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Communist Tactics of Revolution

The Role of the Communist Party
in the Proletarian Revolution.

Theses adopted by the Second Congress of
the Third International, July 1920.



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THESES OF THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL

On the Role of the Communist Party in the Prole- tarian Revolution.

The first year's activity of the Communist International was devoted principally to propaganda and spreading of Communist ideas. At the present moment, before the Second Congress of the Communist International, the world-wide organisation of the proletariat is entering a new phase: the Communist International is entering the period of organisation and construction. Hitherto in the various countries there existed only Communist tendencies amongst the workers. At the present moment, in nearly every country where there is a serious working-class movement, we have no longer tendencies, but Communist organisations and parties. This circumstance must move the Second Congress of the International to take up a perfectly clear and exact position on the subject of the role of the Communist Party before and after the conquest of power by the working-class. Amongst certain supporters of Communism (the "Left" movement in Germany, the supporters of the I.W.W. in America, certain groups of revolutionary Syndicalists and Anarchists) there may be noticed an insufficient estimate of the role of the Communist Party, as such, and even a direct denial of the necessity of the existence of a Communist Party. This will serve as an additional motive to impel the Second Congress of the Communist International clearly and definitely to deal with the questions stated above.

(1) The Communist Party is a section of the working class. To be more precise, its most advanced, its

most class-conscious, and, therefore, its most revolutionary section. The Communist Party is created by the natural selection of the best, most class-conscious, most devoted, most far-seeing workers. The Communist Party has no interests distinct from those of the working class. The Communist Party is distinguished from the general mass of the workers by the fact that it reviews the whole historical development of the working-class in its entirety, and strives, at every turning-point in that path, to defend the interests not of separate groups, not of separate professions, but of the working class as a whole. The Communist Party is that lever of political organisation with the help of which the foremost section of the working class guides along the right road the whole mass of the proletariat and the semi-proletariat.

(2) Until the time when state power has been conquered by the proletariat, until the time when the proletariat has once and for all firmly established its supremacy, and has secured the working class against a bourgeois restoration—until that time the Communist Party will naturally include in its organised ranks only a minority of the workers. Until the seizure of power, and in the transitional period, the Communist Party may, under favourable circumstances, enjoy an undivided ideo-political influence on all the proletarian and semi-proletarian elements of the population, but cannot unite them in an organised fashion within its ranks. Only when the proletarian dictatorship has deprived the capitalist class of such mighty weapon as the press, the school, Parliament, the Church, the apparatus of government, etc., only when the final defeat of the bourgeois order becomes apparent to all—only then will all, or nearly all, the workers begin to enter the ranks of the Communist Party.

(3) The idea of a party must be very strictly distinguished from the idea of a class. The members of the "Christian" and the liberal professional unions of Germany, England, and other countries are un-

doubtedly a section of the working class. The more or less considerable masses of workers who still support the Schiedemanns, Gompers, and Co., are undoubtedly a section of the working class. In given historical circumstances there may be present in the working class reactionary strains of large numerical strength. The problem of a Communism does not consist in the party's adapting itself to these backward sections of the working class, but in raising the whole working class to the level of its Communist vanguard. The confusion of these two ideas—party and class—may lead to the greatest possible mistakes and chaos. Thus, for example, it is clear that, in spite of the mood or the prejudices of a certain section of the working class masses during the imperialist war, the duty of the working-class party was, in spite of all, to come out against those prejudices, defending the historical interests of the proletariat—interests which demanded on the part of the proletarian party a declaration of war against war.

Thus, for example, at the beginning of the imperialist war in 1914, the social-traitors of all countries, supporting the bourgeoisie of "their" country, with common accord adduced in their defence the claim that such was the will of the working class. And they forgot that, even if this were so, the duty of the proletarian party, under such conditions, was to declare itself against the opinion of the majority of the workers and to defend the historical interests of the proletariat in spite of all. Thus, in the early years of the twentieth century, the Russian Mensheviks of the time (the so-called "economists") repudiated an open political struggle against Tsarism on the basis that forsooth, the working class as a whole had not yet attained to an understanding of the political struggle.

(4) The Communist International is unshakably convinced that the collapse of the old "social-democratic" parties of the 2nd International can in no wise be represented as a collapse of proletarian party life altogether. The period of direct struggle for the dic-

tatorship of the proletariat gives birth to a new party of the proletariat—the Communist Party.

(5) The Communist International decisively repudiates the view that the proletariat can in any way accomplish its revolution without having its own independent political party. Every class struggle is a political struggle. The aim of that struggle, inevitably transforming itself into a civil war, is the conquest of political power. But political power cannot be assumed, organised, and directed except by one political party or another. Only in the case when the proletariat has as a guide an organised and experienced party, with strictly defined aims and a concretely worked-out programme of immediate activity both in internal and in external politics, will the conquest of political power not be a mere accidental episode, but will serve as the point of departure of a prolonged period of Communist reconstruction by the proletariat.

