 1991 during the counter-revolution, the name reverted to 'St. Petersburg'.



## VLADIMIR ILYICH LENIN (1870-1924)

**Vladimir Ilyich Lenin is generally considered by communists to be the greatest revolutionary leader in the history of the world.**

A prolific writer, Lenin's *Collected Works* fill 45 volumes. His writings cover every aspect of philosophy, history and political organisation, but his most significant intellectual contribution was to the expansion of the scientific socialist theory that began with Marx and Engels.

Lenin's theoretical work may be divided into four main categories:

- 1) Party organisation, best represented by his pamphlet, *What is to be Done?* (1902).
- 2) Revolutionary tactics, of which his writings are numerous, but can be seen at their best in his *April Theses* (1917) and '*Left-Wing' Communism, an Infantile Disorder* (1920).
- 3) Characterization of monopoly capitalism and imperialism, in *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1916). Here Lenin, using the analytical tools bequeathed by Marx and Engels, began the task of understanding the new conditions which were to form the battleground for the national liberation movements throughout the world as well as for the communist parties.
- 4) Re-affirmation of the revolutionary teaching of Marx and Engels, through his assertion of dialectical materialist philosophy in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* (1908), and the revolutionary theory of the state in *State and Revolution* (1917).

### **V.I. Lenin's most important contribution, however, was to link theory to practice.**

After the overthrow of the Tsar of Russia in February 1917, and the confusion that followed, the Bolshevik Party, under Lenin's leadership, was able to establish itself as the vanguard party of the proletariat, seize power, and maintain it, leading the Russian working-class and peasantry into the creation of the world's first socialist state, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

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Lenin was born Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov on 10<sup>th</sup> April 1870 in the town of Simbirsk, on the River Volga in the eastern part of European Russia. The town has now been re-named Ulyanovsk in his honour. The name 'Lenin', at first 'Nikolai Lenin', was one of many that he was to use as a revolutionary.

His father Ilya Nikolayevich Ulyanov (1831-1886) was appointed Inspector of Government Schools in the Simbirsk District in 1869, becoming Director of Government Schools in 1874; in 1882 he received the hereditary rank of Actual Civil Councillor. His mother, Maria Alexandrovna Blank (1835-1916), was an educated woman from a family of small landowners. Lenin was the third of six children. Lenin's father had very progressive ideas about education, which were to influence his children. He believed in equal rights for education regardless of status, gender or ethnic background, especially at primary level, and was instrumental in setting up schools for the Chuvash, Mordvin and Tartar minorities. At home, it was the practice for the Ulyanov family to speak German and French on specific days. This was later to be of benefit to Lenin, who was an excellent linguist.

In 1887, Lenin's older brother, Alexander Ilyich Ulyanov (born 1866), and a student in the capital, St. Petersburg, was executed by hanging, together with four others, for his part in the attempted assassination of Tsar Alexander III. Alexander Ulyanov was a member of the Narodnik group, 'People's Will', which had already assassinated Alexander III's father, Alexander II in 1881.

The Narodniks (coming from the Russian word for 'people') believed in socialism based on the peasant commune, without dependence on big landlords and money-lenders. The People's Will faction believed that they could achieve their goals by terrorist actions against individuals in authority. His brother's execution deeply affected Lenin's attitudes for the rest of his life. He was appalled by the attitude of 'liberal' neighbours to his family following the arrest of his brother; more importantly for history, although he shared his brother's hatred of the system, he quickly came to see that mass action would be far more effective than individual terrorism.



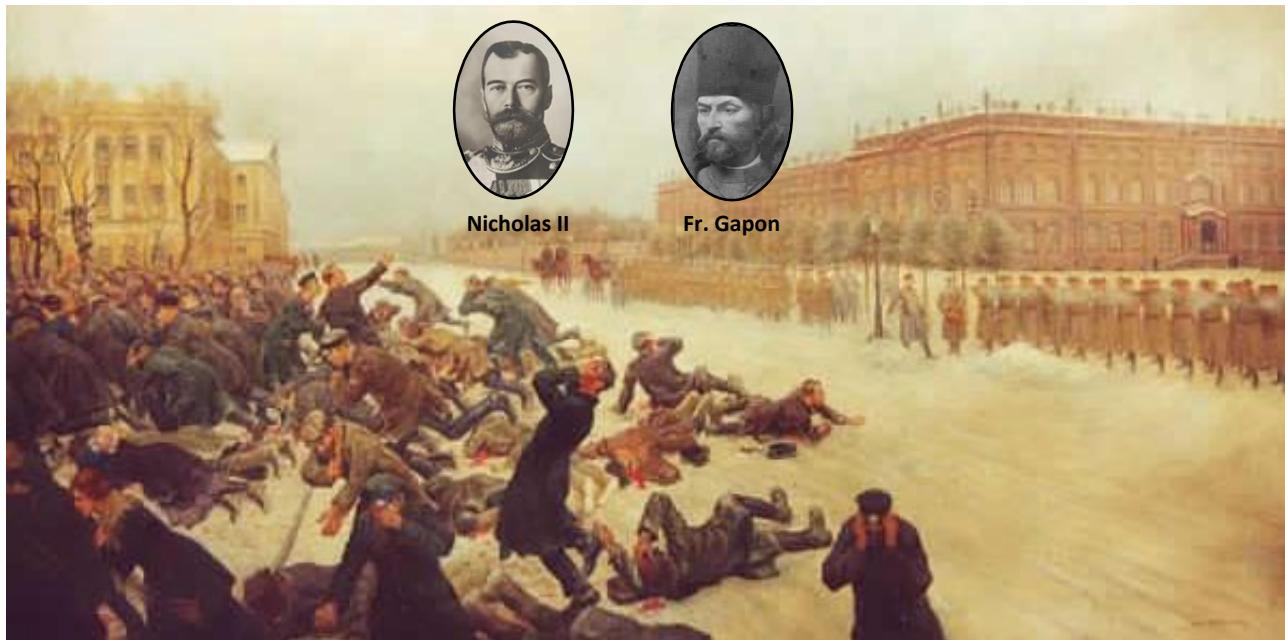
Georgi Valentinovich Plekhanov (1856-1918) joined the Narodnik 'Land and Liberty Party' and became its main speaker at the huge Kazan Square Rally in St. Petersburg in 1876. In 1879 that party split into two factions, 'People's Will', of which Alexander Ulyanov was a member, and which advocated terrorism, and 'Black Repartition' led by G.V. Plekhanov which believed in socialist propaganda and mass action. In 1880, Plekhanov was forced into exile in Germany where he began to study Marxism. In 1883 he joined with Pavel Axelrod and Vera Zasulich to form the 'Emancipation of Labour' group — the first Russian Marxist organisation. Lenin regarded Plekhanov's work as laying the theoretical basis for the revolutionary movement in Russia, even though later Plekhanov came to oppose the Bolsheviks and the October Revolution. He is known as 'The Father of Russian Marxism'.

In the same year that his brother was executed, Lenin enrolled at Kazan University, but was soon expelled for taking part in student demonstrations, and was exiled to his late maternal grandfather's estate in Kokushkino, Kazan Province. He was, however, allowed to continue with his studies. He returned to the city of Kazan in October 1888 where he had his first contact with a small Marxist society influenced by the Emancipation of Labour group.

In 1891, Lenin obtained an external degree in law from the University of St. Petersburg and practised law for two years in the city of Samara on the Volga. In 1895, he went back to St. Petersburg where he set up the 'League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working-Class'. He was arrested and sent to prison later the same year, and then exiled to Siberia for three years with Nadezhda Krupskaya, whom he married there. In 1898 the various Russian Marxist groups came together in Minsk and held the First Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP), the most important group represented being the League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class. All nine delegates were later arrested. Lenin was already exiled in Siberia.

In 1900, at the end of their period of exile, Lenin and Krupskaya went abroad. They moved from country to country, but established contact with Plekhanov and with Martov with whom they had worked in the League of Struggle. Together they started a newspaper called *Iskra* [The Spark]. This newspaper was smuggled into Russia and was effective in building the party. In 1902, Lenin wrote his pamphlet *What is to be Done?* which laid out the plan to establish a highly disciplined vanguard party composed of dedicated revolutionaries. In the following year, 1903, the Second Congress of the RSDLP was held in London. At this Congress, Lenin fought for the organisational principles that he had outlined in *What is to be Done?* He won his position with a very small majority — his old comrade Martov opposing him and calling for a broad party, open to anyone. Lenin's faction became known as 'Bolsheviks' — 'majority' in Russian, and Martov's as 'Mensheviks' or 'minority'.

By the end of 1904 disturbances were beginning in Russia, even the liberal bourgeoisie were demanding a Duma or parliament. On 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1905, Father Gapon, a Russian Orthodox priest led a peaceful demonstration in St. Petersburg of about 150,000 people carrying pictures of the Tsar and icons of saints. They were naïvely petitioning Tsar Nicholas II to help them out of the problems being created by rising food prices and harsh working conditions. On reaching the Winter Palace, the Imperial Guard opened fire killing an estimated 1,000 people.



During the year that followed there were nationwide strikes and unrest amongst the peasants. In June 1905 the crew of the battleship Potemkin in the Black Sea fleet mutinied against harsh conditions and seized the ship. Early in 1905, the first soviet, or workers' council was formed in St. Petersburg, initially as a strike committee. 12 years later, in 1917, this form of organisation was to have decisive significance. The major socialist organisations, the two wings of the RSDLP and the Socialist-Revolutionaries (a peasant based party which had grown out of the Narodniks), were not yet strong enough to take state power. Lenin returned to Russia in November 1905 to direct the Bolsheviks. The experience of this time taught him that if the working class could exercise leadership and control of the bourgeois democratic revolution, then progress towards a socialist revolution would become easier; he also realised that the working class needed to be in alliance with the peasant.

As a result of what was to be known as the 1905 Revolution, the First Duma or Parliament was established in 1906 but lasted less than a year. By the beginning of 1907, following mass executions and the dissolution of the Duma, it became clear that the Revolution of 1905 was over. Lenin quickly grasped that this was to be the rehearsal for something far bigger yet to come. He returned abroad that year. During the years between 1907 and the beginning of the First World War in 1914, there was a complex series of events. The two factions of the RSDLP would at times work together and at other times as separate parties. There were to be three more Dumas, but generally, revolutionary activity was at a low level.

The First World War was to seriously split the Second International, the body that since 1889 had united the socialist parties. The Basel Conference of 1912, seeing the impending conflict between the two imperialist blocks — Germany, Austria and Turkey in one block, and Britain France and Russia in the other — had agreed that it was not in the interest of the workers to participate in an imperialist war. When the war began, however, the leaderships of the major socialist parties fell in line with the ruling class in their respective countries and supported the mutual slaughter that was to follow.

In 1915, representatives of those socialist organisations which opposed the First World War, met in Zimmerwald, Switzerland (which was neutral). Although many there were pacifists, Lenin and other revolutionaries argued that the time was ripe for revolution and that the war should be turned into a revolutionary civil war; these parties and factions were later to form the nucleus of the communist parties.

The term ‘social-democrat’, which had been used since the 1860’s to refer to Marxists, was to change its meaning and become a term used for the most moderate of reformers, whilst Marxists were to return to the term used by Marx and Engels in 1848 and call themselves ‘communists’. By the beginning of 1917, the Russian army was in retreat and the troops, many of whom did not even have weapons or ammunition, were in a state of mutiny. In Russia the economy was in tatters and people could not afford to live. Soviets were formed with those in Petrograd and Moscow being very powerful. In February, the Tsar abdicated and a Provisional Government was formed, led first by Prince Lvov and from July by the Right Socialist-Revolutionary, Kerensky. Because the Soviets, in many ways also acted as a government this is often referred to as the period of dual power. Lenin returned from exile abroad in April 1917, and on arrival in Petrograd, issued his famous *April Theses*, first as speeches to meetings of Bolsheviks and of the Soviets and later written. His main points were that there must be immediate withdrawal from the war, and that all power must go to the Soviets and the Provisional Government overthrown.

At the time of Lenin’s arrival, the Bolsheviks were a minority party within the Soviets, but because his demands were popular, support rapidly increased. Detachments of workers, soldiers and sailors, known as ‘Red Guards’ had been formed during the February Revolution, these detachments were to become very decisive as the year progressed. At the beginning of June 1917, the first All-Russian Congress of Soviets was held, and established the All-Russian Central Executive Committee. The Bolsheviks had only 105 out of 784 full delegates, nevertheless, this structure became of critical importance later in the year when the Bolsheviks won control.

At the beginning of July 1917, following Russian losses against Austria and Germany, feeling against the continuation of the war began to grow. Huge demonstrations occurred on the streets of Petrograd and spread to other cities demanding an end to the war and ‘All Power to the Soviets’—despite the fact that the demonstration was forbidden by the All-Russian Central Committee, controlled by Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries. Although the demonstrators used Bolshevik slogans, the Bolsheviks at first were worried about a premature uprising, but then decided to try and channel the anger of the people and keep the demonstrations peaceful. Then, on 17<sup>th</sup> July 1917, a huge demonstration of not less than 100,000 people was shot at by troops loyal to the Provisional Government and about 700 were killed. Already, on the 15<sup>th</sup> July 1917 the Cadets (Constitutional Democrats, a party supporting constitutional monarchy) had walked out of the government coalition led by Prince Lvov. Suppression of the Bolsheviks by the Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks followed, and an order to abduct Lenin was put out on the 19<sup>th</sup> July 1917. Lenin escaped to nearby Finland, at that time a semi-independent part of the Russian Empire. On the 21<sup>st</sup> July 1917, the Socialist-Revolutionary Kerensky became Prime Minister. Kerensky had previously been Minister of War, and one of his first actions, following the military disaster of July, was to replace General Brusilov with General Kornilov as Commander-in-Chief of the army. Kornilov immediately fell out with Kerensky, demanding the return of the death penalty for troops at the front and the militarisation of the factories. Believing that the Bolsheviks were now controlling Petrograd, Kornilov demanded the resignation of the cabinet and sent a force under General Krymov to take the capital. When news of Kornilov’s intentions reached Kerensky, he rearmed the Bolshevik Red Guards who raised 25 000 men to guard Petrograd. Emissaries were sent to Krymov’s troops, who refused to attack. Krymov committed suicide. Kornilov was arrested but later escaped. The Bolsheviks, who had suffered decline since the July Days, were now the heroes of the hour. In the period that followed, local Soviets throughout Russia came under the control of the Bolsheviks.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> September alone, 126 local Soviets passed resolutions demanding that the All Russian Central Executive Committee take power into its own hands. In the rural areas, peasants were seizing land. Before mid-September they had gained control of both the Petrograd and the Moscow Soviets. On 12<sup>th</sup> September, Lenin wrote to the Bolshevik Central Committee using these words:

**“The Bolsheviks, having obtained a majority in the Soviets of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies in both capitals, can and must take state power into their own hands.”**

On 7<sup>th</sup> October, Lenin returned to Petrograd and on the 10<sup>th</sup> the Bolshevik Central Committee met and decided on insurrection. A Military Revolutionary Committee (Milrevcom) was set up later in the month under the supervision of the Petrograd Soviet. The function of Milrevcom was not only to seize power, but also to win the allegiance of army units within the capital, which it did very effectively, prior to the seizure of power.

On 25<sup>th</sup> October, armed units seized all important government buildings, post and telegraph offices and bridges. At 10am a short declaration, drafted by Lenin, saying that the Provisional Government had been overthrown was distributed. The seizure of power was timed to take place while the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets was meeting. Before it took place, the Bolsheviks already knew that they had a majority of delegates. This time, of 649 delegates, 390 were Bolsheviks, and 160 Socialist Revolutionaries, of whom about 100 were Left Socialist Revolutionaries who supported the Bolsheviks.



**STORMING OF THE WINTER PALACE:** This famous image is not original. There were no cameras or film-crews when this event took place. This is actually a still from the 1927 film *October: 10 Days that Shook the World* by Soviet director, Segei Eisenstein. It became more authentic due to the fact that many who had taken part in the actual events took part in the making of the film and gave advice to Eisenstein.

Whilst they met, armed units stormed the Winter Palace where the Provisional Government was sitting. There was little resistance, and only two people were killed during the seizure of power. Fighting in the old capital of Moscow was more severe and was to last several days.

