

Education for Socialists

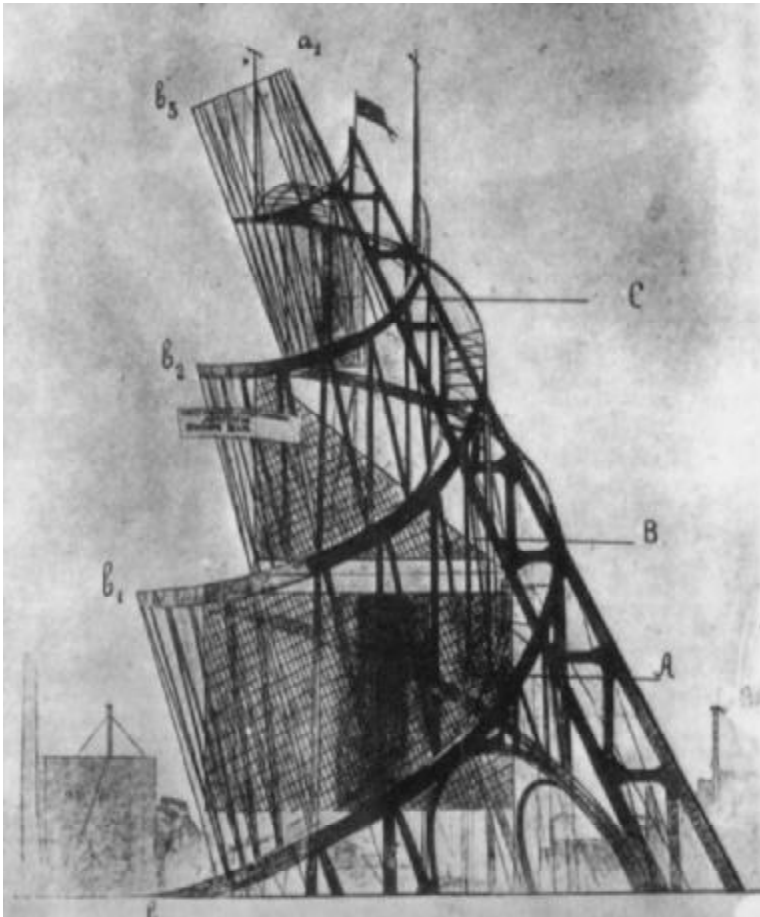
**Class Guides for the
Study of Marxism**

Volume 2

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The "Tatlin tower": 1919 drawing by Vladimir Tatlin (1885-1953), the founder of constructivism, of a huge structure he planned as part of a projected exhibition entitled "Monument to the Third International".

Party Leadership & Functioning

These classes make up a five-day full-time school aimed at helping branch secretaries, organisers and members of branch executives.

Class 1. The vanguard party and its leadership

Reading [89 pages]

- a Mohideen, “The Need for a Revolutionary Party”, in Mohideen et al, *Organisational Principles and Methods of the Democratic Socialist Party* [19 pages]
- b Cannon, “Factional Struggle and Party Leadership”, *Fighting for Socialism in the American Century* [16 pages]
- c Cannon, “The Problem of Party Leadership”, in *Readings for Classes* [39 pages]
- d Lorimer, “Selecting a National Leadership Team”, in Mohideen et al, *Organisational Principles and Methods of the Democratic Socialist Party* [15 pages]

Discussion points

- 1 “The revolutionary party, through its program, is the vehicle for introducing socialist theory, socialist consciousness, into the workers’ movement.” (Mohideen; a, 9) Discuss.
- 2 “The organisation of revolutionaries must consist first and foremost of people who make revolutionary activity their profession.” (Lenin; quoted in a, 14) Discuss the requirements of membership in a revolutionary party.
- 3 “... the vanguard role [of the party] must be won in action. It cannot simply be self-proclaimed.” (Mohideen; a, 19) Discuss.
- 4 “The leading cadre plays the same decisive role in relation to the party that the party plays in relation to the class.” (Cannon; b, 208) Discuss.
- 5 Cannon lists four negative types of leadership: stars, cliques, cults and permanent factions. (b, 208-211) Discuss.