The same class struggle requires the centralisation at one point of the general direction of the various forms of the proletarian movement (the Trade Unions, the Co-operative, factory and workshop committees, educational work, elections, and so forth). Only a political party can act as a general unifying and guiding centre of this kind. The refusal to create and strengthen it, and to be controlled by it, signifies a refusal to admit unity of control of the isolated fighting detachments of the proletariat serving on various fronts. Finally, the class struggle of the proletariat requires concentrated agitation, throwing light on the various stages of the struggle from a single point of view, and concentrating the attention of the proletariat at every given moment on definite problems common to the whole of the working class. This cannot be achieved without a centralised political apparatus, that is, without a political party. Consequently, the propaganda of the revolutionary syndicalists and of the supporters of the Industrial Workers of the World against the necessity of an in-

dependent working class party, objectively speaking, has helped, and helps, only the capitalist class and counter-revolutionary "Social-Democrats." In their propaganda against the Communist Party, which the syndicalists and the industrialists wish to replace by Trades Unions alone, or by formless "General" Labor Unions, they come on to common ground with acknowledged opportunists. The Russian Mensheviks, after the defeat of the 1905 revolution, for several years preached a so-called "Labour Conference," which was to take the place of the revolutionary party of the working class. All kinds of "Labourists" in England and America, who in practice are openly engaged in carrying out bourgeois policy, preach to the workers the creation of shapeless "Labour Unions" in place of a political party. The revolutionary syndicalists and industrialists are anxious to struggle against the dictatorship of the capitalist class, but do not know how to set about it. They do not notice that the working class without an independent political party is a body without a head.

Revolutionary syndicalism and industrialism represent a step forward only in comparison with the old, worn out, counter-revolutionary ideology of the Second International. But, in comparison with revolutionary Marxism, i.e., with Communism, syndicalism and industrialism represent a step back. The declaration of the "Left" Communists of Germany (made by them in their programme statement at their first congress in April) to the effect that they are creating a party. "but not a party in the usual, traditional sense of the word"—(Keine Partei im ublichen Sinne)—is a surrender to those views of syndicalism and industrialism which are in essence reactionary.

(6) The Communists wholeheartedly support the formation, side by side with the Communist Party, of the widest possible non-party Labour organisations. The Communists consider as their most important task a systematic work of organisation and education

within these wide labour organisations. But, precisely to ensure that this work will bear fruit, precisely to ensure that the enemies of the revolutionary proletariat will not gain possession of these organisations, the foremost working class Communists must always have their independent, strongly organised Communist Party, acting always in an organised way, and be capable of defending the general interests of Communism at every turn of events and in all forms of the movement.

7. The Communists do not avoid the mass non-party working class organisations even when they bear an openly reactionary, "Black Hundred," character (the "Yellow" Unions, the "Christian" Unions, and so on). But the Communist Party ceaselessly carries on its own work within these organisations, and untiringly demonstrates to the workers that the non-party idea, as a principle, is consciously fostered amongst the workers by the capitalist class and its lackeys, in order to divert the proletariat from the organised struggle for Socialism.

(8) The old "classical" division of the working-class movement into three forms (the Party, the Trade Unions, and the Co-operatives) has obviously outlived its usefulness. The Proletarian Revolution in Russia has produced the fundamental form of working-class dictatorship—the Soviets. But work in the Soviets also, just as in the revolutionised producers' unions, must unswervingly and systematically be guided by the party of the proletariat, i.e., by the Communist Party. The Communist Party, the organised vanguard of the working class, simultaneously serves the interests of the economic, the political, and the educational struggles of the working class, in their entirety. The Communist Party must appear as the heart and soul of the producers' unions, of the Councils of the Workers' Deputies, and of all other forms of proletarian organisation.

The appearance of Soviets as the chief form, historically speaking, of the dictatorship of the proletariat,

in no way diminishes the guiding role of the Communist Party in the Proletarian Revolution. The German "Left" Communists (see the appeal of their party to the German proletariat, April 14th, 1920, signed, "The Communist Labour Party of Germany") declare that the "the party, too, must adapt itself more and more to the idea of the Soviets and to adopt a proletarian character—"Wird gefordert dass auch die Partie sich immer mehr dem Rategedanken anpasst und proletarischen Charakter annimmt" (**Kommunistische Arbeiterzeitung**). This is a misleading statement of the idea that the Communist Party, forsooth, must melt into the Soviets, that the Soviets can, somehow, take the place of the Communist Party.

This idea is fundamentally incorrect and reactionary.