On the 26<sup>th</sup> October, the Soviet Congress elected a 101 member Central Executive Committee with the Bolshevik L.B. Kamenev as Chairman, and a 15 member Council of People's Commissars of which V.I. Lenin was Chairman. That same day 'The Decree on Peace' and 'The Decree on Land' were issued. The first called for an unconditional end to the war with Austria and Germany, the second abolished private ownership of the land, dividing most of the estates amongst the peasantry and declaring mines and agro-industrial estates to be the property of the state. This second decree was based on the land programme of the Socialist Revolutionaries and helped bring the peasants as a class, and the Left Socialist Revolutionaries as a party, closer to the Bolsheviks. War. Soon after the October Revolution, Lenin made it clear that any attempt to fight against Germany would be disastrous to the revolution, whose main aim should be to fight against local reactionary forces, which had already started civil war. Though he faced opposition within his own party, the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was signed on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1918, with an enormous amount of land being ceded to Germany. However, the defeat of Germany by the allies on the Western Front later in the same year allowed much of the territory to be regained. Following the Bolshevik Revolution, reactionary forces regrouped, in particular General Denikin in southern Russia and Admiral Kolchak in Siberia. These forces were known as the 'White Armies'. Local nationalist forces, particularly in Ukraine and the Trans-Caucasus were also very active.

There was a long and complex civil war, in which final victory came only in 1923. The White Armies had foreign financial assistance and were joined by foreign armies. At various times between 1917 and 1923, the armies of no less than 14 countries, including Britain, France, USA and Japan invaded Soviet Russia. Nevertheless, superior resolve, organisation and discipline led to the Bolshevik victory.

The Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic RSFSR was established in 1918 and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics USSR in 1922. The USSR initially included the RSFSR, Ukraine, Byelorussia and the Trans-Caucasian Federation. The number of Soviet Republics was later to grow to 15. Despite the Civil War and enormous internal problems, at Lenin's insistence, the First Congress of the Third International was held, (the Second International having been dissolved in 1916 as the leadership of most of the socialist parties were by this time supporting their respective ruling classes in pursuit of mutual slaughter).

The Third International, which later became known as the Communist International, or Comintern, had its roots in the 1915 Zimmerwald Conference. The Second Congress, held in 1920 was of even greater importance. It was here that Lenin produced his important document, '*Left-Wing Communism an Infantile Disorder*' as well as giving advice to a number of new communist parties. By 1921, the Bolsheviks had established their power over most of the country, and the need for economic recovery in a land devastated by both the First World War and the Civil War was extremely urgent. Already in 1920, Lenin had initiated the GOELRO plan under the technician, Gleb Krzhizhanovsky. This was a plan for electrification of the whole country, which was in fact completed by 1931. The New Economic Policy (NEP), which relaxed the harsh militarism of War Communism and allowed a certain amount of private enterprise, was introduced. There was rapid economic growth.

In May 1922, Lenin had his first stroke. Since an assassination attempt in 1918, when a bullet lodged in his throat, his health had deteriorated. In December 1922, he had another stroke. From the he was to retire from active politics, although he was to continue writing until March 1923 when he had a stroke which left him bedridden. He died in January 1924 at the age of 53.

Lenin was succeeded as leader of the Soviet Union by J.V. Stalin.

**Ian Patrick Beddoes (2010)** originally written as an Appendix 4 to the ZimCom Publishers Edition of "Philosophy and Class Struggle" by John Hoffman (Dialego)



LENIN DISGUISED  
AS A WORKER

# THE BOLSHEVIKS MUST ASSUME POWER

A Letter to the Central Committee and the Petrograd and  
Moscow Committees of the RSDLP(B)

by

V.I. Lenin  
September 1917

*Written while Lenin was exiled in Finland. Finland was at that time a self-governing part of the Russian Empire subject to less severe laws. Petrograd was close to Finnish border.*

The Bolsheviks, having obtained a majority in the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies of both capitals, can and **must** take state power into their own hands.

They can because the active majority of revolutionary elements in the two chief cities is large enough to carry the people with it, to overcome the opponent's resistance, to smash him, and to gain and retain power. For the Bolsheviks, by immediately proposing a democratic peace, by immediately giving the land to the peasants and by re-establishing the democratic institutions and liberties which have been mangled and shattered by Kerensky<sup>1</sup>, will form a government which **nobody** will be able to overthrow.

The majority of the people are **on our side**. This was proved by the long and painful course of events from 6<sup>th</sup> May to 31<sup>st</sup> August and to 12<sup>th</sup> September<sup>2</sup>. The majority gained in the Soviets of the metropolitan cities **resulted** from the people coming **over to our side**. The wavering of the Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks<sup>3</sup> and the increase in the number of internationalists within their ranks prove the same thing. The Democratic Conference<sup>4</sup> represents not a majority of the revolutionary people, but **only the compromising upper strata of the petty bourgeoisie**. We must not be deceived by the election figures; elections prove nothing. Compare the elections to the city councils of Petrograd and Moscow with the elections to the Soviets. Compare the elections in Moscow with the Moscow strike of 12<sup>th</sup> August. Those are objective facts regarding that majority of revolutionary elements that are leading the people. The Democratic Conference is deceiving the peasants; it is giving them neither peace nor land. A Bolshevik government alone will satisfy the demands of the peasants.

\* \* \* \* \*

Why must the Bolsheviks assume power **at this very moment?**

Because the impending surrender of Petrograd will make our chances a hundred times less favourable.

And it is not in our power to prevent the surrender of Petrograd while the army is headed by Kerensky and Co. Nor can we 'wait' for the Constituent Assembly, for by surrendering Petrograd Kerensky and Co. can always frustrate its convocation. Our Party alone, on taking power, can secure the Constituent Assembly's convocation; it will then accuse the other parties of procrastination and will be able to substantiate its accusations.

A separate peace between the British and German imperialists must and can be prevented, but only by quick action.

The people are tired of the wavering of the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries. It is only our victory in the metropolitan cities that will carry the peasants with us.

\* \* \* \* \*

We are concerned now not with the ‘day’, or ‘moment’ of insurrection in the narrow sense of the word. That will be only decided by the common voice of those who are in contact with the workers and soldiers, with the masses. The point is that now, at the Democratic Conference, our Party has virtually its own congress, and this congress (whether it wishes to or not) must decide the fate of the revolution. The point is to make the task clear to the Party. The present task must be an armed uprising in Petrograd and Moscow (with its region), the seizing of power and the overthrow of the government. We must consider how to agitate for this without expressly saying as much in the press. We must remember and weigh Marx’s words about insurrection, “**Insurrection is an art**”, etc.

\* \* \* \* \*

It would be naïve to wait for a ‘formal’ majority for the Bolsheviks. No revolution ever waits for that. Kerensky and Co. are not waiting either, and are preparing to surrender Petrograd. It is the wretched waverings of the Democratic Conference that are bound to exhaust the patience of the workers of Petrograd and Moscow! History will not forgive us if we do not assume power now.

There is no apparatus?

There is an apparatus — the Soviets and the democratic organisations. The international situation **right** now, on **the eve** of the conclusion of a separate peace between the British and the Germans, is **in our favour**. To propose peace to the nations right now means **to win**. By taking power both in Moscow and in Petrograd at once (it doesn’t matter which comes first, Moscow may possibly begin), we shall win **absolutely and unquestionably**.

## N. Lenin

Written 12<sup>th</sup> - 14<sup>th</sup> September 1917 (Old Style) 25<sup>th</sup> - 27<sup>th</sup> September 1917 (New Style)

First published *Proletarskaya* magazine, 1921

V.I. Lenin, *The Bolsheviks Must Assume Power* (1917): LCW Vol.26 pp. 19-21

## Notes

1. KERENSKY: Alexander Fyodorov Kerensky (1881-1970) Right Socialist-Revolutionary, became Minister of Justice in the First Provisional Government formed on 3<sup>rd</sup> March and led by the liberal aristocrat, Prince Lvov as Prime Minister. On the 4<sup>th</sup> May 2017, Kerensky became Minister of War. On the 21<sup>st</sup> July 1917, Kerensky became Prime Minister, declaring Russia to be a republic on 15<sup>th</sup> September 1917. He remained until the Bolsheviks took power on 25<sup>th</sup> October 1917. The February Revolution was largely due to opposition to the carnage of the First World War and the determination of the masses to pull out of it; the refusal of Kerensky and the Provisional Government to do so played a major role in his downfall.

2. 6<sup>th</sup> MAY: Announcement of the first coalition Provisional Government; this was the first government, with the exception of Kerensky, in which members of ‘socialist’ parties, participated. The Bolsheviks at this time were opposed to participation in the Provisional Government, calling for “All Power to the Soviets”.

31<sup>st</sup> AUGUST: the Petrograd Soviet of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies passed a Bolshevik resolution calling for the establishment of a Soviet Government;

12<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER: the date set by the Central Executive Committee of the Soviets of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies and the Executive Committee of the All-Russia Soviet of Peasants’ Deputies, both dominated by Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks, for the convocation of a Democratic Conference. The Democratic Conference took place in Petrograd, 14<sup>th</sup> - 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1917.

### 3. SOCIALIST REVOLUTIONARIES AND MENSHEVIKS:

SOCIALIST-REVOLUTIONARIES (S-Rs): founded in late 1901 and early 1902 through the merger of various Narodnik groups [See article: *Vladimir Ilyich Lenin*]; at the beginning of the Revolutionary period they were the majority party among the peasants. After the bourgeois-democratic revolution in February 1917, the Socialist- Revolutionaries, together with the Mensheviks, were the mainstay of the Provisional Government, and the Party's leaders (Avksentyev, Kerensky and Chernov) were in the Cabinet. The Socialist-Revolutionary leadership refused to support the peasant demand for the abolition of landed estates and favoured the preservation of large holdings; the Provisional Government sent punitive expeditions against peasants who seized tracts of large estates. At the end of November 1917, the left-wing formed a separate party, the Left-Socialist Revolutionaries which initially recognised Soviet power and entered into an agreement with the Bolsheviks, voting with them at the crucial 2<sup>nd</sup> All-Russian Congress of the Soviets in October 1917. Opposing the Brest-Litovsk Peace Treaty with Germany, the Left S-Rs assassinated the German Ambassador Count Mirbach on 6<sup>th</sup> July 1918 and attempted an armed coup in Moscow. On 30<sup>th</sup> August 1918, a young woman member of the Left S-Rs, Fanny Kaplan, shot and wounded Lenin. It should be noted, however, that during the course of the struggle, many of the best members of the Left S-Rs joined the Bolshevik Party.

MENSHEVIKS: The Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP) was founded in 1899. At its 2<sup>nd</sup> Congress in 1903, Lenin fought for the line that the Party should be a party of professional revolutionaries as opposed to the line put forward by Martov and others that the Party should be open to anyone. Lenin and his followers obtained a small majority at the Congress and became known as the 'Bolsheviks' [Majority] and the other faction as the 'Mensheviks' [Minority]. Although attempts were made to bring unity, the two factions became, in fact, different parties with the Mensheviks being closer in attitude and policy to the Social-Democrats in Western Europe. In fact, the Mensheviks were for some time more influential than the Bolsheviks, but this was to change during the course of the year 1917. It may be noted here that Stalin was the main organiser of the Bolsheviks in Russia during the period that Lenin and other leaders were in exile; Trotsky had his own, intermediate group, the Mezhraontsy, which during the years following the 2<sup>nd</sup> Congress mainly sided with the Mensheviks. Trotsky eventually joined the Bolsheviks in June 1917.

DEMOCRATIC CONFERENCE: The All-Russia Democratic Conference was called by the Central Executive Committee of the Soviets, which was dominated by Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries, ostensibly to decide on the question of state power, but actually to switch the attention of the masses away from the mounting revolutionary movement. It took place from 14<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> September 1917 (old style) in Petrograd and was attended by more than 1,500 delegates. The Menshevik and Socialist- Revolutionary leaders did their utmost to reduce the number of workers' and peasants' delegates and increase those of various petty-bourgeois and bourgeois groups, thereby securing a majority.

The Central Committee of the RSDLP(B) met on 3<sup>rd</sup> September and decided to take part. It circulated a letter among local Party organisations instructing them to "do their utmost to build up the largest possible well-knit group of delegates from among our Party members". The Bolsheviks decided to attend in order to expose the Mensheviks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries. The tactics of the Bolsheviks in respect of the Democratic Conference were outlined by Lenin in two of his letters. The Democratic Conference adopted a resolution on the establishment of a pre-parliament (Caretaker Council of the Republic), an attempt to create the impression that Russia now had a parliamentary system, but according to the Provisional Government's ordinance, the pre-parliament was to be a consultative body under the Government. A meeting of the Bolshevik delegates to the Democratic Conference called by the Central Committee decided, by a vote of 77 to 50, to take part in the pre-parliament. Lenin criticised the decision demanding that the Bolsheviks should concentrate on preparing for the insurrection.



## OCTOBER DAYS

by  
**Nadezhda Krupskaya**  
**(1869-1939)**

*This is Chapter 25 of "Reminiscences of Lenin" written by Krupskaya in 1933. Nadezhda Krupskaya married Lenin in 1894 and was his companion until his death; she was a Communist politician in her own right, later becoming Deputy Minister of Education and playing an important role in the development of the Soviet public library system.*

The seizure of power in October had been carefully thought out and prepared by the Party of the proletariat — the Bolshevik Party. The uprising during the July days had started spontaneously, but the Party, keeping a sober mind, had considered it premature. The truth had to be faced, and that truth was that the masses were still unprepared for an uprising. The Central Committee therefore decided to postpone it. It was no easy thing to restrain the insurgents whose fighting blood was up. But the Bolsheviks did their duty, painful though it was, for they appreciated the vital importance of choosing the right moment for the insurrection.

A couple of months later the situation had changed, and Ilyich, who was compelled to hide in Finland, wrote a letter to the Central Committee and to the Petrograd and Moscow Committees between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> September, in which he said:

**"Having obtained a majority in the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies in both capitals, the Bolsheviks can and must take power into their hands."** He then proceeds to show why the power had to be seized precisely at that of all times. The surrender of Petrograd would lessen the chances of success. There was talk of a separate peace between the British and German imperialists. **"To offer peace to the nations precisely now is to win,"** wrote Ilyich.

V.I. Lenin, *The Bolsheviks Must Assume Power* (12<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> September 1917): LCW Vol.26 pp.19-21

In his letter to the Central Committee he deals at length with the question of how to determine the moment for the insurrection and how to prepare it.

**"To be successful, insurrection must rely not upon conspiracy and not upon a party, but upon the advanced class. That is the first point. Insurrection must rely upon a revolutionary upsurge of the people. That is the second point. Insurrection must rely upon such a crucial moment in the history of the growing revolution when the activity of the advanced ranks of the people is at its height, and when the vacillations in the ranks of the enemy and in the ranks of the weak, half-hearted and irresolute friends of the revolution are strongest. That is the third point."**

At the end of his letter Ilyich indicated what had to be done in order to treat the insurrection in a Marxist way, i.e. as an art.

**"And in order to treat insurrection in a Marxist way, i.e. as an art, we must at the same time, without losing a single moment, organise a headquarter staff of the insurgent detachments, distribute our forces, move the reliable regiments to the most important points, surround the Alexandrinsky Theatre, occupy the Peter and Paul Fortress, arrest the general staff and the government, and move against the cadets and the Savage Division such detachments as will rather die than allow the enemy to approach the centres of the city;**

**“...we must mobilise the armed workers and call them to fight the last desperate fight, occupy the telegraph and the telephone exchange at once, place *our* headquarter staff of the insurrection at the central telephone exchange and connect it by telephone with all the factories, all the regiments, all the points of armed fighting, etc.**

**“Of course, this is all by way of example, only to illustrate the fact that at the present moment it is impossible to remain loyal to Marxism, to remain loyal to the revolution, *without treating insurrection as an art.*”**

Excerpts from: V.I. Lenin, *Marxism and Insurrection* (13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> September 1917)

LCW Vol.26 pp.22-27

Living in Finland, removed from the actual scene, Ilyich was terribly worried lest the opportune moment for the insurrection should be missed. On 7<sup>th</sup> October he wrote to the Petrograd City Conference, as well as to the Central Committee, the Moscow Committee the Petrograd Committee and the Bolshevik members of the Petrograd and Moscow Soviets. On the 8<sup>th</sup> he wrote a letter to the Bolshevik delegates to the Congress of Soviets of the Northern Region, and worried about whether his letter would reach them. On the 9<sup>th</sup> he came to Petrograd himself and put up illegally in the Vyborg District, whence he directed preparations for the insurrection.

That last month Ilyich thought of nothing else, lived for nothing else but the insurrection. His mood and his deep conviction communicated themselves to his comrades.