- 6 “Our strength is in our combination ...” (Canon; b, 214) Discuss the features of Canon’s cadre concept of leadership.
- 7 “[A capable leader] will defer to more experienced people.” (Canon; c, 12) Discuss.
- 8 “[Leaders] have to have the weapon of prestige.” (Canon; c, 19) Discuss.
- 9 “No, I was wrong about many things, including my methods and my impatience and rudeness with comrades and repulsing them.” (Canon; c, 23) Discuss how a leader should behave towards other comrades.
- 10 “I want every young intellectual thrown in the water ...” (Canon; c, 25) Discuss.
- 11 “Being elected to the NC has nothing to do *per se* with being a leader.” (Lorimer; d, 55) Discuss.
- 12 Discuss the idea of the nominations commission in selecting our national leadership.

Class 2. The organisation and functioning of the party

Reading [70 pages]

- a Percy, “Building a Revolutionary Party: Our Concepts and Methods”, in Mohideen et al, *Organisational Principles and Methods of the Democratic Socialist Party* [25 pages]
- b Brewer, “The Party, the Personal and the Political”, in Mohideen et al, *Organisational Principles and Methods of the Democratic Socialist Party* [17 pages]
- c Spindler, “The Structure and Functioning of Branch Leaderships”, in Mohideen et al, *Organisational Principles and Methods of the Democratic Socialist Party* [12 pages]
- d Zeller, “An Interview with Leon Trotsky”, in *Readings for Classes* [6 pages]

Discussion points

- 1 Discuss the concept of democratic centralism. (Percy; a, 30-31 & 33-34)
- 2 What is a professional revolutionary? (Percy; a, 34-35)
- 3 “Loyalty to the DSP is the primary condition for membership.” (Percy; a, 38) Discuss. Is party loyalty a Stalinist concept?
- 4 We are striving for relative political homogeneity in our party. What does this mean? Should we be aiming for a “pluralist” party”?
- 5 John Percy lists a number of attitudes to avoid in party building: formalism,

- routinism, sloppiness, apathy and whinging. (Percy; a, 41-42) Discuss.
- 6 Pat Brewer discusses the “guilt-fix” method of party functioning (Brewer; b, 76-78). What’s wrong with this? What is our approach?
 - 7 Why do we reject the idea of women’s caucuses and quotas in the party?
 - 8 Discuss the role and functioning of a branch executive. (Spindler; c, 91-95)
 - 9 Discuss the relationship between Resistance and the DSP. (Spindler; c, 97-98)
 - 10 “Each person is a lever to be fully utilised to strengthen the party.” (Trotsky; d, 40) Discuss
 - 11 “Leave maximum initiative to the responsible comrades in their own field.” (Trotsky; d, 40) Discuss.
 - 12 “At the level of organisational work, one must be methodical and precise, leaving nothing to chance.” (Trotsky; d, 41) Discuss.

Class 3. The Struggle for a Proletarian Party — I

Reading [140 pages]

- a Cannon, “Speech on the Russian Question”, *The Struggle for a Proletarian Party*, pp. 197-210 [14 pages]
- b Cannon, “The Struggle for a Proletarian Party”, *The Struggle for a Proletarian Party*, pp. 13-96 [84 pages]
- c Abern et al, “The War and Bureaucratic Conservatism”, in *The Struggle for a Proletarian Party*, pp. 239-280 [42 pages]

Supplementary reading

- d Hansen, *Organisational Methods and Political Principles*

Discussion points

- 1 What was the “Russian question”? How did it manifest itself with the Nazi-Soviet Pact and its aftermath? (See Cannon’s “Speech on the Russian Question”)
- 2 “The crisis signifies the reaction in our ranks to external social pressure.” (a, 13). What was this “external social pressure”?
- 3 Why did the majority characterise the opposition as “petty-bourgeois”?
- 4 “It is not sufficient for the party to have a proletarian program; it also requires a proletarian composition.” (a, 21) Discuss.
- 5 “... it is the program that creates the organisation, or conquers and utilises an existing one.” (a, 28) Discuss.

- 6 Discuss the Marxist attitude to intellectuals and the revolutionary party (especially in relation to Burnham).
- 7 What is an “unprincipled combination”? Why was the opposition an unprincipled bloc?
- 8 What is a clique? Discuss in relation to Abern.
- 9 What is the Marxist definition of bureaucracy? Can bureaucratism manifest itself in a revolutionary party?