In the history of the Russian Revolution, we witnessed a whole epoch when the Soviets opposed the proletarian party and supported the policy of the agents of the bourgeoisie. The same was witnessed in Germany. The same is possible in other countries also.

On the contrary, in order that the Soviets may carry out their historical mission, the existence is required of such a strong Communist Party that it will not merely "adapt itself" to the Soviets, but will be able to exercise a decisive influence on their policy to force them of their own accord to reject "adaptation" to the capitalist class and the White Social Democracy, and, through the medium of the Communist groups in the Soviets, to lead the latter in the path laid down by the Party.

Those who propose, that the Communist Party should "adapt" itself to the Soviets, those who see in such an adaptation a strengthening of the "proletarian character" of the Party—such persons are conferring a very doubtful favour upon both the Party and the Soviets, and are ignorant both of the meaning of the Party and of the meaning of the Soviets. The "Soviet idea" will be victorious the more quickly,

the stronger are the Communist parties which we are able to create in every country. The "Soviet idea" is now recognised in words by many "independent" Socialists and even by Right Socialists. We shall only be able to prevent these elements from distorting the Soviet idea if we have a strong Communist Party, capable of defining the policy of the Soviets, and of leading them in its train.

(9) The Communist Party is required by the working class not only before the conquest of power, and not only during the conquest of power, but also after the transference of power into the hands of the working class. The history of the Russian Communist Party, which for three years has been in power in a gigantic country, shows that the part played by the Communist Party after the conquest of power by the working class has not only not been diminished, but, on the contrary, has had a colossal development.

(10) On the morrow of the conquest of power by the proletariat, its party nevertheless remains, as before, only a section of the working class. But it is precisely that section of the working class which organised victory. The Communist Party during twenty years, as we saw in Russia—during thirteen years, as we see in Germany—in its struggle not only with the capitalist class but with those "Socialists" who were the instruments of bourgeois influence on the workers, attracted into its ranks the most steadfast, the most far-sighted, the most advanced fighters of the working class. Only in the presence of such a strongly knitted organisation of the best section of the working class is it possible to overcome all those difficulties which arise before the working-class dictatorship on the morrow of victory. The organisation of a new proletarian Red Army, the practical annihilation of the bourgeois state apparatus and the creation in its place of the beginnings of a new proletarian state apparatus, the struggle against the sectional strivings of individual groups of workers, the struggle against local and regional "patriotism," the beating

out of paths towards a new Labour discipline—in all those spheres a decisive voice belongs to the Communist Party, the members of which, by their living example, lead in their train the majority of the working classes.

(11) The necessity of a political party of the proletariat disappears only with the complete abolition of classes. On the road to this final victory of Communism, it is possible that the relative importance of the three fundamental proletarian organisations of to-day (the Party, the Soviets, and the Producers' Unions) will be altered, and that gradually one single type of labour organisation will be crystallised out. But the Communist Party will be amalgamated entirely with the working class only when Communism ceases to be an aim of the struggle and the whole working class becomes Communist.

(12) The Second Congress of the Communist International must not only affirm the historical mission of the Communist Party generally, but must point out to the international proletariat, if only in the most general terms, what kind of a Communist Party is required.

(13) The Communist International considers that, especially in the epoch of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the Communist Party must be built up on the foundation of an iron proletarian centralism. In order successfully to guide the working class in the long and obstinate civil struggle that is upon us, the Communist Party itself must create within its ranks an iron military discipline. The experience of the Russian Communist Party, which has for three years successfully guided the civil war of the working class, has shown that in this sphere without the strictest discipline, the most perfect centralisation, and the most complete comradesly confidence of all the Party organisations in the guiding party centre, the victory of the workers is impossible.

(14) The Communist Party must be built up on the foundation of democratic centralism. The chief prin-

inciples of democratic centralism are: the elective character of the lower groups, the absolutely binding character of all the directions of a higher body for the subordinate groups, and the existence of a powerful party centre of unquestionable authority for all the leaders of the party life from Congress to Congress.

(15) A whole series of Communist Parties in Europe and America, in view of the state of siege introduced by the capitalist class against the Communists, are forced to carry on an illegal existence. It is essential to remember that in such a state of things it is occasionally necessary to abandon the strict application of the principle of election, and to allow the directing organs of the Party the right of co-optation, as was the case in Russia at one time. In a de facto state of siege the Communist Party will not only be unable to have recourse on every serious question to a democratic referendum amongst all the members of the party (the proposal of a section of the American Communists), but, on the contrary, must empower its executive centre to be able, if necessity requires to take, at short notice, decisions which are important for all members of the Party.

(16). The preaching of wide "autonomy" for separate local organisations of the Party at the present moment only weakens the ranks of the Communist Party, undermines its capacity for work, and assists the petty bourgeois, anarchical, centrifugal elements.