His last letter from Finland to the Bolshevik delegates to the Congress of Soviets of the Northern Region is a document of the utmost importance. Here it is:

**“...armed uprising is a special form of political struggle, one subject to special laws to which attentive thought must be given. Karl Marx expressed this truth with remarkable clarity when he wrote that ‘insurrection is an art quite as much as war’. Of the principal rules of this art, Marx noted the following:**

**“(1) Never play with insurrection, but when beginning it realise firmly that you must go all the way.**

**“(2) Concentrate a great superiority of forces at the decisive point and at the decisive moment, otherwise the enemy, who has the advantage of better preparation and organisation, will destroy the insurgents.**

**“(3) Once the insurrection has begun, you must act with the greatest determination, and by all means, without fail, take the offensive. ‘The defensive is the death of every armed rising.’**

**“(4) You must try to take the enemy by surprise and seize the moment when his forces are scattered.**

**“(5) You must strive for daily successes, however small (one might say hourly, if it is the case of one town), and at all costs retain ‘moral superiority’. Marx summed up the lessons of all revolutions in respect to armed uprising in the words of ‘Danton\*’, the greatest master of revolutionary policy yet known: *de l’audace, de l’audace, encore de l’audace*’[audacity, audacity and again audacity].**

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\*DANTON: Georges Jacques Danton (1759-1794) was one of the leaders of the Great French Revolution, the bourgeois revolution against feudal rule which broke out in 1789 and was to lead to the execution of King Louis XVI in 1793. Due to differences within the revolutionary camp, Danton was himself executed in 1794.

**“Applied to Russia and to October 1917, this means: a simultaneous offensive on Petrograd, as sudden and as rapid as possible, which must without fail be carried out from within and from without, from the working-class quarters and from Finland, from Revel and from Kronstadt, an offensive of the entire navy, the concentration of a gigantic superiority of forces over the 15,000 or 20,000 (perhaps more) of our ‘bourgeois guard’ (the officers’ schools), our ‘Vendée troops’\* (part of the Cossacks), etc. Our three main forces — the fleet, the workers, and the army units — must be so combined as to occupy without fail and to hold at any cost:**

**“(a) the telephone exchange;**

**”(b) the telegraph office;**

**“(c) the railway stations;**

**“(d) and above all, the bridges.**

**“The most determined elements (our ‘shock forces’ and young workers, as well as the best of the sailors) must be formed into small detachments to occupy all the more important points and to take part everywhere in all important operations, for example:**

**“to encircle and cut off Petrograd;**

**“to seize it by a combined attack of the sailors, the workers, and the troops — a task which requires art and triple audacity;**

**“to form detachments from the best workers, armed with rifles and bombs, for the purpose of attacking and surrounding the enemy’s ‘centres’ (the officers’ schools, the telegraph office, the telephone exchange, etc.). Their watchword must be: “Better die to a man than let the enemy pass!”**

**“Let us hope that if action is decided on, the leaders will successfully apply the great precepts of Danton and Marx.**

**“The success of both the Russian and the world revolution depends on two or three days’ fighting.”**

V.I. Lenin, *Advice of an Onlooker* (8<sup>th</sup> October 1917): LCW Vol.26 pp.179-181

This letter was written on the 8<sup>th</sup> October 1917, and the 9<sup>th</sup> already found Ilyich in Petrograd. The next day there was a meeting of the Central Committee, at which a resolution was carried on his motion calling for an armed uprising. Zinoviev and Kamenev voted against it and demanded that a special plenary meeting of the Central Committee should be called. Kamenev demonstratively announced his resignation from the Central Committee. Lenin demanded that the severest measures of Party penalty should be imposed upon them.

Intensive preparations for the uprising were going forward and breaking down all opportunist resistance. On 13<sup>th</sup> October 1917 the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet passed a resolution to set up a Military Revolutionary Committee.

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**VENDÉE TROOPS:** in 1793, during the Great French Revolution, there was a serious counter-revolutionary uprising in the Vendée region on the west coast of France which was eventually suppressed by the Republican forces.

On 16<sup>th</sup> October 1917 an enlarged meeting of the Central Committee was held together with representatives of the Party organisations. The same day, at a meeting of the Central Committee, a Military Revolutionary Centre was set up to direct the uprising, consisting of Stalin, Sverdlov, Dzerzhinsky and others. On the 17<sup>th</sup> October the proposed organisation of a Military Revolutionary Committee was endorsed by the Petrograd Soviet as a whole and not only its Executive Committee. Five days after this a meeting of the regimental committees acknowledged the Petrograd Military Revolutionary Committee as the leading organ of the military units in Petrograd, and passed a resolution not to obey the orders of the Staff unless they were endorsed by the Military Revolutionary Committee.

Already on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 1917 the Military Revolutionary Committee (MRC) had appointed commissars to the military units. The next day, 24<sup>th</sup> October, the Provisional Government decided to prosecute the members of the MRC, and arrest the commissars appointed to the military units. The military cadets were called out to the Winter Palace. But it was too late. The military units stood for the Bolsheviks. The workers stood for the transfer of power to the Soviets. The MRC was working under the direct guidance of the Central Committee, most of whose members, including Stalin, Sverdlov, Molotov, Dzerzhinsky and Bubnov, were members of the MRC. The uprising had begun.



**Red Guards seize key positions in Petrograd**

served as a medium through whom Ilyich maintained contact with the organisation, told Ilyich that the guards patrolling the city had been doubled, that the Provisional Government had given orders to raise the bridges across the Neva in order to cut off communication between the working-class quarters, and that the bridges were being guarded by detachments of soldiers. Obviously, the uprising was starting. Ilyich had intended asking Eino to send for Stalin, but had gathered from what Eino had told him that that was almost impossible. Stalin was probably at the MRC in Smolny, the trams were probably not running, and it would take him a long time to get there. Ilyich decided to go to Smolny himself at once. He hurried away, leaving Marguerite a note, saying: "I am going where you did not want me to go. Good-bye. Ilyich."

That night the Vyborg District was arming in preparation for the uprising. One group of workers after another came to the District Committee to receive weapons and instructions. That night I went to see Ilyich at Fofanova's flat, only to learn that he had gone to Smolny\*.

On 24<sup>th</sup> October 1917 Ilyich was still in hiding at the flat of our Party member Marguerite Fofanova in the Vyborg District (House No. 92/1, Flat No. 42 on the corner of Bolshoi Sampsonievsky and Serdobolskaya streets). He knew that the uprising was about to take place, and fretted because he was not in the thick of it at such a crucial moment. He sent two messages through Marguerite saying that the uprising could not be delayed a moment more. That evening, at last, Eino Rahja, a Finnish comrade, came to see him. Eino, who was in close touch with the factories and the Party organisation and

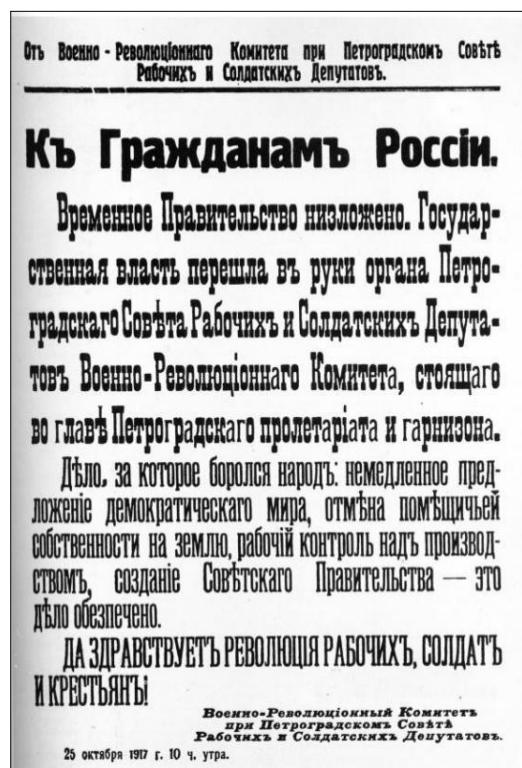
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\*SMOLNY: The Smolny Institute had been an exclusive academy for young ladies. During the course of the revolution the Bolsheviks seized it as their head-quarters.

Zhenya Yegorova (Secretary of the Vyborg District Party Committee) and I hitched a lorry that our people were sending to Smolny. I was anxious to know whether Ilyich had reached Smolny in safety or not. I do not remember now whether I actually saw Ilyich in Smolny or only learned that he was there. At any rate, I know I did not talk to him, because he was completely absorbed in the business of directing the uprising, and when he did a thing he never did it by halves.

Smolny was brilliantly lit up, a scene of intense activity. Red Guards, representatives from the factories, and soldiers came from all over to receive instructions. Typewriters rattled away, telephones rang, our girls sat sorting out piles of telegrams, and on the second floor the MRC was in continuous session. Armoured cars stood throbbing on the square outside, a held gun stood ready for action, and stacks of firewood had been built up in case barricades were needed. Guns and machine-guns stood at the entrance, sentries at the doors.

By 10am on 25<sup>th</sup> October (7<sup>th</sup> November New Style), a manifesto *To the Citizens of Russia* issued by the MRC of the Petrograd Soviet came off the press. It said:



10am 25<sup>th</sup> October 1917

Above: Original proclamation and translation announcing the seizure of power. LCW Vol.26 p.236

Although it was obvious that the revolution was victorious, the MRC continued its activities as intensively as ever, occupying the government offices one after another, organising guard duty, etc.

At 2.30pm a meeting of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies was held. The Soviet hailed with acclamation the report that the Provisional Government no longer existed, that some of its ministers had been arrested and the rest were awaiting their turn, that the Pre-parliament had been dismissed, and the railway stations, the general post and telegraph offices and the State Bank occupied. The Winter Palace was being stormed. It had not been captured yet, but its fate was sealed, and the soldiers were displaying wonderful heroism. The uprising had been a bloodless one.

Lenin's appearance at the meeting of the Soviet was greeted with a tumultuous ovation. It was characteristic of Ilyich that he made no big speeches in connection with the victory. He spoke instead about the tasks confronting the Soviet power, which had to be tackled in real earnest. He said that a new period in the history of Russia had been ushered in. The Soviet Government would carry on without the bourgeoisie. A decree would be issued abolishing private ownership of the land. A real workers' control would be established over industry.

The struggle for socialism would be launched. The old machinery of state would be broken up and scrapped, and a new authority, the authority of the Soviet organisations, would be set up. We had the force of a mass organisation which would carry all before it. The task of the day was to conclude peace. To do that Capital had to be defeated. The international proletariat, among whom signs of revolutionary unrest were beginning to appear, would help us to secure peace.

This speech struck home with the members of the Petrograd Soviet of Soldiers' and Workers' Deputies. Yes, a new period in our history was beginning. The strength of the mass organisations was invincible. The masses had risen, and the power of the bourgeoisie had fallen. We shall take the land from the landowners, and give the law to the factory owners, and, most important of all, we shall secure peace. The world revolution will come to our assistance. Ilyich was right. His speech was greeted with a storm of applause.

The Second Congress of the Soviets was to be opened that evening. It was to proclaim the power of the Soviets and give official recognition to the victory of the revolution.

Agitation was carried on among the delegates when they began to arrive. The government of the workers was to lean upon the peasantry, rally it behind them. The party that was supposed to express the views of the peasantry were the Socialist-Revolutionaries. The rich peasantry, the kulaks had their ideologists in the person of the Right Socialist-Revolutionaries. The ideologists of the peasant masses, the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries were typical representatives of the petty bourgeoisie, which wavered between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The leaders of the Petrograd Committee of the Socialist-Revolutionaries were Natanson, Spiridonova and Kamkov. Ilyich had met Natanson during his first emigration. At that time — in 1904 — Natanson had stood fairly close to the Marxists, except that he had believed the Social-Democrats to be underestimating the role of the peasantry. Spiridonova was a popular figure at that time. During the first revolution, in 1906, she, then a girl of seventeen, had assassinated Luzhenovsky, the suppressor of the peasant movement in the Tambov Gubernia. After being brutally tortured, she was condemned to penal servitude in Siberia, where she remained until the February Revolution. The Left Socialist-Revolutionaries of Petrograd were strongly influenced by the Bolshevik temper of the masses. They were more favourably inclined towards the Bolsheviks than any of the others. They saw that the Bolsheviks were out in all earnest to confiscate all the lands of the landowners and hand them over to the peasants. The Left Socialist-Revolutionaries believed in introducing a system of equalised land-tenure; the Bolsheviks realised that a complete reconstruction of agriculture on socialist lines was necessary. However, Ilyich considered that the most important thing at the moment was to confiscate the landowners' lands. As to what turn further reconstruction would take, experience itself would show. And he gave his thoughts to the drafting of a decree on the land.

The reminiscences of M.V. Fofanova contain a very interesting item.

**"I remember,"** she writes, **"Vladimir Ilyich asking me to get him all the back numbers of *Izvestia*, the organ of the All-Russian Soviet of Peasants' Deputies, which I did, of course. I do not remember exactly how many numbers there were, but they made a solid batch of material for study. Vladimir Ilyich spent two days over it, working even at night. In the morning he says to me: 'Well, I think I've studied these S-Rs inside out. All that remains is for me to read the mandate of their peasant electors.' Two hours later he called me in and said cheerfully, slapping one of the newspapers (I saw it to be the 19<sup>th</sup> August issue of the *Peasant Izvestia*): 'Here's a ready-made agreement with the Left S-Rs. It's no joke — this mandate has been signed by 242 local deputies. We shall use it as the basis for our law concerning the land and see if the Left S-Rs dare to reject it.' He showed me the paper with blue pencil markings all over it and added: 'The thing is to find a means by which we could afterwards reshape their socialisation idea after our own pattern.'"**

Marguerite was an agronomist by profession and she came up against these problems in her work. It was, therefore, a subject on which Ilyich willingly spoke to her.

Would the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries quit the Congress or not?

The Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets opened at 10.45pm on 25<sup>th</sup> October 1917 (7<sup>th</sup> November New Style). That evening the congress was to be constituted, was to elect a presidium and define its powers. Of the 670 delegates only 300 were Bolsheviks; 193 were Socialist-Revolutionaries and 68 Mensheviks. The Right Socialist-Revolutionaries, Mensheviks and Bundists foamed at the mouth and thundered denunciations at the Bolsheviks. They read out a declaration of protest against the “military plot and seizure of power engineered by the Bolsheviks behind the backs of the other parties and factions represented on the Soviet” and walked out. Some of the Menshevik-Internationalists quitted too.

The Left Socialist-Revolutionaries, who formed the overwhelming majority of the S-R delegates (169 out of 193), remained. Altogether fifty delegates quitted the Congress. Vladimir Ilyich was not present at the opening night.

While the Second Congress of Soviets was being opened the Winter Palace was being stormed. Kerensky had escaped the day before, disguised as a sailor, and was rushed off to Pskov in a motor-car. The Military Revolutionary Committee of Pskov did not arrest him, although it had direct orders signed by Dybenko and Krylenko to do so, and Kerensky left for Moscow to organise a crusade against Petrograd, where the soldiers and workers had taken the power into their own hands. The other ministers, headed by Kishkin, entrenched themselves in the Winter Palace under the protection of the military cadets and the women’s shock battalion, which had been drawn up there for the purpose. The Mensheviks, Right S-Rs and Bundists were frantic with rage over the siege of the Winter Palace and went into hysterics at the Congress. Erlich declared that some of the town-councillors had decided to go unarmed to the Palace Square and risk being shot down because the palace was being shelled. The Executive Committee of the Soviet of Peasants Deputies, and the Menshevik and S-R groups decided to join them. After the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries had walked out an interval was called. When the proceedings were resumed at 3.10am the Congress was informed that the Winter Palace had been taken, the ministers arrested, the officers and cadets disarmed, and the Third Bicycle Battalion, which Kerensky had sent against Petrograd, had gone over to the revolutionary people.

When there was no doubt left that victory had been won and that the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries would not quit the Congress, Vladimir Ilyich, who had hardly slept the previous night and had taken an active part all the time in directing the uprising, left Smolny and went to sleep at the Bonch-Bruyeviches’, who lived in Peski, not far from Smolny. He was given a room to himself, but he could not fall asleep for a long time. He got up quietly so as not to wake anybody and began to write the Decree on Land, which he had already thought out in every detail.