Class 4. The Struggle for a Proletarian Party — II

Reading [131 pages]

- a Cannon, “Factional Struggle and Party Leadership”, *Fighting for Socialism in the American Century*, pp. 199-206 [8 pages]
- b Cannon, “Letters to Comrades”, *The Struggle for a Proletarian Party*, pp. 99-193 [95 pages]
- c “Documents of the Struggle”, in *The Struggle for a Proletarian Party*, pp. 211-238 [28 pages]

Discussion points

- 1 “Factional struggle is a part of the process of building the revolutionary party of the masses; not the whole of the struggle, but a part of it.” (Cannon; a, 205)
Discuss
- 2 “Every serious factional struggle, properly directed by a conscious leadership, develops in progressive stages ...” (Cannon; a, 205) Discuss in relation to the 1939-40 struggle.
- 3 “For some time, Burnham and Shachtman have been pressing to carry the discussion into the public press of the party.” (Cannon; b, 127) Discuss the majority’s response to this idea.
- 4 By early January 1940 the majority was convinced that the minority was preparing to split away from the party. How did Cannon propose that the party meet this threat? (See especially Letter 25.)
- 5 “We will never instill a real party patriotism into the ranks unless we establish the conception that violation of the party unity is not only a crime but a crime which brings the most ruthless punishment in the form of a war of political extermination against those who commit it.” (Cannon; b, 167) Discuss.
- 6 Why did Cannon and his supporters declare that they would maintain unity and

discipline if they were put in a minority by the convention?

- 7 *“Those party members who find it impossible after a reasonable period of time to work in a proletarian milieu and to attract to the party worker militants shall be transferred from party membership to the rank of sympathisers. Special organisations of sympathisers may be formed for this purpose.”* (b, 220) Discuss.
- 8 Following its April 1940 convention, the SWP first suspended, then expelled the Burnham-Shachtman group. Why did it do this?

Class 5. Common problems for organisers

Reading

- a Recent party building reports to last Congress, subsequent National Committee plenums and your district/branch (if available).

Discussion points

- 1 The organisational tasks of building the party have to be understood within the concrete political situation. Discuss the main organisational challenges facing the party today.
- 2 Some meetings seem to work and others seem like a boring ritual. What makes a successful branch meeting? What makes a successful executive meeting? What is the starting point of planning a branch meeting, executive meeting, fraction?
- 3 What is the correct “balance” between party building and movement work?
- 4 In every branch there are some members who are more active and others who are less active. Should the branch leadership prioritise organising the most active?
- 5 New members lack experience and political education. When should they be trusted with assignments?
- 6 Lenin compared the paper to a scaffolding around which the revolutionary party can be built. How well do we use the paper in our party today and what should be done to improve this in the branches?
- 7 Discuss the party’s current finance campaigns.
- 8 What are the main education classes that can be used at the branch level and what is the purpose of each one of them?
- 9 In the last year some branches have recruited at a much higher rate than others. What do you think are the reasons for the differences? How can your branch’s recruitment be improved? How do you ask someone to join the party?

- 10 What is the “personnel problem”? How should organisers relate to individual members of the branch? What are the considerations in preparing a division of labour?
- 11 How do you know your branch is functioning well? What “executive information” should organisers and the executive be regularly collecting and digesting? What do you do with this information?

Reading list

The following is a list of titles from which class readings have been taken:

- 1 Cannon, *Fighting for Socialism in the ‘American Century’*
- 2 Cannon et al, *Readings for Classes*
- 3 Cannon, *The Struggle for a Proletarian Party*
- 4 Hansen, *Organisational Methods and Political Principles*
- 5 Mohideen et al, *Organisational Principles and Methods of the Democratic Socialist Party*
- 6 Party-building reports from the last DSP congress and subsequent National Committee plenums



1920 Soviet poster appeals to women to help build socialism.

Introduction to the Marxist Classics

The purpose of this 13-part class series is to provide an introduction to some of the basic writings of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky.

The required reading for each class is of modest length so that participants will feel confident to begin reading these basic socialist writings.

This is *only* a beginning, however. Hopefully, those taking part will feel inspired and impelled to plunge deeper, beginning perhaps with the supplementary readings suggested for each class.

The required readings for the classes are available in various editions. Wherever possible we have used Resistance Books editions and then the old Progress Publishers three-volume Marx-Engels *Selected Works* and the Lenin *Collected Works*. But other editions will serve although page number references will have to be changed.