(17) In the countries where the bourgeoisie, or the counter-revolutionary social democracy, is still in power, the Communist Parties must learn accurately to co-ordinate their legal work with their illegal, and, with this, the legal work must always remain under the de facto control of the illegal Party. The Parliamentary groups of Communists, both in the central and in the local government institutions, must be absolutely and entirely subordinate to the Communist Party as a whole—independently of whether the Party as a whole at the given moment is a legal or an illegal organisation. Those deputies who, in one way

or another, do not obey the orders of the Party, must be expelled from the ranks of the Communists.

The legal Press (newspapers, literature) must be unconditionally and entirely subordinate to the Party as a whole and to its executive committee. No concessions in this respect are permissible.

(18) The fundamental basis of all the organising work of the Party and of the Communists must be the setting-up of Communist nuclei (groups) wherever there is even a small number of proletarians and semi-proletarians. In every Council of Workers' Deputies, in every trade union, in every co-operative organisation, in every workshop, in every house committee, in every governmental institution, everywhere, if there be only three persons sympathising with Communism, it is necessary immediately to organise a Communist group. It is only the organisation of the Communists that allows the vanguard of the working-class to lead the whole of the working-class. All the groups of Communists at work in the non-party organisations are unconditionally subordinated to the party organisation as a whole, independently of whether the Party at the given moment is working legally or illegally. The Communist groups of all kinds must be subordinated to one another in a strict hierarchy, in the most accurate form possible.

(19) The Communist Party almost everywhere is born as a town party, as a party of the industrial workers, living mainly in the towns. In order to achieve the easiest and swiftest possible victory of the working class, it is necessary that the Communist Party should become not merely a party of the town, but also of the villages. The Communist Party must carry on its propaganda and organisation amongst the agricultural labourers, the small and middle peasantry. The Communist Party, with particular persistence, must attempt the organisation of Communist groups in the villages.

The international organisation of the proletariat can be powerful only if in all countries where Com-

munists live and struggle the view of the part played by the Communist Party, as outlined above, is confirmed. The Communist International invites to its congresses every trade union acknowledging the principles of the Third International and ready to break with the Yellow International. The Communist International will organise under its auspices an international section of Red Trades Unions standing on the platform of Communism. The Communist International will not refuse to co-operate with any non-party working-class organisation, if it wishes to carry on a serious revolutionary struggle against the capitalist class. But the Communist International, side by side with this, will always point out to the workers of the whole world: (1) The Communist Party is the chief and most important weapon of emancipation of the working class. In every country there should now be no longer groups and tendencies, but a Communist Party. (2) In every country there should exist only one single Communist Party. (3) The Communist Party must be built on the principle of strict centralisation and, in the period of civil war, must introduce military discipline into its ranks. (4) Wherever there are ten proletarians or semi-proletarians, the Communist Party must have its organised nucleus (group). (5) In every non-party institution there must exist a Communist group, most strictly subordinated to the Party as a whole. (6) Firmly and devotedly guarding the programme and the revolutionary tactics of Communism, the Communist Party must always be connected in the closest possible fashion with the great working class organisations and must avoid sectarianism as much as it avoids lack of principle.

II.—The Communist Parties and the Question of Parliamentarism.

(1) In a number of countries in Western Europe and America, one of the burning questions of Communist tactics is that of the Parliamentary struggle. The

split in the German Communist Party, the formation of an anti-Parliamentarian fraction in the Italian Party, the position of the Belgian Communist group, the disputes in the ranks of the British Communists, and, finally, the attitude of revolutionary syndicalist circles and of the I.W.W.—all these necessitate clear and definite guidance on the part of the Communist International.

I.

(2) Parliamentarism as a State system is the "democratic" form of bourgeois supremacy, which requires, at a certain stage of its development, the aid of the fiction of popular representation. The latter, outwardly the organisation of the people's will irrespective of classes, in reality is a machine of suppression and oppression in the hands of dominant capitalism.

(3) Parliamentarism is a definite form of State structure. Consequently it can in no way be a form of Communist society, which knows neither classes, nor the class struggle, nor any form of State whatsoever.

(4) Parliamentarism cannot even be the form of the proletarian government during the period of transition from the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie to the dictatorship of the proletariat. At the moment of intensified class struggle, passing into civil war, the proletariat must inevitably build up its State organisation as a fighting organisation, into which representatives of the former ruling classes cannot be admitted. At such a stage, any fiction of "the general will" is directly harmful to the proletariat; and similarly unnecessary and harmful is the Parliamentary division of functions. The Soviet Republic represents the form of the Proletarian Dictatorship.