Addressing the Congress on the evening of 26<sup>th</sup> October (8<sup>th</sup> November, New Style) in support of the Decree on Land, Ilyich said:

**“Voices are being raised here that the decree itself and the Mandate were drawn up by the Socialist-Revolutionaries.**

**“What of it? Does it matter who drew them up?**

**“As a democratic government, we cannot ignore the decision of the masses of the people, even though we may disagree with it. In the fire of experience, applying the decree in practice, and carrying it out locally, the peasants will themselves realise where the truth lies. And even if the peasants continue to follow the Socialist-Revolutionaries, even if they give this party a majority in the Constituent Assembly, we shall still say — what of it?**

**“Experience is the best teacher and it will show who is right. Let the peasants solve this problem from one end and we shall solve it from the other. Experience will oblige us to draw together in the general stream of revolutionary creative work, in the elaboration of new state forms. We must be guided by experience; we must allow complete freedom to the creative faculties of the masses. The old government, which was overthrown by armed uprising, wanted to settle the land problem with the help of the old, unchanged tsarist bureaucracy. But instead of solving the problem, the bureaucracy only fought the peasants. The peasants have learned something during the eight months of our revolution; they want to settle all land problems themselves. We are therefore opposed to all amendments to this draft law. We want no details in it, for we are writing a decree, not a programme of action.”**

V.I. Lenin, *Report on Land* (26<sup>th</sup> October 2017): LCW Vol.26 pp.260-261

We have all of Ilyich in those words — an Ilyich free from petty conceit (it does not matter who said it, so long as it says the right thing), taking into consideration the opinion of the rank and file, appreciating the power of revolutionary creative work, clearly understanding that the masses are best convinced by practice and experience, and that the hard facts of life would show them that the Bolsheviks' point of view had been correct. The Decree on Land submitted by Lenin was adopted. Sixteen years have passed since then. Landlord ownership has been abolished, and step by step, in a struggle against the old proprietary habits and views, new forms of farming have been created — collective farming, which now embraces the bulk of peasant households. The old small-farm methods and small-owner mentality are becoming a thing of the past. A strong and powerful basis for socialist farming has been created.

The decrees on Peace and Land were passed at the evening session on 26<sup>th</sup> October 1917 (8<sup>th</sup> November New Style). On these points agreement was reached with the S-Rs. On the question of forming a government, however, the position was worse. The Left S-Rs had not quitted the Congress because they had realised that such an action would have cost them their influence among the peasant masses, but the withdrawal on 25<sup>th</sup> October of the Right S-Rs and the Mensheviks, and their outcries against the ‘adventurism’ of the Bolsheviks, the seizure of power, etc., etc., had deeply affected them.

After the Right S-Rs and the others had left the Congress, Kamkov, one of the leaders of the Left S-Rs, declared that they stood for a united democratic government, and that the Left S-Rs would do everything they could to have such a government set up. The Left S-Rs said they wanted to act as mediators between the Bolsheviks and the parties who had left the Congress. The Bolsheviks did not refuse to negotiate, but Ilyich understood perfectly well that nothing would come of such talks. The Bolsheviks had not seized the power and made the revolution in order to hitch a swan, a pike and a crab to the Soviet cart, to form a government that would be incapable of pulling together and getting things done. Co-operation with the Left S-Rs, in Ilyich's opinion, was possible.

A talk on this question with representatives of the Left S-Rs was held a couple of hours before the congress opened on 26<sup>th</sup> October 1917. I remember the surroundings in which that conference was held. It was a room in Smolny with small settees upholstered in dark red. On one settee sat Spiridonova, and next to her stood Ilyich, arguing with her in a sort of gentle earnest manner. No agreement was reached with the Left S-Rs. They did not want to join the government. Ilyich proposed the appointment of Bolsheviks alone to the posts of socialist ministers.

The Congress session of 26<sup>th</sup> October 1917 (8<sup>th</sup> November New Style) opened at 9pm. I was present. I remember the speech Ilyich made in submitting his draft Decree on Land. He spoke almlly. The audience listened with rapt attention. During the reading of the Decree I was struck by the expression of one of the delegates who sat a little way off. He was an elderly looking peasant, and under the stress of powerful emotion his face had assumed a wax-like appearance and his eyes shone with a peculiar light.

The death sentence, introduced by Kerensky at the front, was repealed, Decrees on Peace, on Land and on Workers' Control were passed, and a Bolshevik Council of People's Commissars was formed as follows:

Vladimir Ulyanov (Lenin)	Chairman of the Council;
A.I. Rykov	People's Commissar for Internal Affairs;
V.P. Milyutin	Agriculture;
G. Shyapnikov	Labour;
V.A. Ovseyenko (Antonov)	
N.V. Krylenko	Committee of Military and Naval Affairs;
P.Y. Dybenko	
V P. Nogin	Trade and Industry;
A.V. Lunacharsky	Education;
I.I. Skvortsov (Stepanov)	Finance;
L.D. Bronstein (Trotsky)	Foreign Affairs;
G. I. Oppokov (Lomov)	Justice;
I. A. Teodorovich	Food Supply;
N.P. Avilov (Glebov)	Post and Telegraph;
J.V. Djugashvili (Stalin)	Chairman of the People's Commissariat for Nationalities.

The post of Commissar of Railways was left open.

Eino Rahja relates that when the list of first People's Commissars was being discussed at a meeting of the Bolshevik group, he had been sitting in a corner listening. One of the nominees had protested that he had no experience in that kind of work. Vladimir Ilyich had burst out laughing and said: "Do you think any of us has had such experience?" None had any experience, of course. But Vladimir Ilyich envisaged the People's Commissar as a new type of minister, an organiser and manager of one or another branch of state activity, who was linked closely with the masses.

Vladimir Ilyich's mind was hard at work all the time on the problem of new forms of administration. He was thinking of how to organise a machinery of government that would be free from the taint of bureaucracy, that would lean on the masses, organise their co-operation and assistance, and show itself capable of training a new type of administrative worker on this job. In the resolution of the Second Congress of Soviets concerning the formation of a workers' and peasants' government, this is expressed in the following words:

**"The management of individual branches of state activity is entrusted to commissions whose members shall ensure the fulfilment of the programme announced by the Congress, and shall work in close contact with mass organisations of men and women workers, sailors, soldiers, peasants and office employees. Governmental authority is vested in a collegium of the chairmen of those commissions, i.e. the Council of People's Commissars."**

V.I. Lenin, *Decision to Form the Workers' and Peasants' Government* (26<sup>th</sup> or 27<sup>th</sup> October 1917)  
LCW Vol.26 p.262

I recall the talks I had with Ilyich on this subject during the few weeks he lived at Fofanova's. I was working at the time with tremendous enthusiasm in the Vyborg District, keenly observing the revolutionary activities of the masses and the radical changes that were taking place in the whole pattern of life. On meeting Vladimir Ilyich I would tell him about life in the district. I remember telling him about an interesting sitting of a People's Court which I had attended. Such courts had been held in some places during the Revolution of 1905 — in Sormovo for one thing. Chugurin, a worker, whom I had met as a student of the Longjumeau Party school near Paris and with whom I was now working at the Vyborg District Council, was a native of Sormovo. It was his suggestion to start organising such courts in the Vyborg District. The first court sat at the People's House. The place was packed with people standing shoulder to shoulder on the floor, benches and window sills. I do not remember now exactly what cases came before the court. They were not really offences in the strict sense of the word, but incidents of everyday life. Two suspicious characters were tried for attempting to arrest Chugurin. A tall swarthy watchman was 'tried' for beating his young son, exploiting him and keeping him away from school. Many working men and women from among the public made warm speeches, The 'defendant' kept wiping the sweat from his brow, and then, with the tears streaming down his face, promised not to ill-treat his son any more. Strictly speaking, it was not a court, but a public control of citizens' behaviour; we were witnessing proletarian ethics in the making. Vladimir Ilyich was greatly interested in this 'court' and questioned me about it in detail.

Mostly I told him about the new forms of educational work. I was in charge of the Department of Education at the District Council. The children's school did not function in the summer, and most of the time I was busy with political education. In this respect my five years' experience at the Sunday Evening School in the Nevskaya Zastava District in the nineties came in very useful to me. These were different times, of course, and we could go ahead with the job unhampered.

Delegates from some forty factories got together every week and we discussed ways and means of carrying out one or another measure. Whatever we decided was immediately carried out. For example, we decided to do away with illiteracy, and the factory delegates, each at his own place of employment, organised the registration of illiterates, secured school premises and raised the necessary funds by bearing down upon the factory managements.

A representative of the workers was attached to each such school and he saw to it that the school was supplied with all that it needed in the way of blackboards, chalk, ABC books, etc. Special representatives were appointed to see that right teaching methods were used and to find out what the workers had to say about it. We briefed these representatives and had them report back to us. We got together delegates of the soldiers' wives and discussed conditions in the children's homes, organised their inspection over the children's homes, gave them instructions, and carried out extensive explanatory work among them. We got together the librarians of the district, and together with them and the workers discussed the forms of work of the public libraries. A powerful impulse was given to the initiative of the workers, and the Department of Education rallied around itself considerable forces. Ilyich said at the time that this was just the style of work that our government offices and future ministers would have to adopt, a style of work modelled after these committees of working men and women, who were in the thick of things and were familiar with the conditions of life and work of the masses and with everything that agitated their minds at the moment.

Vladimir Ilyich was all the more keen to draw me out on these subjects in that he believed I understood how to enlist the masses on the job of running the government. He had some strong things to say afterwards about the 'rotten' bureaucratism that had wormed its way in everywhere. Eventually, when the question came up of raising the responsibility of the People's Commissars and the Commissariats' department managers, who often shuffled it off on to the boards and commissions, the question of one-man management arose. Ilyich unexpectedly got me appointed a member of the commission under the Council of People's Commissars which was set up to investigate this question. He said we must be careful that one-man management should in no way override the initiative and independent activity of the commissions, or weaken the ties with the masses; one-man management had to be combined with an ability to work with the masses.

Ilyich tried to make use of everyone's experience for building up a state of a new type. The Soviet Government, at the head of which Ilyich now stood, was faced with the task of setting up a type of state machinery such as the world had never yet seen, a machinery that relied on the support of the broad masses; the task was to remodel the whole social fabric and all human relations along new socialist lines.

But first of all the Soviet power had to be defended against the enemy's attempts to overthrow it by force and disrupt it from within. Our ranks had to be strengthened.

9<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> November 1917 were days of struggle for the very existence of the Soviet power.

As a result of a thorough study of the experience of the Paris Commune, the world's first proletarian state, Ilyich noted what a ruinous effect the leniency which the working masses and the workers' government had shown towards their avowed enemies had had upon the fate of the Paris Commune. In speaking of the fight against the enemies, therefore, Ilyich was always inclined to put the case strongly for fear of the masses and himself showing too great leniency.

At the beginning of the October Revolution there had been far too much forbearance of this kind. Kerensky and a number of ministers had been allowed to escape, the cadets who had defended the Winter Palace had been set free on parole, and General Krasnov, who commanded Kerensky's advancing troops, had been left under domiciliary arrest. One day, while sitting in one of the waiting rooms at Smolny on a heap of army coats, I heard a conversation between Krylenko and General Krasnov, who had been brought to Petrograd under arrest. They had come in together, sat down at a small table standing all by itself in the middle of the large room, and dropped into a calm easy conversation. I remember being surprised at the peaceful nature of their talk.

Speaking at a meeting of the Central Executive Committee on 4<sup>th</sup> November 1917, Ilyich had said:

**"Krasnov was given soft treatment. He was only placed under house arrest. We are against civil war. But if it nevertheless goes on what are we to do?"**

V.I. Lenin, *Speech on the Press* (4<sup>th</sup> November 1917): LCW Vol.26 p.285

Released by the Pskov comrades, Kerensky had engineered an attack on Petrograd; set free on parole, the officer cadets had revolted on 11<sup>th</sup> November, and Krasnov, escaping from under domiciliary arrest, had organised a hundred-thousand-strong White Army in the Don with aid of the German Government.

The people were tired of the imperialist carnage and wanted a bloodless revolution, but the enemies compelled them to fight. Engrossed completely in the problems of socialist reconstruction of the entire social system, Ilyich was compelled to turn his attention to the defence of the cause of the revolution.

On 9<sup>th</sup> November 1917 Kerensky succeeded in capturing Gatchina. In an article *Lenin During the Days of the Uprising* (*Krasnaya Gazeta*, 6<sup>th</sup> November 1927) Podvoisky gives a vivid description of the tremendous work Lenin did during the days of Petrograd's defence. He describes how Lenin came to the Area Staff Headquarters and demanded a report on the situation. Antonov Ovseyenko began to explain the general plan of operations, pointing out on the map the disposition of our forces and the probable disposition and strength of the enemy's forces.

**"Lenin examined the map closely. With the keenness of a profound and attentive strategist and general, he demanded explanations — why this point was not being guarded, why that point was undefended, why such a step was being contemplated instead of another, why Kronstadt, Vyborg, Helsingfors had not been called on for support, and so on. After comparing notes, it became clear that we had really made quite a number of blunders and not acted with the prompt urgency which the menacing situation in Petrograd called for in the matter of organising the means and forces for its defence."**

On the evening of the 9<sup>th</sup> Ilyich spoke with Helsingfors [now Helsinki] on the private line and arranged for two destroyers and the battleship *Respublika* to be sent to guard the approaches to Petrograd.

Vladimir Ilyich went to the Putilov Works with Antonov-Ovseyenko to check up whether the armoured train, which was so badly needed, was being built quickly enough. He talked with the workers there. Staff Headquarters was transferred to Smolny, and Lenin took a close interest in all its work, and helped it to mobilise the activity of the masses. Podvoisky writes that he began to appreciate Lenin's work after a delegate conference of workers' organisations, district Soviets, factory committees, trade unions and military units, which Lenin had called.



Lenin addresses Putilov workers

"I saw here wherein Lenin's power lay," he writes. "During an emergency, he kept the concentration of our forces and means at its highest pitch of intensity. We squandered our energies, mustered and used our forces without plan, as a result of which our efforts lost much of their impact, and blunted the edge of the masses' activity, initiative and determination. The masses had not felt that iron will and iron plan which keeps all parts together as in a finely adjusted machine. Lenin kept driving home the idea that it was essential to make the utmost concentrated efforts for defence. Elaborating on this idea he unfolded to the conference an intelligible plan in which, as in an integral machine, everyone found a place for himself, for his factory or his unit. Right there, at the conference, every man was able to envisage concretely the plan of further work, and to feel his work to be linked with that of the whole collective body of the republic. As a result, he felt the responsibility which, from that moment, the dictatorship of the proletariat was imposing upon him.

"To attract the masses and bring it home to them that no leaders would do their job for them, but that they themselves would have to get down to work with their own hands if they wanted to arrange their lives on new lines and defend their state — this is what Lenin constantly strove to achieve this is where he showed himself to be a true leader of the people, a leader who was able to make the masses face up to vital and essential issues and take the step towards their solution themselves, not by unconsciously following a leader, but by being profoundly conscious themselves of what they were doing."

In this Podvoisky was absolutely right. Ilyich was able to alert the masses, was able always to set concrete aims before them.

The workers of Petrograd rose in defence of their city. Old and young went off to the front to meet the troops of Kerensky. The Cossacks and the units that had been called up from the provinces were none too keen on fighting, and the Petrograd workers carried on agitation among them, argued with them. The Cossacks and soldiers whom Kerensky had mobilised simply quitted the front, taking guns and rifles with them. Kerensky's front was disintegrating. Nevertheless, many Petrograd workers lost their lives in defending the city. Among them was Vera Slutskaya, who had been an active Party worker in the Vasileostrovsky District. She went out to the front in a lorry and had her head blown off by a shell. Quite a number of our Vyborg District comrades were killed too. The whole district turned out to attend the funeral.

On 29<sup>th</sup> October 1917, when Kerensky was marching on Petrograd in full force, the military cadets, who had been released from the Winter Palace on parole, decided to help Kerensky and engineered a revolt. I was still living in Petrograd District at the time with Ilyich's relatives — this was before I moved to Smolny. Early in the morning fighting started near the Pavlovskoye Military School not far from where we lived. On hearing of the revolt of the cadets, the Red Guards and workers from the factories in the Vyborg District came to suppress it. Guns were used in the fighting, and our house shook. The people around us were scared to death. Early in the morning of that day, when I was leaving the house to go to the District Council, a housemaid from next door had come running towards me crying horrified: "You ought to see what they're doing! I just saw them bayonet a cadet just like a fly on a pin!" On the way I had met a fresh force of the Vyborg Red Guards coming up with another cannon. The revolt of the cadets was quickly suppressed.

The same day Ilyich addressed a conference of regimental representatives of the Petrograd garrison. In the course of his speech he said:

**"Kerensky's bid is just as pathetic a gamble as Kornilov's. But the situation is a difficult one. Vigorous efforts must be made to get some order into the food situation, and put an end to the misery at the fronts. We cannot wait, nor can we tolerate Kerensky's mutiny a single day. If the Kornilovites launch another offensive, they will get what the mutinous officer cadets got today. The cadets have only themselves to blame. We took power almost without bloodshed. If there were any losses they were on our side... The government set up by the will of the workers', soldiers' and peasants' deputies will not tolerate any nonsense from the Kornilovites."**

V.I. Lenin, *Conference of the Regimental Delegates of the Petrograd Garrison* (29<sup>th</sup> October 1917)  
LCW Vol.26 p.271

On 1<sup>st</sup> November 1917 Kerensky's revolt was suppressed. Gatchina was recaptured. Kerensky escaped. In Petrograd victory was complete. But in the country at large civil war was breaking out. On 8<sup>th</sup> November General Kaledin had proclaimed martial law in the Don Region and began to organise the Cossacks against the Soviet power. On 9<sup>th</sup> November the Cossack ataman Dutov had captured Orenburg. In Moscow things were dragging. The Whites had seized the Kremlin there. The fight was fiercer than in Petrograd.