Class 1. The Communist Manifesto (I)

Reading

- a Marx & Engels, “Manifesto of the Communist Party”, *The Communist Manifesto*, Section I [12 pages]
- b Engels, “Karl Marx”, Marx & Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 3 [10 pages]

Supplementary reading

- c Engels, “Principles of Communism,” Marx & Engels *Selected Works* (in three volumes), Vol. 1, Questions 1-13
- d Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*

Discussion points

- 1 Section I of the *Communist Manifesto* begins with the statement, “The history of all hitherto existing society [“That is, all *written* history.” — *Footnote by Engels.*] is the history of class struggle.” (Marx & Engels; a, 45) Why did Marx and Engels say this was the only adequate way to explain the history of human civilisation?
- 2 Did capitalist society always exist? How did it come into being? What are the main stages in the economic and political development of the bourgeoisie?
- 3 The *Communist Manifesto* states: “The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie.” (Marx & Engels; a, 47) How do the activities of the Australian government demonstrate this?
- 4 The *Communist Manifesto* says, “Constant revolutionising of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones.” (Marx & Engels; a, 48) How and why does this “constant revolutionising of production” occur under capitalism and what are its social and political consequences?
- 5 How has the bourgeoisie forged the weapons that will bring death to itself and “called into existence the men [and women] who are to wield these weapons”? (Marx & Engels; a, 51)
- 6 What are the main stages of the social development of the working class and its struggle with the capitalist class?
- 7 Why is the working class the only truly revolutionary class in capitalist society? Why is no other class capable of overthrowing capitalism and building a classless society? What about the lower middle class (the petty-bourgeoisie)? Can it be an ally of the working class?
- 8 What distinguishes the proletarian revolutionary movement from all previous historical movements?
- 9 The *Manifesto* states, “Though not in substance, yet in form, the struggle of the proletariat with the bourgeoisie is at first a national struggle.” (Marx & Engels; a, 55) Why is the proletariat’s struggle with the bourgeoisie only national in *form* but not in *substance*?
- 10 Discuss the *Manifesto*’s argument that the bourgeoisie is “unfit to rule [society] because it is incompetent to assure an existence” to the majority of society (Marx & Engels; a, 55). Has this argument been confirmed or refuted by the development of capitalism in the period since the *Manifesto* was written?

Class 2. The Communist Manifesto (II)

Reading

- a Marx & Engels, Preface to the German Edition of 1872, *The Communist Manifesto* [2 pages]
- b Marx & Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, Sections II & IV, [17 pages]
- c Engels, “The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State”, Marx & Engels *Selected Works*, Vol. 3, Preface to the First Edition, Chs. I & IX [25 pages]

Supplementary reading

- d Engels, “Principles of Communism,” Marx & Engels *Selected Works*, Vol. 1, Questions 14-24
- e Marx, “Letter to L. Kugelmann in Hanover, April 12, 1871,” Marx & Engels *Selected Works*, Vol. 2

Discussion points

- 1 In the beginning of Section II, the *Communist Manifesto* says: “The theoretical conclusions of the Communists are in no way based on ideas or principles that have been invented, or discovered, by this or that would-be reformer. They merely express, in general terms, actual relations springing from an existing class struggle, from a historical movement going on under our very eyes.” (Marx & Engels; b, 56) How is this reflected in the way the *Manifesto* is written, in its analysis, and in its political conclusions? How does this differ from utopian socialism?
- 2 What distinguishes the Communists from other working-class parties?
- 3 In the beginning of Section IV, the *Manifesto* says: “The Communists fight for the attainment of the immediate aims, for the enforcement of the momentary interests of the working class, but in the movement of the present, they also represent and take care of the future of the movement.” (Marx & Engels; b, 72) What does this mean?
- 4 At the beginning of Section II, the *Manifesto* says that “the theory of the Communists may be summed up in a single sentence: Abolition of private property.” (Marx & Engels; b, 57) What does this mean? Does this mean the expropriation of personal property (homes, cars, TV sets, etc.) or the private property of small farmers, shopkeepers and other small business owners?
- 5 How does the *Communist Manifesto* answer the argument that the abolition of private property will mean the abolition of “individuality and freedom”? (Marx

& Engels; b, 58) How does it deal with the argument that the abolition of private property will remove the incentive to work, will lead to “universal laziness” (Marx & Engels; b, 59)?