(5) The bourgeois parliaments, which represent one of the important parts of the bourgeois State apparatus, cannot be conquered, just as the bourgeois State itself cannot be conquered by the proletariat. The problem before the proletariat consists in blowing up the bourgeois State machine, in destroying it, and destroying with it all parliamentary institutions, whether

of a republic or of a constitutional monarchy.

(6) The same applies to the bourgeois local authorities, which, from a theoretical point of view, it is incorrect to distinguish from the organs of the State. In reality, they are just as much parts of the bourgeois State mechanism, which will have to be destroyed by the revolutionary proletariat, and replaced by local Councils of Workers' Deputies.

(7) Consequently, Communism repudiates parliamentarism as a form of the future; it repudiates parliamentarism as a form of the class dictatorship of the proletariat; it repudiates the possibility of conquering parliaments; it lays down as its aim the destruction of parliamentarism. **For this reason there can be a question only of utilising the bourgeois State institutions with the object of their destruction.** On this, and only on this plane, can the question be discussed.

II.

(8) Every class struggle is a political struggle, since, in the long run, it is a struggle for power. Any strike which spreads throughout the country begins to threaten the bourgeois State, and thereby acquires a political character. To strive to overthrow the bourgeoisie, and to destroy its State apparatus, by whatever means, signifies to carry on a political struggle. The creation of a class apparatus—for the task of government and to crush the opposition of the bourgeoisie (whatever be the nature of that apparatus) means the conquest of political power.

(9) Consequently, the question of the political struggle is not at all the same as the question of our attitude towards parliamentarism. It is the general question of the class struggle of the proletariat, in the measure that that struggle passes from petty and sectional forms to a struggle for the overthrow of the capitalist order.

(10) The fundamental method of struggle employed by the proletariat against the bourgeoisie, i.e., against its State power, is, first and foremost, the method of

mass action. Mass action is organised and directed by the mass organisations of the proletariat, under the general guidance of a strongly knitted, disciplined, centralised Communist Party. The civil struggle is a war. In that war the proletariat must have its efficient corps of political officers, its efficient political general staff directing all operations in all spheres of the conflict.

(11) The mass struggle represents a whole system of developing demonstrations, becoming more and more intensified in their form, and logically leading to a rising against the Capitalist State. In this mass struggle, unfolding itself into a civil war, the guiding party of the proletariat must, as a general rule, consolidate in its rear any and every legal position, making them subsidiary strong points in its revolutionary work, and subordinating them to the plan of the chief campaign, that of the mass struggle.

(12) One of these subordinate strong points is the floor of the bourgeois parliament. It is not permissible to urge against participation in parliamentary action that parliament is an institution of the bourgeois state. The Communist Party enters that institution not for the purpose of carrying on organic work there, but in order to blow up the bourgeois machinery of government, and parliament itself, from within (e.g. the activity of Liebknecht in Germany, of the Bolsheviks in the Imperial Duma, in the "Democratic Conference" in Kerensky's "Pre-parliament," finally, in the "Constituent Assembly," and likewise in the town councils).

(13) This work in parliaments, which resolves itself mainly into revolutionary agitation from the floor of the House, exposure of opponents, the proclamation of watchwords for the masses, etc., must in its entirety be subordinated to the aims and problems of the mass struggle outside parliament.

(14) For this, the following conditions are essential:

1. The absence of any form of "autonomy" for the Communist groups in Parliament, and their un-

questioning subordination to the central committee of the Party.

2. Constant control and guidance on the part of the executive committee.

3. The arrangement of simultaneous demonstrations both within and without parliament.

4. A revolutionary attitude in parliament itself, i.e., the absence of any fear "on principle" of transgressing the rules of parliamentary debate.

5. The execution by Communist members of parliament of non-parliamentary work, specially in connection with mass demonstrations.

6. Constant touch with the illegal work of the Party, and the utilisation of parliamentary privilege, so far as the latter exists, in this direction.

7. The immediate recall or expulsion from the Party of every member of the parliamentary group who, in his parliamentary work, disobeys the order of the Party.

(15) The electoral campaign itself must be carried on not in a spirit of pursuit of the maximum number of parliamentary seats, but in the spirit of the revolutionary mobilisation of the masses around the watchwords of the proletarian revolution. The electoral campaign must be carried on by the whole mass of the members of the party, and not only by the leaders. It is necessary to utilise and be in complete contact with all mass actions taking place at the given moment (strikes, demonstrations, movements amongst soldiers and sailors, etc.) It is necessary to involve in active work all the mass organisations of the proletariat.

(16) If these conditions are observed, parliamentary work represents the complete antithesis of that dirty political scheming carried on by the Social-Democratic parties of all countries, who enter parliament to support that "democratic" institution, or, at best, to "conquer" it. The Communist Party can stand only and exclusively for the revolutionary utilisation of parliamentarism, as practised by Karl Liebknecht, Högland, and the Bolsheviks.