The Right Socialist-Revolutionaries, the Mensheviks and other factions, who had quit the Second Congress of Soviets on 26<sup>th</sup> October 1917, organised a 'Committee for the Salvation of the Motherland and the Revolution', around which they thought to rally all the opponents of the Soviet power. The Committee had on it nine representatives of the Central Town Council, the whole presidium of the pre-parliament, three representatives from each of the executive committees of the All-Russian Soviet of Workers and Soldiers' Deputies, the Soviet of Peasants' Deputies, and of the S-R and Menshevik factions, representatives of the Unity-Mensheviks, the Centroflot and two representatives of Plekhanov's Unity group. They were out to save the country and the revolution from the Bolshevik 'adventurers' who had seized the power behind their backs. But they could not do much.

The slogans “For Peace”, “For Land” were so popular among the masses that the latter rallied unhesitatingly around the Bolsheviks with tremendous enthusiasm. The Committee of Public Security, which had been formed in Moscow, joined the Petrograd Committee for the Salvation of the Motherland and the Revolution. It had been formed on the initiative of the Moscow Town Council, at the head of which stood the Right Socialist-Revolutionary Rudnev. The Moscow Committee of Public Security openly sided with the counter-revolution.

Troops had to be sent to Moscow to give a helping hand, but this could not be done on account of the stand which the All-Russian Executive Committee of Railway Employees had taken. The Railwaymen’s Executive backed the dissentient factions that had quitted the Congress, and the workers had no influence there. The Railwaymen’s Executive declared that it took a ‘neutral stand’ in the civil war that had started, and would not allow the troops of either side to pass. Actually, this ‘neutrality’ hit the Bolsheviks and prevented them from sending troops to the assistance of Moscow. The sabotage of the Railwaymen’s Executive was broken by the railway workers, who undertook to transport the troops themselves. On 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1917 the Military Revolutionary Committee in Petrograd sent a force to Moscow. The resistance of the Whites, however, was overcome in Moscow before those troops arrived.

At the most difficult moment, when the revolt of the military cadets had only just been suppressed in Petrograd, when Kerensky was still advancing, and fighting in Moscow was still in progress, a number of members of the Party Central Committee began to vacillate. They believed that concessions ought to be made, that the situation was desperate. These vacillations were most strikingly revealed in the negotiations with the Railwaymen’s Executive. On 27<sup>th</sup> October 1917, the latter passed a resolution calling for the formation of a government of all the Socialist parties, from the Bolsheviks to the Popular Socialists, and offering to act as mediators. At first only the Left-wing of the Railwaymen’s Executive entered into negotiations with the Central Committee, who authorised L.B. Ramenov and G.Y. Sokolnikov to represent it. The Mensheviks and the Right S-Rs took no part in the talks at first, but when they saw, as they thought, that the Bolsheviks had been driven into a corner as a result of Kerensky’s attack and the state of affairs in Moscow, and learned that vacillations had started within the Central Committee, they became brazen to a degree. They came to the meeting of the Railwaymen’s Executive on 30<sup>th</sup>-31<sup>st</sup> October 1917 and demanded the repudiation of the power of the Soviets, the exclusion from participation in the government of those guilty of the October uprising, the removal, first and foremost, of Lenin, and the setting up of a new government headed by Chernov or Avksentyev. The Bolshevik delegation led by Kamenev did not withdraw from the meeting, thereby permitting discussion of the proposals submitted by the Mensheviks and the Right S-Rs. The next day, on 1<sup>st</sup> November 1917, a meeting of the Central Committee was called, at which Lenin demanded that the talks with the Railwaymen’s Executive, who had gone over to the side of the Kaledins and Kornilovs, should be broken off immediately. A resolution to that effect was adopted by the Central Committee.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> November 1917, Nogin, Rykov, V. Milyutin and Teodorovich announced their resignation from the Council of People’s Commissars on the grounds that they considered it necessary to form a socialist government of all the Socialist parties. They were joined by a number of other Commissars. Kamenev, Rykov, Zinoviev, Nogin and Milyutin announced their resignation from the Central Committee. All of them had stood for the formation of an all-party coalition government right after the victory of the October Revolution. The Central Committee demanded that they should submit to Party discipline. Ilyich was indignant and fought hard on this point. Zinoviev published a statement announcing his return to the Central Committee.

The further victories of the Bolsheviks and the Petrograd and Moscow organisations’ sharp disapproval of these comrades’ conduct (their resignation from the Central Committee and their official posts) enabled the Party to liquidate this incident fairly quickly. It took one’s thoughts back to the past — to the Second Congress of the Party fourteen years earlier, in 1903. The Party then had only just begun to form, and Martov’s refusal to join the editorial board of *Iskra* had provoked a serious crisis in the Party, which had caused Ilyich great distress.

The present resignation of a number of comrades from the Central Committee and from their posts of Commissars merely created temporary difficulties. The uplift of the revolutionary movement had helped to quickly liquidate this incident, and Ilyich, who always spoke about what was on his mind at the moment during our walks together, never once mentioned this incident. His mind was set entirely on the problem of how to begin building up the socialist system of life, how to put into effect the resolutions passed at the Second Congress of Soviets.

On 4<sup>th</sup> November 1917, Ilyich spoke at the meeting of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee and the meeting of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies held jointly with army delegates from the front. His speeches breathed absolute confidence in victory, confidence in the correctness of the line which the Bolsheviks had taken, confidence in the support of the masses.

**“The Kerensky government’s criminal failure to act brought the country and the revolution to the brink of disaster: delay may indeed prove to be fatal, and the new regime is setting up milestones in the development of new forms of life by issuing laws to meet the aspirations and hopes of the broad masses. The local Soviets, depending on time and place, can amend, enlarge and add to the basic provisions worked out by the government. Creative activity at the grass roots is the basic factor of the new public life. Let the workers set up workers’ control at their factories. Let them supply the villages with manufactures in exchange for grain. Account must be taken of every single article, every pound of grain, because what socialism implies above all is keeping account of everything. Socialism cannot be decreed from above. Its spirit rejects the mechanical bureaucratic approach; living, creative socialism is the product of the masses themselves.”** (My italics – N.K.)

V.I. Lenin, *Meeting of the All-Russian Central Executive Meeting: 2. Reply to a Question by the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries* (4<sup>th</sup> November 1917) LCW Vol.26 pp.288-289

Wonderful words!

**“Power is in the hands of our Party, which enjoys the confidence of the broad masses. Some of our comrades may have adopted a platform which has nothing in common with Bolshevism. But the mass of Moscow workers will not follow Rykov and Nogin.”**

V.I. Lenin, *Meeting of the All-Russian Central Executive Meeting:3. Speeches Concerning the Socialist Revolutionaries’ Question* (4<sup>th</sup> November 1917) LCW Vol.26 p.290

said Ilyich.

He concluded his speech with the following words:

**“The Central Executive Committee authorises the Council of People’s Commissars to nominate, by the next sitting, candidates for the People’s Commissars of the Interior, and Trade and Industry, and invites Comrade Kolegayev to fill the post of People’s Commissar of Agriculture.”**

V.I. Lenin, *Meeting of the All-Russian Central Executive Meeting: 4. Speech and Resolution on the Resignation of a Group of People’s Commissars* (4<sup>th</sup> November 1917) LCW Vol.26 p.292

Kolegayev was a Left Socialist-Revolutionary. He did not accept the proffered post. The party of Left Socialist-Revolutionaries still shirked responsibility.

The Mensheviks, Right S-Rs and others agitated for sabotage. The old government officials refused to work under the Bolsheviks, and did not come to their offices.

Addressing the Petrograd Soviet on 4<sup>th</sup> November, Lenin said:

**“The bourgeoisie has surrounded us with an atmosphere of lies and slander, but I have yet to see the soldier who is not enthusiastic over the Soviets having taken power. I have yet to see the peasant who opposes the Soviets.”**

V.I. Lenin, *Speech at Joint Meeting of Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers Deputies and Delegates from the Front* (4<sup>th</sup> November 1917) LCW Vol.26 p.296

And this gave Lenin confidence in victory.

On 8<sup>th</sup> November 1917, Yakov Sverdlov was elected Chairman of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee in place of L.B. Kamenev. He was nominated by Ilyich. The choice was an exceedingly happy one. Sverdlov was a man of great firmness. In the struggle for the Soviet power, in the struggle against the counter-revolution, he was indispensable. Moreover, there was a tremendous job to be done in organising a state of a new type, and this job called for an organiser of exceptional ability. Sverdlov was just that kind of organiser.

Two years later, on 18<sup>th</sup> March 1919, after having accomplished a tremendous organising job for the good of the country at a time of its greatest need, Sverdlov died. Lenin's speech at the special meeting of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee held in connection with his death, has gone down in history as a splendid memorial to that devoted champion of the working-class cause.



**Yakov Mikhailovich Sverdlov  
(1885-1919)**

“In the course of our revolution, and in its victories,” said Lenin, “Comrade Sverdlov succeeded in expressing more fully and integrally than anybody else the chief and most important features of the proletarian revolution...” The most “profound and permanent feature of this revolution and condition of its victory” Ilyich continued, “was, and remains, the organisation of the proletarian masses, the organisation of the working people. And it is this organisation of millions of working people that constitutes the best stimulant for the revolution, its deepest source of victory... This feature of the proletarian revolution also brought to the fore Yakov Sverdlov, a man who was first and foremost an organiser.” Ilyich described Sverdlov as “the most perfect type of professional revolutionary” wholeheartedly devoted to the cause of the revolution, steeled by long years of underground illegal activity, a man who never lost touch with the masses, never left Russia, a revolutionary who “succeeded in becoming not only a beloved leader of the workers, not only a leader who was most familiar with practical work, but also an organiser of the advanced proletarians... it was the exceptional organising talent of this man which gave us that which we have been so proud of, so justly proud of, up to now.

“He made it possible for us to carry on concerted, efficient, really organised activities, activities worthy of the organised proletarian masses, and answering to the requirements of the proletarian revolution — those concerted, organised activities without which we could not have achieved a single success, without which we could not have overcome any one of the innumerable difficulties which we have had to face, and without which we would not have been able to stand up to any one of the severe trials we experienced in the past, and are experiencing at the present time.” Ilyich characterised Sverdlov as an organiser who had won for himself “unchallenged prestige, the organiser of Soviet power throughout Russia, the man, unique in his knowledge, who organised the work of the Party which created the Soviets and established the Soviet government...”

V.I. Lenin, *Speech in Memory of Y.M. Sverdlov* (18<sup>th</sup> March 1919) LCW Vol.29 pp.89-93

The October Revolution altered the conditions of the revolutionary struggle. These new conditions of struggle demanded of a man greater determination, greater pertinacity, greater 'stamina', to use a favourite word of Vladimir Ilyich, greater organising scope. "The essence of socialism in the making is organisation," Ilyich often said.

It was no accident that the course of events brought to the fore men who were not afraid to shoulder responsibility, men whose abilities had been cramped by the conditions of the old underground; constant arrests and deportations had brought their organising efforts to naught, while the need for secrecy had kept them in the background. One such man was Stalin, an outstanding organiser of the Party and of the victory of October. It was not for nothing that when candidates for People's Commissars were being nominated at the Second Congress of Soviets, Ilyich proposed that Stalin should be appointed Chairman of the Commissariat for the Affairs of Nationalities. Ilyich had striven for years to bring about the liberation of the non-Russian nationalities and give them an opportunity for all-round development; during the last few years he had fought harder than ever for the right of nations to self-determination. I remember how closely he took to heart every little thing that had any bearing on this question, and how furious he got one day when I told him that there was some hesitation at the People's Commissariat of Education on the question as to whether historical monuments of value to the Poles should be restored to them or not.

Ilyich hated great-power chauvinism with all his soul, and there was nothing he desired more passionately than that the Republic of the Soviets should offset the imperialist policy of oppressing the weaker nationalities by its own policy of complete liberation for those nationalities, a policy of comradely solicitude for their welfare. He knew Stalin's views on the national question very well, as they had often discussed the subject in Cracow. He was confident that Stalin would consider himself in honour bound to carry out in deed and not in word all that had been so carefully thought out and discussed on this subject during previous years. The nationalities had to be given the right to self-determination. The task was complicated by the fact that this right had to be enforced under conditions of acute class struggle. The work of putting into effect the nations' right to self-determination had to be combined with the struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat and the implementation of the power of the Soviets. This question was closely linked, with the question of the international struggle of the proletariat and the questions of the civil war. A broad mind, profound conviction and practical organising ability were required of the person in charge of affairs on the national front. That is why Ilyich proposed Stalin for the job.

The problem of learning how to work the new way, learning new habits of mind, the problem of making leading, capable and tenacious builders of the socialist system out of yesterday's revolutionary opposition, loomed large before all Party workers.

\* \* \* \* \*

Ilyich and I moved into Smolny. We were given a room there formerly occupied by a *dame de class*. It was partitioned off to make room for a bed. Admission to it was through the wash-room. A lift took you upstairs where Ilyich had his private office. Facing this was a small outer office used as a waiting room. Delegation after delegation came to see him. Most of them were from the front. Often, when going up to him, I would find him in the outer office. The room would be crowded with soldiers, all standing up and listening to Ilyich, who was talking to them by the window. Ilyich worked in the bustling atmosphere of Smolny, which was always crowded with people. Everyone came there, as if drawn by a magnet.

Smolny was guarded by soldiers of the Machine-Gun Regiment, the same regiment that had been quartered in the Vyborg District in the summer of 1917 and was completely under the influence of the workers there. It had been the first to come out in 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1917, eager to join the fray. Kerensky had decided to make an example of the rebels. They were disarmed and marched out on to the square where they were publicly degraded. After that the machine-gunners hated the Provisional Government worse than ever. In October they fought for the Soviet power and afterwards took over guard duty at Smolny.



**Red Guards checking papers at the Smolny Institute**

One machine-gunner by the name of Zheltishev, an Ufa peasant, was told to look after Ilyich. He was greatly attached to Ilyich and took care of him, attending to his wants and bringing him his meals from the canteen, which was then housed in Smolny. Zheltishev was naïve to a degree. He was forever wondering at things. Even the spirit-lamp set him wondering. I came into the room once and found him sitting on his haunches pouring spirits on the burning lamp that stood before him on the floor. Even the taps and the crockery set him wondering.

The machine-gunners who were guarding Smolny once came upon a pile of caskets used by the young ladies of the former Smolny Institute. Curious to know what was in them, they prised them open with their bayonets. They found them to contain diaries, all kinds of knick-knacks and ribbons. The men gave them away to the children of the neighbourhood. Zheltishev brought me a trinket — a round little mirror with carving on it and the word "Niagara" in English letters. I still have it. Ilyich sometimes exchanged a word with Zheltishev, and the latter was prepared to do anything in the world for him. Zheltishev was supposed to attend on Trotsky, too, who lived opposite us with his family in the rooms formerly occupied by the head mistress of the Institute. But he did not like Trotsky. "He was much too bossy," he once wrote to me. He is now living in a collective farm in the Bashkir Republic. He has a large family, is ailing, goes in for bee-keeping, and writes to me occasionally, recollecting things about Ilyich.

I was at work all day, first in the Vyborg District Council, then in the Commissariat of Education. Ilyich was left pretty much to shift for himself. Zheltishev brought him his meals and bread — the usual rations. Maria Ilyinichna sometimes brought him some food from home, but he had no one to take regular care of his meals, as I was hardly ever at home.

A young fellow named Korotkov recently told me of an incident connected with Lenin. He was a boy of twelve at the time, living with his mother, who was an office cleaner at Smolny. Once she heard someone walking about in the canteen. She looked in, and there was Ilyich standing at a table eating a piece of black bread and herring to which he had helped himself. He was somewhat taken aback at the sight of the office cleaner, and said with a smile: "I felt very hungry, you know." Korotkova knew Vladimir Ilyich. Once, during the days immediately following the revolution, Ilyich was coming down the stairs, which she was washing. She stood leaning on the banister, resting. Ilyich stopped and talked to her. She did not know who he was at the time.