III.

(17) Anti-parliamentarism "on principle," in the sense of an absolute and categorical refusal to participate in elections and in the revolutionary parliamentary struggle, thus appears as a naive, childish doctrine, unable to bear criticism, which sometimes has as its foundation a healthy disgust at parliamentary politicians, but which at the same time does not realise the possibilities of revolutionary parliamentarism. In addition, this doctrine is frequently connected with a completely inaccurate understanding of the part to be played by the Party, which it views not as the fighting centralised vanguard of the workers, but as a decentralised system of feebly connected revolutionary groups.

(18) On the other hand, there does not follow from the recognition of the principle of parliamentary work the absolute recognition of the necessity, under all and any circumstances, of actual elections, or of actual participation in the sessions of parliament. Here the question depends on a series of specific conditions. With a certain grouping of these conditions, it may become necessary to leave parliament. That is what the Bolsheviks did when they left the Pre-parliament in order to "blow it up," at once rendering it helpless and placing in sharp opposition to it the Petrograd Soviet, which was about to take charge of the insurrection. This is what they did in the Constituent Assembly on the day of its dissolution, transferring all their activity to the second All-Russian Congress of Soviets. Under different circumstances it may be necessary to boycott elections and organise a direct violent attack on the bourgeois parliamentary clique; or to participate in elections while boycotting parliament itself; and so on.

(19) In this way, while recognising, as a general rule, the necessity of participating in elections, both to central parliaments and to the organs of local self-governments, as well as of taking part in the work of those institutions, the Communist Party must decide

the question concretely, basing itself on the peculiar conditions of the actual moment. The boycott of elections or of parliament, and similarly the abandonment of the latter, are permissible, speaking generally, when conditions exist for a direct transition to an armed struggle for power.

(20) It is necessary constantly to keep in mind the relative unimportance of this question. If the centre of gravity lies in the struggle for power outside parliament, then it follows as a matter of course that the question of proletarian dictatorship, and of the mass struggle for the latter, is not on a par with the minor question of utilisation of parliamentarism.

(21) The Communist International, therefore, declares in the most categorical fashion that it considers as a crime against the Labour movement any split, or attempt at a split, within the Communist parties on this point. The Congress summons all elements standing for the mass struggle for proletarian dictatorship under the guidance of the centralised party of the revolutionary proletariat, which exercises its influence in all the mass organisations of the working-class, to strive for the complete unity of all Communist elements in spite of any possible divergence on the question of parliamentarism.

Communist Parliamentarism.

[To Communist members of bourgeois parliaments and municipal bodies, and to the Central Committees of Communist Parties whose duty it is to direct the Communist groups in bourgeois parliaments.]

Annex to Theses on Parliamentarism.

The opposition to the Communists entering the bourgeois parliaments is sustained mostly by the recollections of Social-Democratic parliamentarism during the epoch of the Second International. The conduct of the majority of the Social-Democratic members in the bourgeois parliaments was really so unprincipled and, frequently, treacherous, that this bitter experience cannot be forgotten by the working class.

That is why it is necessary for the Communist International, which has in the interests of the revolution advocated the utilisation of the parliamentary tribune by the Communists, to observe very strictly the activity of the Communist members, and to take all measures to create a new type of revolutionary parliamentarian, a parliamentary Communist warrior:

To this end it is necessary that:—

1. The Communist party as a whole, and its Central Committee, should, during the preparatory stage, i.e., before the parliamentary elections—inspect very carefully the quality of the personnel of the parliamentary group. The Central Committee should be responsible for all the work of the parliamentary Communist group. The Central Committee must have the undeniable right to reject any candidate of any organisation, if it is not perfectly convinced that such candidate will carry on a real Communist policy when in Parliament.

The Communist Parties must desist from the old Social-Democratic habit of electing as deputies only

the so-called "experienced" parliamentarians—chiefly lawyers and so forth. As a rule, it is necessary to put **workmen** forward as candidates, without troubling about the fact that these may sometimes be simple rank-and-file workers, without much parliamentary experience. The Communist Party must treat with merciless contempt those elements who try to make a career by joining the party just before the elections in order to get into parliament. The Central Committees of the Communist Parties must sanction the candidatures of only such men as have, by long years of work, proved their unwavering loyalty to the working class.

2. When the elections are over the organisations of the parliamentary group must be wholly in the hands of the Central Committee of the Communist Party—whether the party as a whole is a lawful or illegal one at the given moment. The chairman and the presidium of the parliamentary Communist group must be confirmed in their functions by the Central Committee of the Party. The Central Committee of the Party must have its permanent representative in the parliament group, with the right of veto. On all important political questions the parliamentary group must ask for preliminary instructions from the Central Committee of the Party.