He said to her: "Well, Comrade, don't you find things better now under the Soviet power than under the old government?"

And she answered: "Oh, I don't care, so long as I get paid for my work."

Afterwards, when she got to know it had been Lenin, she could not get over it. She told that story of how she had answered Lenin as long as she lived. She is now an old-age pensioner, and her son, who had then been employed in the Forwarding Department of Smolny has taken his degree as artist at the State Art and Crafts Workshops.

And then, at last, Shotman's mother, a Finn, took matters in hand. She was very fond of her son and proud of the fact that he had been a delegate to the Second Party Congress and helped Ilyich to hide himself during the July days. Soon she had everything in the house ship-shape, the way Ilyich liked it, and put Zheltishev, and the cleaners, and the waitresses in the canteen through their paces. I could rest assured now, when going away, that Ilyich would be properly looked after and given his meals.

Late in the afternoon, when I came home from work, Ilyich (if he was disengaged) and I would go for a stroll round Smolny and have a chat. Few people knew Ilyich by sight in those days, and he used to go about unattended. True, the machine-gunners, seeing him go out, used to worry about it, and they saw to it that the Smolny area alas kept clear of hostile elements. Once they ran in a dozen or so housewives who had collected on the corner and were railing loudly at Lenin. Malkov, the commandant of Smolny, sent for me the next morning and said: "We ran some women in yesterday — they were kicking up a row. What am I to do with them? Will you have a look at them?"

For one thing it turned out that most of the women had slipped away, and the rest were such an ignorant lot far removed from politics that I laughingly advised Malkov to let them go. One of the women, on being released, came back and asked me in a whisper, pointing to Malkov: "Is that Lenin?" I dismissed her with a smile.

We lived in Smolny up to March 1918, when we moved to Moscow.



Moscow 1918  
statue of Tsar Alexander III destroyed



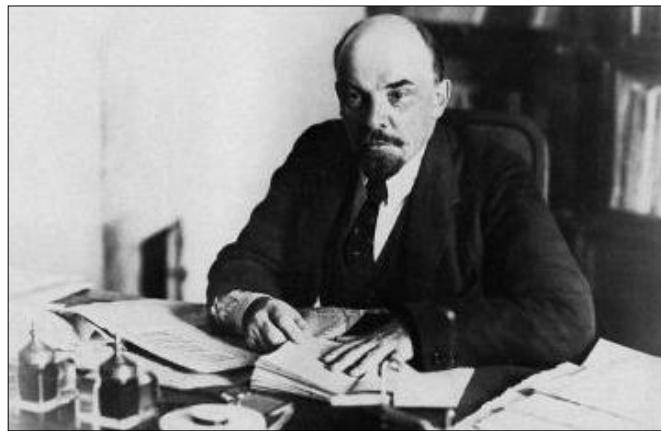
Moscow 1918  
Lenin unveils statue of Marx and Engels

*Excerpts from:*

# ‘LEFT-WING’ CHILDISHNESS AND THE PETIT- BOURGEOIS MENTALITY

by  
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Published 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> May 1918 in *Pravda*



*For us as Zimbabwean Communists, the question of taking state power cannot be divorced from what happens after, in particular the rebuilding of the economy. Some Comrades believe that having obtained power, the working-class can immediately move to socialism. Here Lenin looks at the practical problems of building socialism.*

## INTRODUCTION

The publication by a small group of ‘Left Communists’<sup>1</sup> of their journal, *Kommunist*<sup>2</sup> [No.1, 20<sup>th</sup> April 1918], and of their ‘theses’, strikingly confirms my views expressed in the pamphlet *The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government* [Published in *Pravda* 28<sup>th</sup> April 1918]. There could not be better confirmation, in political literature, of the utter naïveté of the defence of petty-bourgeois sloppiness that is sometimes concealed by ‘Left’ slogans. It is useful and necessary to deal with the arguments of ‘Left Communists’ because they are characteristic of the period we are passing through. They show up with exceptional clarity the negative side of the core of this period. They are instructive, because the people we are dealing with are the best of those who have failed to understand the present period, people who by their knowledge and loyalty stand far, far above the ordinary representatives of the same mistaken views, namely, the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries.

## III

We shall pass on to the misfortunes of our ‘Left Communists’ in the sphere of home policy. It is difficult to read the following phrases in the theses on the **present** situation without smiling.

“...The systematic use of the remaining means of production is conceivable only if a most determined policy of socialisation is pursued...”

“...not to capitulate to the bourgeoisie and its petty-bourgeois intellectualist servitors, but to rout the bourgeoisie and to put down sabotage completely...”

Dear ‘Left Communists’, how determined they are, but how little thinking they display. What do they mean by pursuing “a most determined policy of socialisation”?

One may or may not be determined on the question of nationalisation or confiscation, but the whole point is that even the greatest possible ‘determination’ in the world is not enough to pass from nationalisation and confiscation to socialisation. The misfortune of our ‘Lefts’ is that by their naïve, childish combination of the words “most determined policy of socialisation” they reveal their utter failure to understand the crux of the question, the crux of the present situation.

The misfortune of our ‘Lefts’ is that they have missed the very essence of the present situation, the transition from confiscation (the carrying out of which requires above all determination in a politician) to socialisation (the carrying out of which requires a **different** quality in the revolutionary).

Yesterday, the main task of the moment was, as determinedly as possible, to nationalise, confiscate, beat down and crush the bourgeoisie, and put down sabotage. Today, only a blind man could fail to see that we have nationalised, confiscated, beaten down and put down more **than we have had time to count**. The difference between socialisation and simple confiscation is that confiscation can be carried out by ‘determination’ alone, without the ability to calculate and distribute properly, whereas **socialisation cannot be brought about without this ability**. The historical service we have rendered is that yesterday we were determined (and we shall be tomorrow) in confiscating, in beating down the bourgeoisie, in putting down sabotage. To write about this today in “theses on the present situation” is to fix one’s eyes on the past and to fail to understand the transition to the future.

“...To put down sabotage completely...” What a task they have found! Our saboteurs are quite sufficiently “put down”. What we lack is something quite different. We lack the proper **calculation** of which saboteurs to set to work and where to place them. We lack the organisation of our own forces that is needed for, say, one Bolshevik leader or controller to be able to supervise a hundred saboteurs who are now coming into our service. When that is how matters stand, to flaunt such phrases as “a most determined policy of socialisation”, “routing”, and “completely putting down” is just missing the mark. It is typical of the petty-bourgeois revolutionary not to notice that routing, putting down, etc. is not enough for socialism. It is sufficient for a small proprietor enraged against a big proprietor. But no proletarian revolutionary would ever fall into such error.

If the words we have quoted provoke a smile, the following discovery made by the ‘Left Communists’ will provoke nothing short of Homeric<sup>3</sup> laughter. According to them, under the “Bolshevik deviation to the right” the Soviet Republic is threatened with “evolution towards state capitalism”.

They have really frightened us this time!

And with what gusto these ‘Left Communists’ repeat this threatening revelation in their theses and articles... It has not occurred to them that state capitalism would be a **step forward** as compared with the present state of affairs in our Soviet Republic. If in approximately six months’ time state capitalism became established in our Republic, this would be a great success and a sure guarantee that within a year socialism will have gained a permanently firm hold and will have become invincible in our country. I can imagine with what noble indignation a ‘Left Communist’ will recoil from these words, and what ‘devastating criticism’ he will make to the workers against the “Bolshevik deviation to the right”.

What! Transition to state **capitalism** in the Soviet **Socialist** Republic would be a step forward?.. Isn’t this the betrayal of socialism?

Here we come to the root of the **economic** mistake of the ‘Left Communists’. And that is why we must deal with this point in greater detail.

**Firstly:** the ‘Left Communists’ do not understand what kind of **transition** it is from capitalism to socialism that gives us the right and the grounds to call our country the Socialist Republic of Soviets.

**Secondly:** they reveal their petty-bourgeois mentality precisely by **not recognising** the petty-bourgeois element as the **principal** enemy of socialism in our country.

**Thirdly:** in making a bugbear of ‘state capitalism’, they betray their failure to understand that the Soviet state differs from the bourgeois state economically.

Let us examine these three points. No one, I think, in studying the question of the economic system of Russia, has denied its transitional character. Nor, I think, has any Communist denied that the term Socialist Soviet Republic implies the determination of Soviet power to achieve the transition to socialism, and not that the new economic system is recognised as a socialist order.

But what does the word ‘transition’ mean? Does it not mean, as applied to an economy, that the present system contains elements, particles, fragments of **both** capitalism and socialism?

Everyone will admit that it does. But not all who admit this take the trouble to consider what elements actually constitute the various socio-economic structures that exist in Russia at the present time. And this is the crux of the question. Let us enumerate these elements:

- 1) patriarchal, i.e. to a considerable extent natural, peasant farming;
- 2) small commodity production (this includes the majority of those peasants who sell their grain);
- 3) private capitalism;
- 4) state capitalism;
- 5) socialism.

Russia is so vast and so varied that all these different types of socio-economic structures are intermingled. This is what constitutes the specific features of the situation.

The question arises: what elements predominate?

Clearly in a small-peasant country, the petty-bourgeois element predominates and it must predominate, for the great majority of those working the land are small commodity producers. The shell of our state capitalism (grain monopoly, state controlled entrepreneurs and traders, bourgeois co-operators) is pierced now in one place, now in another by **profiteers**, the chief object of profiteering being **grain**. It is in this field that the main struggle is being waged.

Between what elements is this struggle being waged if we are to speak in terms of economic categories such as ‘state capitalism’?

Between the fourth and the fifth in the order in which I have just enumerated them. Of course not. It is not state capitalism that is at war with socialism, but the petty bourgeoisie plus private capitalism fighting together against both state capitalism and socialism.

The petty bourgeoisie oppose **every** kind of state interference, accounting and control, whether it be state capitalist or state socialist. This is an absolutely unquestionable fact of reality, and the root of the economic mistake of the 'Left Communists' is that they have failed to understand it. The profiteer, the commercial racketeer, the disrupter of monopoly — these are our principal internal enemies, the enemies of the economic measures of Soviet power. A hundred and twenty-five years ago it might have been excusable for the French petty bourgeoisie, the most ardent and sincere revolutionaries, to try to crush the profiteer by executing a few of the 'chosen' and by making thunderous declamations.

Today, however, the purely rhetorical attitude to this question assumed by some Left Socialist-Revolutionaries can rouse nothing but disgust and revulsion in every politically conscious revolutionary. We know perfectly well that the economic basis of profiteering is both the small proprietors, who are exceptionally widespread in Russia, and private capitalism, of which **every** petty bourgeois is an agent. We know that the million tentacles of this petty-bourgeois hydra now and again encircle various sections of the workers, that, **instead of state monopoly**, profiteering forces its way into every pore of our social and economic organism.

Those who fail to see this show by their blindness that they are slaves of petty-bourgeois prejudices. This is precisely the case with our 'Left Communists', who in words (and of course in their deepest convictions) are merciless enemies of the petty bourgeoisie, while in deeds they help only the petty bourgeoisie, serve only this section of the population and express only its point of view by fighting — **in April 1918!!** — against... 'state capitalism'. They are wide of the mark!

The petty bourgeoisie have money put away, the few thousand that they made during the war by 'honest' and especially by dishonest means. They are the characteristic economic type that serves as the basis of profiteering and private capitalism. Money is a certificate entitling the possessor to receive social wealth; and a vast section of small proprietors, numbering millions, cling to this certificate and conceal it from the state. They do not believe in socialism or communism, and 'mark time' until the proletarian storm blows over. Either we subordinate the petty bourgeoisie to **our** control and accounting (we can do this if we organise the poor, that is, the majority of the population or semi-proletarians, around the politically conscious proletarian vanguard), or they will overthrow our workers' power as surely and as inevitably as the revolution was overthrown by the Napoleons and Cavaignacs who sprang from this very soil of petty proprietorship.

This is how the question stands. Only the Left Socialist Revolutionaries fail to see this plain and evident truth through their mist of empty phrases about the 'toiling' peasants. But who takes these phrase-mongering Left Socialist-Revolutionaries seriously?

The petty bourgeois who hoards his thousands is an enemy of state capitalism. He wants to employ his thousands just for himself, against the poor, in opposition to any kind of state control. And the sum total of these thousands, amounting to many thousands of millions, forms the base for profiteering, which undermines our socialist construction.

Let us assume that a certain number of workers produce in a few days values equal to 1,000 roubles. Let us then assume that 200 roubles of this total vanishes owing to petty profiteering, various kinds of embezzlement and the evasion by the small proprietors of Soviet decrees and regulations.

Every politically conscious worker will say that if better order and organisation could be obtained at the price of 300 roubles out of the 1,000 roubles he would willingly give 300 roubles instead of 200 roubles, for it will be quite easy under Soviet power to reduce this 'tribute' later on to, say, 100 roubles or 50 roubles, once order and organisation are established and once the petty-bourgeois disruption of state monopoly is completely overcome.

This simple illustration in figures, which I have deliberately simplified to the utmost in order to make it absolutely clear, explains the present **correlation** of state capitalism and socialism. The workers hold state power and have every legal opportunity of taking the whole thousand, without giving up a single kopek, except for socialist purposes. This legal opportunity, which rests upon the actual transition of power to the workers, is an element of socialism.

But in many ways, the small proprietary and private capitalist element undermines this legal position, drags in profiteering, hinders the execution of Soviet decrees.

State capitalism would be a gigantic step forward **even if** we paid **more** than we are paying at present (I took a numerical example deliberately to bring this out more sharply), because it is worth while paying for 'tuition', because it is useful for the workers, because victory over disorder, economic ruin and laxity is the most important thing; because the continuation of the anarchy of small ownership is the greatest, the most serious danger, and it will **certainly** be our ruin (unless we overcome it), whereas not only will the payment of a heavier tribute to state capitalism not ruin us, it will lead us to socialism by the surest road.

When the working class has learned how to defend the state system against the anarchy of small ownership, when it has learned to organise large-scale production on a national scale, along state capitalist lines, it will hold, if I may use the expression, all the trump cards, and the consolidation of socialism will be assured. In the first place, **economically**, state capitalism is immeasurably superior to our present economic system. In the second place, there is nothing terrible in it for Soviet power, for the Soviet state is a state in which the power of the workers and the poor is assured. The 'Left Communists' failed to understand these unquestionable truths, which, of course, a 'Left Socialist-Revolutionary', who cannot connect any ideas on political economy in his head in general, will never understand, but which every Marxist **must** admit. It is not even worthwhile arguing with a 'Left Socialist-Revolutionary'. It is enough to point to him as a repulsive example of a windbag. But the 'Left Communists' **must** be argued with because it is Marxists who are making a mistake, and an analysis of their mistake will help the **working class** to find the true road.

## IV

To make things even clearer, let us first of all take the most concrete example of state capitalism. Everybody knows what this example is. It is Germany. Here we have 'the last word' in modern large-scale capitalist engineering and planned organisation, **subordinated to Junker-bourgeois imperialism**. Cross out the words in italics, and in place of the militarist, Junker, bourgeois, imperialist **state** put **also a state**, but of a different social type, of a different class content — a **Soviet** state, that is, a proletarian state, and you will have the **sum total** of the conditions necessary for socialism. Socialism is inconceivable without large-scale capitalist engineering based on the latest discoveries of modern science. It is inconceivable without planned state organisation, which keeps tens of millions of people to the strictest observance of a unified standard in production and distribution. We Marxists have always spoken of this, and it is not worth while wasting two seconds talking to people who do not understand **even** this (anarchists and a good half of the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries).

At the same time socialism is inconceivable unless the proletariat is the ruler of the state. This also is ABC. And history (which nobody, except Menshevik blockheads of the first order, ever expected to bring about 'complete' socialism smoothly, gently, easily and simply) has taken such a peculiar course that it **has given birth** in 1918 to two unconnected halves of socialism existing side by side like two future chickens in the single shell of international imperialism. In 1918 Germany and Russia have become the most striking embodiment of the material realisation of the economic, the productive and the socio-economic conditions for socialism, on the one hand, and the political conditions, on the other.

A successful proletarian revolution in Germany would immediately and very easily smash any shell of imperialism (which unfortunately is made of the best steel, and hence cannot be broken by the efforts of **any** ...chick) and would bring about the victory of world socialism for certain, without any difficulty, or with slight difficulty — if, of course, by ‘difficulty’ we mean difficult on a world historical scale, and not in the parochial philistine sense.

While the revolution in Germany is still slow in ‘coming forth’, our task is to study the state capitalism of the Germans, to spare **no effort** in copying it and not shrink from adopting **dictatorial** methods to hasten the copying of it. Our task is to hasten this copying even more than Peter hastened the copying of Western culture by barbarian Russia, and we must not hesitate to use barbarous methods in fighting barbarism. If there are anarchists and Left Socialist-Revolutionaries (I recall off-hand the speeches of Karelín and Ghe at the meeting of the Central Executive Committee) who indulge in Narcissus-like reflections and say that it is unbecoming for us revolutionaries to take lessons from German imperialism, there is only one thing we can say in reply: the revolution that took these people seriously would perish irrevocably (and deservedly). At present, petty-bourgeois capitalism prevails in Russia, and it is **one and the same road** that leads from it to **both** large-scale state capitalism and to socialism, **through one and the same** intermediary station called “national accounting and control of production and distribution”. Those who fail to understand this are committing an unpardonable mistake in economics. Either they do not know the facts of life, do not see what actually exists and are unable to look the truth in the face, or they confine themselves to abstractly comparing ‘capitalism’ with ‘socialism’ and fail to study the concrete forms and stages of the transition that is taking place in our country. Let it be said in parenthesis that this is the very theoretical mistake which misled the best people in the *Novaya Zhizn* [New Life] and *Vpered* [Forward] camp. The worst and the mediocre of these, owing to their stupidity and spinelessness, tag along behind the bourgeoisie, of whom they stand in awe. The best of them have failed to understand that it was not without reason that the teachers of socialism spoke of a whole period of transition from capitalism to socialism and emphasised the “prolonged birth-pangs” of the new society. And this new society is again an abstraction which can come into being only by passing through a series of varied, imperfect concrete attempts to create this or that socialist state. It is because Russia cannot advance from the economic situation now existing here without traversing the ground which is **common** to state capitalism and to socialism (national accounting and control) that the attempt to frighten others as well as themselves with “evolution **towards** state capitalism” (*Kommunist* No. 1, p. 8, col.1) is utter theoretical nonsense. This is letting one’s thoughts wander away from the true road of evolution, and failing to understand what this road is. In practice, it is equivalent to pulling us back to small proprietary capitalism. In order to convince the reader that this is not the first time I have given this ‘high’ appreciation of state capitalism and that I gave it **before** the Bolsheviks seized power I take the liberty of quoting the following passage from my pamphlet *The Impending Catastrophe and How to Combat It*, written in September 1917.

**“...try to substitute for the Junker-capitalist state, for the landowner-capitalist state, a revolutionary-democratic state, i.e. a state which in a revolutionary way abolishes all privileges and does not fear to introduce the fullest democracy in a revolutionary way. You will find that, given a really revolutionary-democratic state, state-monopoly capitalism inevitably and unavoidably implies a step, and more than one step, towards socialism! For if a huge capitalist undertaking becomes a monopoly, it means that it serves the whole nation. If it has become a state monopoly, it means that the state (i.e. the armed organisation of the population, the workers and peasants above all, provided there is revolutionary democracy) directs the whole undertaking. In whose interest? Either in the interest of the landowners and capitalists, in which case we have not a revolutionary-democratic, but a reactionary-bureaucratic state, an imperialist republic. Or in the interest of revolutionary democracy — and then it is a step towards socialism.”**

**"For socialism is merely the next step forward from state capitalist monopoly... state-monopoly capitalism is complete material preparation for socialism, the threshold of socialism, a rung on the ladder of history between which and the rung called socialism there are no intermediate rungs."**

**V.I. Lenin, The Impending Catastrophe and How to Combat It** (September 1917)

LCW Vol.25 pp.361-363

Please note that this was written when Kerensky was in power, that we are discussing **not** the dictatorship of the proletariat, **not** the socialist state, but the revolutionary-democratic state.

Is it not clear that the **higher** we stand on this political ladder, **the more completely** we incorporate the socialist state and the dictatorship of the proletariat in the Soviets, **the less** ought we to fear 'state capitalism'? Is it not clear that from the **material**, economic and productive point of view, we are not yet on the threshold of socialism? Is it not clear that we cannot pass through the door of socialism without crossing 'the threshold' we have not yet reached?

From whatever side we approach the question, only one conclusion can be drawn: the argument of the 'Left Communists' about the 'state capitalism' which is alleged to be threatening us is an utter mistake in economics and is evident proof that they are complete slaves of petty-bourgeois ideology.

## V

The following is also extremely instructive. When we argued with Comrade Bukharin in the Central Executive Committee, he declared, among other things, that on the question of high salaries for specialists "we" (evidently meaning the 'Left Communists') were "more to the right than Lenin", for in this case "we" saw no deviation from principle, bearing in mind Marx's words that under certain conditions it is more expedient for the working class to "buy out the whole lot of them" (namely, the whole lot of capitalists, i.e. **to buy** from the bourgeoisie the land, factories, works and other means of production). This extremely interesting statement shows, in the first place, that Bukharin is head and shoulders above the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries and anarchists, that he is by no means hopelessly stuck in the mud of phrase-making, but on the contrary is making efforts to think out the **concrete** difficulties of the transition — the painful and difficult transition — from capitalism to socialism. In the second place, this statement makes Bukharin's mistake still more glaring. Let us consider Marx's idea carefully. Marx was talking about the Britain of the seventies of the last century, about the culminating point in the development of pre-monopoly capitalism. At that time Britain was a country in which militarism and bureaucracy were less pronounced than in any other, a country in which there was the greatest possibility of a 'peaceful' victory for socialism in the sense of the workers 'buying out' the bourgeoisie. And Marx said that under certain conditions the workers would certainly not refuse to buy out the bourgeoisie. Marx did not commit himself, or the future leaders of the socialist revolution, to matters of form, to ways and means of bringing about the revolution. He understood perfectly well that a vast number of new problems would arise, that the whole situation would change in the course of the revolution, and that the situation would change **radically** and **often** in the course of revolution.

Well, and what about Soviet Russia? Is it not clear that **after** the seizure of power by the proletariat and **after** the crushing of the exploiters' armed resistance and sabotage, **certain** conditions prevail which correspond to those which might have existed in Britain half a century ago had a peaceful transition to socialism begun there?

The subordination of the capitalists to the workers in Britain would have been assured at that time owing to the following circumstances:

- (1) the absolute preponderance of workers, of proletarians, in the population owing to the absence of a peasantry (in Britain in the seventies there was hope of an extremely rapid spread of socialism among agricultural labourers);
- (2) the excellent organisation of the proletariat in trade unions (Britain was at that time the leading country in the world in this respect);
- (3) the comparatively high level of culture of the proletariat, which had been trained by centuries of development of political liberty;
- (4) the old habit of the well-organised British capitalists of settling political and economic questions by compromise — at that time the British capitalists were better organised than the capitalists of any country in the world (this superiority has now passed to Germany). These were the circumstances which at that time gave rise to the idea that the **peaceful** subjugation of the British capitalists by the workers was possible.

In our country, at the present time, this subjugation is assured by certain premises of fundamental significance (the victory in October and the suppression, from October to February, of the capitalists' armed resistance and sabotage). But **instead of** the absolute preponderance of workers, of proletarians, in the population, and **instead of** a high degree of organisation among them, the important factor of victory in Russia was the support the proletarians received from the poor peasants and those who had experienced sudden ruin. Finally, we have neither a high degree of culture nor the habit of compromise. If these concrete conditions are carefully considered, it will become clear that we can and ought to employ two methods **simultaneously**. On the one hand we must ruthlessly suppress\* the uncultured capitalists who refuse to have anything to do with "state capitalism" or to consider any form of compromise, and who continue by means of profiteering, by bribing the poor peasants, etc. to hinder the realisation of the measures. In this case also we must look truth in the face. We still have too little of that ruthlessness which is indispensable for the success of socialism, and we have too little not because we lack determination. We have sufficient determination. What we do lack is the ability to **catch** quickly enough a sufficient number of profiteers, racketeers and capitalists — the people who infringe the measures passed by the Soviets. The ability to do this can only be acquired by establishing accounting and control! Another thing is that the courts are not sufficiently firm. Instead of sentencing people who take bribes to be shot, they sentence them to six months' imprisonment. These two defects have the same social root: the influence of the petty-bourgeois element, its flabbiness. taken by the Soviets. On the other hand, we must use the **method of compromise**, or of buying off the cultured capitalists who agree to "state capitalism", who are capable of putting it into practice and who are useful to the proletariat as intelligent and experienced organisers of the **largest** types of enterprises, which actually supply products to tens of millions of people. Bukharin is an extremely well-read Marxist economist. He therefore remembered that Marx was profoundly right when he taught the workers the importance of preserving the organisation of large-scale production, precisely for the purpose of facilitating the transition to socialism. Marx taught that (as an exception, and Britain was then an exception) the idea was conceivable of **paying the capitalists well**, of buying them off, **if** the circumstances were such as to compel the capitalists to submit peacefully and to come over to socialism in a cultured and organised fashion, provided they were paid.

But Bukharin went astray because he did not go deep enough into the specific features of the situation in Russia at the present time — an exceptional situation when we, the Russian proletariat, are in **advance** of any Britain or any Germany as regards our political order, as regards the strength of the workers' political power, but are **behind** the most backward West-European country as regards organising a good state capitalism, as regards our level of culture and the degree of material and productive preparedness for the introduction of socialism.

Is it not clear that the specific nature of the present situation creates the need for a specific type of "buying out" which the workers must offer to the most cultured, the most skilled, the most capable organisers among the capitalists who are ready to enter the service of Soviet power and to help honestly in organising "state" production on the largest possible scale? Is it not clear that in this specific situation we must make, every effort to avoid two mistakes, both of which are of a petty-bourgeois nature?

On the one hand, it would be a fatal mistake to declare that since there is a discrepancy between our economic forces and our political strength, it follows that we should not have seized power. Such an argument can be advanced only by a 'man in a muffler', who forgets that there will always be such a discrepancy, that it always exists in the development of nature as well as in the development of society, that only by a series of attempts — each of which, taken by itself, will be one-sided and will suffer from certain inconsistencies — will complete socialism be created by the revolutionary co-operation of the proletarians of **all** countries. On the other hand, it would be an obvious mistake to give free rein to ranters and phrase-mongers who allow themselves to be carried away by the 'dazzling' revolutionary spirit, but who are incapable of sustained, thoughtful and deliberate revolutionary work which takes into account the most difficult stages of transition.

Fortunately, the history of the development of the revolutionary parties and of the struggle that Bolshevism waged against them has left us a heritage of sharply defined types, of which the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries and anarchists are striking examples of bad revolutionaries. They are now shouting hysterically, choking and shouting themselves hoarse, against the 'compromise' of the 'Right Bolsheviks'. But they are incapable of thinking **what** is bad in 'compromise', and **why** 'compromise' has been justly condemned by history and the course of the revolution.

Compromise in Kerensky's time meant the surrender of power to the imperialist bourgeoisie, and the question of power is the fundamental question of every revolution. Compromise by a section of the Bolsheviks in October 1917 either meant that they feared the proletariat seizing power or wished to **share** power equally, not only with unreliable fellow-travellers like the Left Socialist Revolutionaries, but also with the enemies, with the Chernovists and the Mensheviks. The latter would inevitably have hindered us in fundamental matters, such as the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly, the ruthless suppression of the Bogayevskys, the universal setting up of the Soviet institutions, and in every act of confiscation. Now power has been seized, retained and consolidated in the hands of a single party, the party of the proletariat, even without the unreliable fellow-travellers. To speak of compromise at the present time when there is no question, and can be none, of sharing **power**, of renouncing the dictatorship of the proletariat over the bourgeoisie, is merely to repeat, parrot-fashion, words which have been learned by heart but not understood. To describe as 'compromise' the fact that, having arrived at a situation when we can and must rule the country, we try to win over to our side, not grudging the cost, the most skilled people capitalism has trained and to take them into our service against small proprietary disintegration, reveals a total incapacity to think out the economic tasks of socialist construction. Therefore, while it is to Comrade Bukharin's credit that on the Central Executive Committee he 'felt ashamed' of the 'service' he had been rendered by Karel and Ghe, nevertheless, as far as the 'Left Communist' **trend** is concerned, the reference to their political comrades-in-arms still remains a serious warning.

Take, for example, *Znamya Truda*, the organ of the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries, of 25<sup>th</sup> April 1918, which proudly declares,

**“The present position of our party coincides with that of another trend in Bolshevism (Bukharin, Pokrovsky and others)”.**

Or take the Menshevik *Vpered* of the same date, which contains among other articles the following ‘thesis’ by the notorious Menshevik, Isuv\*:

**“The policy of Soviet power, from the very outset devoid of a genuinely proletarian character, has lately pursued more and more openly a course of compromise with the bourgeoisie and has assumed an obviously anti-working class character. On the pretext of nationalising industry, they are pursuing a policy of establishing industrial trusts, and on the pretext of restoring the productive forces of the country, they are attempting to abolish the eight-hour day, to introduce piece-work and the Taylor system<sup>3</sup>, black lists and victimisation. This policy threatens to deprive the proletariat of its most important economic gains and to make it a victim of unrestricted exploitation by the bourgeoisie.”**

Isn’t it marvellous?

Kerensky’s friends, who, together with him, conducted an imperialist war for the sake of the secret treaties, which promised annexations to the Russian capitalists, the colleagues of Tsereteli, who, on 11<sup>th</sup> June 1917, threatened to disarm the workers, the Lieberdans, who screened the rule of the bourgeoisie with high-sounding phrases — these are the very people who accuse Soviet power of ‘compromising with the bourgeoisie’, of ‘establishing trusts’ (that is, of establishing state capitalism!), of introducing the Taylor system. Indeed, the Bolsheviks ought to present Isuv with a medal, and his thesis ought to be exhibited in every workers’ club and union as an example of the **provocative speeches of the bourgeoisie**. The workers know these Lieberdans, Tseretelis and Isuvs very well now. They know them from experience, and it would be extremely useful indeed for the workers to think over the reason why **such lackeys of the bourgeoisie** should incite the workers to resist the Taylor system and the ‘establishment of trusts’. Class-conscious workers will carefully compare the ‘thesis’ of Isuv, a friend of the Lieberdans and the Tseretelis, with the following thesis of the ‘Left Communists’.

**“The introduction of labour discipline in connection with the restoration of capitalist management of industry cannot considerably increase the productivity of labour, but it will diminish the class initiative, activity and organisation of the proletariat. It threatens to enslave the working class; it will rouse discontent among the backward elements as well as among the vanguard of the proletariat. In order to implement this system in the face of the hatred prevailing among the proletariat against the ‘capitalist saboteurs’, the Communist Party would have to rely on the petty bourgeoisie, as against the workers, and in this way would ruin itself as the party of the proletariat”**

*Kommunist* No. 1, p.8 col. 2

This is most striking proof that the ‘Lefts’ have fallen into the trap, have allowed themselves to be provoked by the Isuvs and the other Judases of capitalism. It serves as a good lesson for the workers, who know that it is precisely the vanguard of the proletariat which stands for the introduction of labour discipline, and that it is precisely the petty bourgeoisie which is doing its utmost to disrupt this discipline. Speeches such as the thesis of the ‘Lefts’ quoted above are a terrible disgrace and imply the complete renunciation of communism in practice and complete desertion to the camp of the petty bourgeoisie. “In connection with the restoration of capitalist management” — these are the words with which the ‘Left Communists’ hope to defend themselves.

A perfectly useless defence, because, in the first place, when putting management in the hands of capitalists Soviet power appoints workers' Commissars or workers' committees who watch the manager's every step, who learn from his management experience and who not only have the right to appeal against his orders, but can secure his removal through the organs of Soviet power.

In the second place, management is entrusted to capitalists only for executive functions while at work, the conditions of which are determined by the Soviet power, by which they may be abolished or revised. In the third place, management is entrusted by the Soviet power to capitalists not as capitalists, but as technicians or organisers for higher salaries. And the workers know very well that 99% of the organisers and first-class technicians of really large-scale and giant enterprises, trusts or other establishments belong to the capitalist class. But it is precisely these people whom we, the proletarian party, must appoint to "manage" the labour process and the organisation of production, for there are no other people who have practical experience in this matter.

The workers, having grown out of the infancy when they could have been misled by 'Left' phrases or petty-bourgeois loose thinking, are advancing towards socialism precisely through the capitalist management of trusts, through gigantic machine industry, through enterprises which have a turnover of several millions per year — only through such a system of production and such enterprises.

The workers are not petty bourgeois. They are not afraid of large-scale 'state capitalism', they prize it as their **proletarian** weapon which **their Soviet** power will use against small proprietary disintegration and disorganisation. This is incomprehensible only to the declassed and consequently thoroughly petty-bourgeois intelligentsia, typified among the 'Left Communists' by Osinsky, when he writes in their journal:

**"...The whole initiative in the organisation and management of any enterprise will belong to the 'organisers of the trusts'. We are not going to teach them, or make rank-and-file workers out of them, we are going to learn from them"**

(*Kommunist* No. 1, p.14, col.2).