Previously to any important demonstration of the Communists in parliament, the Central Committee must be entitled and bound to appoint or reject the orator of the faction, to demand of him to hand in beforehand the theses of his speech, or the text, for confirmation by the Central Committee, etc. Every candidate entered on the Communist list must sign a statement to the effect that, at the first request of the Central Committee of the Party, he is bound to give up his mandate, so that the Party can obtain a new election.

3. In countries where reformist, semi-reformist, or simply career-seeking elements have managed to penetrate into the parliamentary Communist groups (as has already happened in several countries) the Central

Committees of the Communist Parties are bound radically to weed out the personnel of the groups, on the principle that it is better for the cause of the working class to have a small but truly Communist group than a numerous one without a regular Communist line of conduct.

4. A Communist deputy, on the decision of the Central Committee, is bound to combine legal work with **illegal work**. In countries where the Communist deputy still enjoys a certain inviolability, the latter must be utilised by way of rendering assistance to the illegal organisation and propaganda of the Party.

5. The Communist members shall make all their parliamentary work **dependent on the work** of the Party outside parliament. The regular introduction of demonstrative bills, not that they may be passed by the bourgeois majority, but for the purposes of propaganda, agitation and organisation, must be carried on under the direction of the Party and its Central Committee.

6. In the event of labour demonstrations in the streets, or other revolutionary movements, the Communist deputy must occupy the most conspicuous place—at the head of the proletarian masses.

7. The Communist deputies must enter, by all means at their disposal, into relations (under the control of the Party) either in writing or otherwise, with the revolutionary workmen, peasants and other toilers, and not resemble, in this respect, the Social-Democratic deputies who try to enter into business relations with their electors.

8. Every Communist member must remember that he is not a "legislator," who is bound to seek agreements with the other legislators, but an agitator of the Party, detailed into the enemy's camp in order there to carry out the orders of the Party. The Communist member is responsible not to the scattered mass of his constituents, but to his own Communist Party—whether legal or illegal.

9. The Communist deputies must speak in parliament in such a way as to be understood by every workman, peasant, washerwoman, and shepherd so that the Party can publish his speeches in leaflet form and spread them in the most remote villages of the country.

10. The rank and file Communist workers must not be shy of speaking in the bourgeois parliaments, and not give way to the so-called experienced parliamentarians, even if such workmen are novices in parliamentary methods. In case of need, the workmen members may read their speeches directly from notes, in order that the speech may be printed afterwards in the papers or in leaflets.

11. The Communist members must make use of the floor of parliament to denounce not only the bourgeoisie and its declared hangers-on, but also to unmask the social-patriots, the reformists, the half-and-half politicians of the Centre, and the other opponents of Communism, and to spread, as widely as possible, the ideas of the Third International.

12. The Communist deputies, even though there should be only one or two of them in parliament, should by their whole conduct hurl a challenge at capitalism, and never forget that only such are worthy of the name of Communists as, not in words but in deeds, are the mortal enemies of the bourgeois order and its social-patriotic flunkeys.

The Time for Soviets.

1. Councils (Soviets) of Workers' Deputies appeared for the first time in Russia in 1905, at a moment when the revolutionary movement of the Russian workers was at its height. Already, in 1905, the Petrograd Council of Workers' Deputies was taking the first instinctive steps towards a seizure of power. And at that time the Petrograd Soviet was strong only in so far as it had a chance of acquiring political power. As soon as the imperial counter-revolution rallied its forces and the Labour movement slackened, the Soviet, after a short period of stagnation, ceased to exist.

2. When, in 1916, at the beginning of a new strong revolutionary wave, the idea began to awaken in Russia of the immediate organisation of Councils of Workers' Deputies, the Bolshevik Party warned the workers against the immediate formation of Soviets, and pointed out that it would be well-timed only at the moment when the revolution was already beginning, and when the time had come for the direct struggle for power.

3. At the beginning of the February revolution of 1917, when the Councils of Workers' Deputies were at once transformed into Councils of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, they drew into the sphere of their influence the widest circles of the masses, and at once acquired a tremendous authority, because the real force was on their side, in their hands. But when the liberal bourgeoisie recovered from the suddenness of the first revolutionary blows, and when the social-traitors, the Socialist-Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks, helped the Russian bourgeoisie to take the power into its hands, the importance of the Soviets began to dwindle. Only after the July days, and after the failure of Kornilov's counter-revolutionary campaign, when the widest masses of the people began to move, and when the collapse of the counter-revolution-

ary bourgeois-coalition Government was quite near did the Soviets begin to flourish again; and they soon acquired a decisive importance in the country.