The attempted irony in this passage is aimed at my words "learn socialism from the organisers of the trusts". Osinsky thinks this is funny. He wants to make 'rank-and-file workers' out of the organisers of the trusts. If this had been written by a man of the age of which the poet wrote "But fifteen years, not more?..." there would have been nothing surprising about it. But it is somewhat strange to hear such things from a Marxist who has learned that socialism is impossible unless it makes use of the achievements of the engineering and culture created by large-scale capitalism. There is no trace of Marxism in this. No. Only those are worthy of the name of Communists who understand that it is **impossible** to create or introduce socialism **without learning** from the organisers of the trusts. For socialism is not a figment of the imagination, but the assimilation and application by the proletarian vanguard, which has seized power, of what has been created by the trusts. We, the party of the proletariat, have **no other way** of acquiring the ability to organise large-scale production on trust lines, as trusts are organised, except by acquiring it from first-class capitalist experts. We have nothing to teach them, unless we undertake the childish task of "teaching" the bourgeois intelligentsia socialism. We must not teach them, but expropriate them (as is being done in Russia "determinedly" enough), **put a stop** to their sabotage, **subordinate** them as a section or group to Soviet power.

We, on the other hand, if we are not Communists of infantile age and infantile understanding, must learn from them, and there is something to learn, for the party of the proletariat and its vanguard have **no experience** of independent work in organising giant enterprises which serve the needs of scores of millions of people.

The best workers in Russia have realised this. They have begun to learn from the capitalist organisers, the managing engineers and the technicians. They have begun to learn steadily and cautiously with easy things, gradually passing on to the more difficult things. If things are going more slowly in the iron and steel and engineering industries, it is because they present greater difficulties. But the textile and tobacco workers and tanners are not afraid of 'state capitalism' or of "learning from the organisers of the trusts", as the declassed petty-bourgeois intelligentsia are. These workers in the central leading institutions like Chief Leather Committee and Central Textile Committee take their place by the side of the capitalists, **learn from them**, establish trusts, establish 'state capitalism', which under Soviet power represents the threshold of socialism, the condition of its firm victory.

This work of the advanced workers of Russia, together with their work of introducing labour discipline, has begun and is proceeding quietly, unobtrusively, without the noise and fuss so necessary to some 'Lefts'. It is proceeding very cautiously and gradually, taking into account the lessons of practical experience. This hard work, the work of **learning** practically how to build up large-scale production, is the guarantee that we are on the right road, the guarantee that the class-conscious workers in Russia are carrying on the struggle against small proprietary disintegration and disorganisation, against petty-bourgeois indiscipline — the guarantee of the victory of communism.

## Notes

**1. LEFT COMMUNISTS:** a group led by Bukharin, Radek and Pyatakov and formed in January 1918 during the controversy over concluding peace with Germany. The 'Left Communists', like the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries, opposed peace negotiations and upheld the adventuristic policy of involving the young Soviet Republic, which as yet had no army, in a "revolutionary war" against imperialist Germany and attempted to impose on the Party a policy that would have led to the destruction of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Trotsky pursued an intermediate line of "not waging war but not concluding peace either". The 'Left Communists' launched an open campaign against the Party line and caused disorganisation by resigning from their posts in the Party and the Soviets. Lenin and his supporters had a hard struggle in the Central Committee against both Trotsky and the 'Left Communists' to achieve a decision in favour of concluding peace with Germany and thus save the young Soviet Republic from destruction.

**2. KOMMUNIST:** There were a number of publications which used this name. The one referred to here was a daily newspaper produced by the 'Left Communists' in Petrograd from 5<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup> March 1918 as the "Organ of the St. Petersburg Committee and the St. Petersburg Area Committee of the RSDLP". Eleven issues appeared. Publication was ceased by decision of the Petrograd City Party Conference of 20<sup>th</sup> March 1918. The Conference stated that the policy expressed in *Kommunist*, was deeply erroneous and failed to reflect the attitude of the Petrograd organisation of the Communist Party. The Conference declared *Petrogradskaya Pravda* to be the organ of the Petrograd Party organisation in place of *Kommunist*.

**3. TAYLOR SYSTEM:** The system of time and motion study introduced by the American, Frederick Taylor (1856-1915) in order to increase productivity. Taylor called it 'scientific management'.

**4. ISUV:** I.A. Isuv (1879-1920), M.I. Lieber (1880-1937), F.I. Dan (1871-1947) and I. Tsereteli (1881-1959) were all Mensheviks who supported the Kerensky government overthrown by the Bolsheviks in October 1917. Lieber and Dan were so close that Lenin habitually referred to them as the Lieberdans.

# THE GREAT OCTOBER SOCIALIST REVOLUTION AND THE LIBERATION MOVEMENTS OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

The Great October Socialist Revolution was one of the greatest epoch changing events of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, described by the American journalist John Reed as the “Ten days that shook the world”. Not surprisingly, visiting Moscow in 1927 J.T. Gumede the then President of the African National Congress (ANC) was to remark “I have seen the new Jerusalem”.

The Great October Socialist Revolution gave birth to the USSR which adopted an anti-colonial foreign policy in support of the liberation movements in southern Africa, the authentic five: ANC, ZAPU, FRELIMO, MPLA, SWAPO plus the PAIGC in west Africa. These received direct material and military support from the USSR and other socialist countries. These movements also received diplomatic support at the UN from the socialist countries. It is therefore not surprising that most of the nationalists started off as trade unionists who later graduated to nationalism. Such was the case with Joshua Nkomo, Joseph Msika and J.B. Marks.

Often there is a misconception that the socialist countries only provided military aid to the liberation movements; however the USSR and other socialist countries offered scholarships aimed at producing manpower for the development of these countries post-independence and cutting dependence on western skills. The Aswan Dam in Egypt and many other projects in the third world were built with Soviet assistance. Cuba for example sent its doctors to Angola, Mozambique and Ethiopia among many other countries.

I spoke to some ex-ZIPRA cadres who received military training in the USSR in order to get a perception of their experiences there; their training combined stints at the Perevalnoye military centre located on the outskirts of Simferopol on the Crimean peninsula with academic and technical training at the Northern Training Camp in Moscow and other locations. The trainees visited far flung cities and also agricultural co-operatives and monuments. While the cadres had short stints (about a year) their varied experiences are worth sharing with *Vanguard* readers.

Some were trained at the outset of the armed struggle when sabotage was the main strategy, while for others it was in the aftermath of ZAPU’s internal crisis when military action was paralysed [early 1970s]; still others trained in the USSR at the height of ZAPU’s military expansion in the late 1970s, and ZIPRA was consolidating a powerful conventional “military man”. These were among others Dumiso Dabengwa who was to become head of the National Security Organisation (NSO) whose group trained in the 60s, Abel Mazinyane head of ZIPRA military intelligence, Zephaniah Moyo who trained in 1977 and became the NSO Deputy Director; Lazarus Ncube, the Matiwaza brothers and Ronnie Patel (one of the few Zimbabwean Asians to have joined the struggle).

With no idea of what to expect in the Soviet Union, it held a certain enigmatic appeal. Dabengwa’s group of six arrived in Moscow in 1964 from Lusaka via Dar-es-Salam and Sudan. On arrival at the airport they were met by hosts bearing warm coats. The first encounter with the USSR winter weather formed a visceral experience for most of the trainees often coupled with accounts of the advice given by their hosts on how to ease the cold.

In 1977 Zephania Moyo arrived in Moscow, he also recalls the “big coat” he was given and the “balaclava”. Abel Mazinyane and his group arrived in the Soviet Union in 1972; he and his fellow trainees were grateful for the thoughtfulness of their hosts who gave them coats and instructed them to stay in the plane till a minibus drove to the door of their aircraft. The literal and metaphorical warmth of this welcome was reinforced shortly thereafter by what according to Zephania Moyo and Mazinyane was a sumptuous meal. A bowl of soup and black bread part of a three course meal was a culture shock for the guerrillas fresh from the camps.

Just as the cold, the snow and the food marked the Soviet Union as different from Rhodesia and varied African countries that had hosted them, so was the experience of arriving in a country that was predominantly white. In the first interactions racial differences cast a shadow of suspicion; particularly the routine medical examinations and incineration of one's clothes. Seen against the background of the trainees experience with white Rhodesians view of black hygiene this did not always go down well with the trainees. However, though common, these initial reactions did not last long as the business of training took centre stage and the interactions with Soviet instructors and society broadened the trainees' experience and reshaped their views.

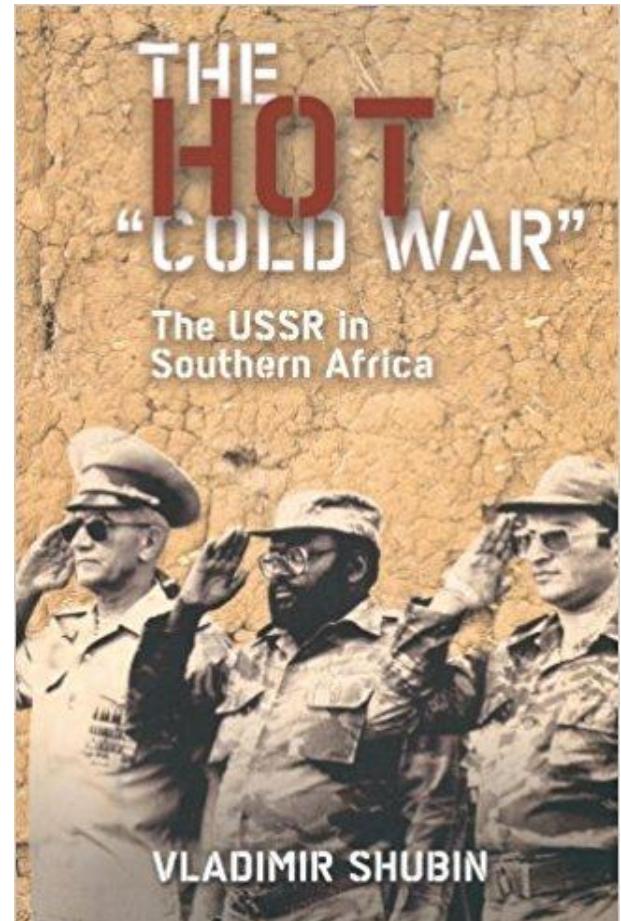
In his book the *The Hot Cold War: the Soviet Union in Southern Africa*, Vladimir Shubin states how the training of early ANC cadres of the early 60s sought to meet the needs appropriate to the southern African movement. To do this the USSR drew on its own experience of World War II, this is a fact attested to by Dumiso Dabengwa. The cadres that came later were full of praise and adulation of the advanced Soviet technology and weaponry. But all spoke of the importance of adapting Soviet weapons to suit the climate and terrain of southern Africa. The cadres also believed in the genuine nature of the Soviet solidarity because the military instruction was also followed by significant flows of weaponry. As Mazinyane puts it, "The Soviets went out of their way to help us, sometimes we had weapons exceeding those of our host armies." All the trainees felt they had the full support and sympathy of their Soviet hosts as was demonstrated by an episode they narrated in which their hosts showed concern for them as people not just from the food and warm clothing but generous stipends too.

Marshall Mpofu for instance stated how his 25 rouble monthly allowance was money enough for him to buy his first suit. The ZAPU cadres relate how Soviet support of this kind was also extended to the ANC, SWAPO, FRELIMO, MPLA and PAIGC.

The cadres emphasised how their ideological formation was based on thoughts they absorbed in class through learning about Marxism-Leninism and Soviet history; and through their experience of living socialism — that is the interactions with and observation of Soviet society. In both cases the views they formed were shaped by a comparative frame of their political and social experience in Rhodesia.

Soviet history particularly the Great Patriotic War [World War II] formed a significant element of their education. Through the use of film and field trips, Soviet instructors created a powerful sense of suffering and sacrifice. This was also literally embodied by those instructors who were veterans of the Great Patriotic War. Major General Fyodor Fedirenko according to Shubin was for many years the head of the Northern Training School. He was a former World War II guerrilla commander in the Crimea.

The interviewees Dabengwa and Mazinyane in particular, spoke of the impressive sacrifice they learnt of the 20 million lives lost. They learnt of how the Germans were stopped at Volkas, not far from Moscow. The trainees were impressed by the dedication shown by the Soviet partisan forces and were inspired to make similar sacrifice.



Zephania Moyo, recounted how he in 1977 travelled to a series of historical sites including a visit to Belarus to the home and grave site of Felix Dzerzhinsky, the man who established the Cheka, the Soviet State Security Force in 1917. Moyo's group was taken to Khatyn the site of the notorious Nazi massacre. This was meant to emphasise the horror of Nazi occupation. Another moving visit was to a site where the martyr wrote with their blood "we will never surrender". For Marshall Mpofu, Lazarus Ncube and Stool Matiwaza the message and lesson learnt were clear — if Soviet heroism could achieve so much against monumental odds so could Zimbabwe.

The engagement with Soviet history was not just contextualized for military training of political propaganda. While ideological lessons were couched in that history, they were complemented by social interaction and observation. By far the most compelling lessons for these comrades were devised from encounter with living socialism. They were moved by contrasts between Soviet egalitarianism and provision for citizen's needs and the Rhodesian unequal discriminatory society.

There was much to emulate in the Soviet Union, the absence of a rigid social structure as a result of state action was one such example. Mazinyane, recalled how poor *babushkas* [gogos, grannies] were able to fly on planes. For him the salient lessons were ordinary people having access to things. For him it reinforced the ZAPU party line that they were fighting a system not a race.

Zephania Moyo who had been a policeman in Rhodesia recalled how he was treated by his white counterparts yet in the USSR he could move freely. Ronnie Patel who spent many years in Moscow underlined the contrast between the racism of recent times and its absence then.

The visits to the co-operatives were singled out by all the interviewees as a source of inspiration for their ambition for a future Zimbabwe. Lazarus Ncube visited an apple producing co-operative farm in the Ukraine. Dabengwa recalled a trip to an agricultural co-operative in Azerbaijan. For Moyo and Dabengwa for example, co-operatives were the future for Zimbabwe, a belief they still hold to this day. Ronnie Patel felt that without his Soviet exposure he would just be another Indian making money. Marshal Mpofu and Lazarus Ncube singled out their commitment to social justice as a legacy to their time in the USSR.

The lasting ability of episodes of Soviet training to shape lives is quite striking. In the case of these ZIPRA cadres the most powerful influences derived less from classroom ideology than from a myriad of interactions of interactions with Soviet citizens and military instructors, their direct observation of the Soviet Union and their understanding of Soviet history and the great sacrifices made in defending the Soviet Union — all seen through the Rhodesian lens.



**ZIPRA soldiers examining the remains of a Rhodesian Alouette III helicopter**

## Conclusion

Military training and exposure to living socialism certainly had a powerful and lasting effect on the interviewees' lives. Their accounts demonstrate the wide ranging and sometimes surprising nature of exchanges that took place in a variety of interlocutors, from urban citizens to members of agricultural co-operatives to veterans of the Great Patriotic War. Visits to monuments and viewing films left vivid memories of Soviet sacrifice and heroism, and sat along the ideological lessons acquired from classroom settings and more technically advanced military training.

When pressed to identify undiluted Soviet influences the interviewees cited the title of Commissar, the role played by anti-aircraft weaponry, and the adoption of certain intelligence practises and devices. They also singled out the idea of co-operative production — co-operatives were instituted in Zambia — in guerrilla assembly points at the end of the war and in ZAPU businesses and farms after 1980.

The lessons for the ZCP are that as these cadres indicate, the October Revolution has profound lessons for us; that we must modify some of these experience to suit Zimbabwean conditions but also draw from the diverse experiences of Cuba and China as well from countries on our continent, from Algeria and Ghana, also from frontline states and from other working class parties.

Viva Socialism, Viva!

**Benny Moyo**  
**International Secretary**  
**Zimbabwe Communist Party**



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Our next issue, scheduled for 1<sup>st</sup> January 2018, will have the title *National Economic Dialogue*. It will focus on the ZCP programme for 2018. Therefore your articles will not only be useful, they will be crucial.

### **Editor**

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**From:**  
**How the Steel  
was Tempered**  
**(1934)**



*Man's dearest possession is life. It is given to him but once, and he must live it so as to feel no torturing regrets for wasted years, never know the burning shame of a mean and petty past; so live that, dying, he might say: all my life, all my strength were given to the finest cause in all the world — the fight for the Liberation of Mankind*

*by Nikolai Ostrovsky (1904-1936)*