4. The history of the German and the Austrian revolutions shows the same. When the popular masses revolted, when the revolutionary wave rose so high that it washed away the strongholds of the Hohenzollern and the Hapsburg monarchies in Germany and in Austria the Councils of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies sprang up with gigantic rapidity. At first the real force was on their side, and the Soviets were well on the way to become the de facto power. But as soon as, owing to a whole series of historical conditions, the power began to pass to the bourgeoisie and the counter-revolutionary Social-Democrats, swiftly the Soviets began to decline and lose all importance. During the days of the unsuccessful counter-revolutionary revolt of Kapp-Luttwitz in Germany, the Soviets again resumed their activity; but when the struggle ended again in the victory of the bourgeoisie and the social-traitors, the Soviets, which had just begun to lift their head again, once more died away.

5. The above facts show that, for the formation of Soviets, certain definite premises are necessary. To organise Councils of Workers' Deputies, and to transform them into Councils of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, the presence of three definite conditions is necessary:

(a) A great revolutionary impulse among the widest circles of the workmen and work-women, the soldiers, and the workers in general;

(b) An acute political and economic crisis, attaining such a degree that the power begins to slip out of the hands of the Government;

(c) When in the ranks of considerable masses of the workers, and first of all in the ranks of the Communist Party, a serious decision to begin a final, systematic, and regular struggle for power has matured.

6. In the absence of these conditions the Communists may and should systematically and persistently

propagate the idea of Soviets, popularise it among the masses, demonstrate to the widest circles of the population that the Soviets are the only efficient form of government during the transition to complete Communism. But to proceed to the **direct organisation of Soviets, in the absence of the above three conditions, is impossible.**

7. The attempt of the social-traitors in Germany to emasculate the Soviets, pervert their character, and then introduce them into the general bourgeois-democratic constitutional system, is treason against the workers' cause and deception of the workers. Real Soviets are possible only as a form of State organisation, **replacing the bourgeois democracy, breaking it up, and replacing it by the dictatorship of the proletariat.**

8. The propaganda of the Right Wing leaders of the Independents (Hilferding, Kautsky, and others) intending to prove the compatibility of the "Soviet system" with the bourgeois Constituent Assembly, is either a complete failure to comprehend the laws of development of a proletarian revolution, or a conscious deceiving of the working class. The Soviets are the dictatorship of the **proletariat.** The Constituent Assembly is the dictatorship of the **bourgeoisie.** To unite and reconcile the dictatorship of the workers with the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie is impossible.

9. The attempts of separate Communist groups in France, Italy, America, England to form Soviets not embracing the larger working masses, and unable therefore to enter into a direct struggle for power, are only prejudicial to the actual preparation of a Soviet revolution. Such artificial, hot-house "Soviets" soon become transformed, at best, into small associations for propaganda of the Soviet idea, and, in the worst case, such anaemic "Soviets" are capable only of compromising the Soviet idea in the eyes of the wide masses of the people.

10. Soviets without a revolution are impossible.



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Soviets without a proletarian revolution inevitably become a parody of Soviets. The authentic mass Soviets are the historically elaborated form of the dictatorship of the proletariat. All sincere and serious partisans of Soviet power should deal cautiously with the Soviet idea, and, while indefatigably propagating it amongst the masses, should proceed to the direct realisation of such Soviets only under the conditions indicated above.

- - Books and Pamphlets Worth Reading - -

- Wage-Labor and Capital (Marx); 7d.
 - The Communist Manifesto (Marx and Engels); 1/1.
 - Political Power—"Shield" or "Dictatorship" (Judd—Reardon Debate, Parties); 7d.
 - Across the Blockade (H. N. Brailsford); 3/8.
 - In Russia (Prof. Goode); 7d.
 - Notorious Russia (Isaac McBride); 7d.
 - ... Minister (P. Simonoff); 7d.
 - The Soviet ... 7d.
 - Militarism and Anti ...
 - The State and Revolution ... 1/8
 - The Communist Program ... Bucharin); 1/8.
 - The Collapse of the Second International ...
 - What is Russia? (P. Simonoff); 2/...
 - Bolshevism at Work (Prof. W. T. Goode);
 - The History of the Russian Revolution to ... Trotsky); 3/8.
 - The Russian Code of Labor Laws (A.S.P. Edition)
 - The Class Struggle (K. Kautsky); 1/8.
 - Value, Price and Profit (Marx); 2/1.
 - A.S.P. Manifesto.—A Statement of Communist Principles.
 - The Danger of the Whitley Scheme (Moses Baritz); 4d.
- ALL PRICES INCLUDE POSTAGE.**

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Pamphlets for the Inquirer

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1/6, Posted 1/8.

COMMUNISM AND THE FAMILY.

Alexandra Kolontay.

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