- 6 What does the *Communist Manifesto* say about the family and women? How were Marx and Engels’ views on the family and women substantiated by the findings of the American anthropologist Lewis Morgan? In what ways were they further developed? (See Engels’ *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*.)
- 7 What does the *Manifesto* mean when it says that “the working [people] have no country”? (Marx & Engels; b, 61)
- 8 The *Manifesto* states: “United action, of the leading civilised countries at least, is one of the first conditions for the emancipation of the proletariat.” (Marx & Engels; b, 61) Why is this?
- 9 The *Manifesto* says: “The ruling ideas of each age have ever been the ideas of the ruling class.” (Marx & Engels; b, 61) Why is this? What then is the source of revolutionary ideas?
- 10 The *Manifesto* says that “the first step in the revolution by the working class, is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class, to win the battle of democracy”. (Marx & Engels; b, 62) Why is this? How does this view of democracy relate to the *Communist Manifesto*’s view of political power as “merely the organised power of one class for oppressing another”. (Marx & Engels; b, 63) What further steps does the *Manifesto* propose be taken by the working class to abolish the capitalist social order?
- 11 At the end of Section IV, the *Manifesto* says that the abolition of capitalism “can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions.” (Marx & Engels; b, 73) Does this mean that Marx and Engels advocated violence? Why does the abolition of capitalism require the use of force by the working class?
- 12 In their preface to the 1872 German edition of the *Manifesto*, Marx and Engels say that the program of revolutionary measures listed at the end of Section II has “in some details become antiquated.” (Marx & Engels; a, 31) What was the key amendment that they thought needed to be made to this program?

Class 3. Wage Labour & Capital

Reading

- a Engels, Introduction to “Wage Labour and Capital”, Marx & Engels *Selected Works*, Vol. 1 [8 pages]
- b Marx, “Wage Labour and Capital”, *op cit* [25 pages]

Supplementary reading

- c Marx, “Wages, Price and Profit”, Marx & Engels *Selected Works*, Vol. 2

Discussion points

- 1 We can exchange, for example, a pen for a cup either directly through barter or indirectly through money (they are both, let us assume, worth \$1). What makes them equal?
- 2 What is a commodity? How does it differ from other products of human labour?
- 3 What determines the value of commodities?
- 4 How does wage labour differ from slave or serf labour? What does the wage worker sell? How does labour power differ from all other commodities?
- 5 Why is the money pocketed by the employer profits, while the payment of the workers are wages? Are workers being repaid for their labour? Why does the view that employers buy labour rather than labour power cause confusion?
- 6 What are the relative bargaining positions of employers and workers? Do workers improve their relative bargaining position with the employer by their labour?
- 7 What is capital? Who produces it? What is wrong with the capitalist argument that profit is payment for risking their capital?
- 8 Why does the employer introduce labour-saving machinery and what is the impact on the individual worker? Is mechanisation of production progressive?
- 9 What does Marx mean when he says that under capitalism dead labour (labour already carried out and embodied in commodities) rules over living labour?
- 10 Why are the economic interests of workers and capitalists irreconcilably antagonistic?

Class 4. Socialism: Utopian & Scientific

Reading

Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* [36 pages]

Discussion points

- 1 Engels writes: “The socialism of earlier days certainly criticised the existing capitalistic mode of production and its consequences. But it could not explain them, and, therefore, could not get the mastery of them.” (p. 78) Why was this?
- 2 What was the connection between the discovery of the materialist conception of history and the transformation of socialism into a science? What role did the dialectical method play in the creation of a scientific theory of socialism?
- 3 How does scientific socialism, i.e., Marxism, differ from utopian socialism?
- 4 What is the difference between “individual” and “social” production? Why does Engels say that production under capitalism is “socialised”? What has happened to this tendency since Engels died in 1895?
- 5 What is a “crisis of overproduction”? Does this mean that more is being produced than people need? In what ways do capitalist economic crises reflect a conflict between socialised production and private capitalist appropriation of the product?
- 6 Why did social classes come into being?
- 7 How does capitalism prepare the economic basis for building a classless, socialist society?
- 8 How can the working class abolish the economic crises that characterise capitalism? How can it abolish commodity production and social classes?

Class 5. What Is To Be Done? (I)

Reading

- a Lorimer, Introduction to Lenin, ‘Left-Wing’ Communism — An Infantile Disorder, Parts II and V [7 pages]
- b Lenin, “What Is To Be Done?”, *Collected Works*, Vol. 5, Ch. I, Section D, Ch. II (all) and Ch. III, Sections A, B and C [51 pages]

Supplementary reading

- c Lenin, “What Is To Be Done?”, *op cit*, Chs. I, II, and III

- d Lenin, “One Step Forward, Two Steps Back”, *Collected Works*, Vol. 7
- e Zinoviev, *History of the Bolshevik Party*, particularly to page 96.

Discussion points

- 1 Lenin states that “Without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement.” (Lenin; b, 369) Why is this? Why are correct theory and program important to a workers’ party? What happens to workers’ political organisations that carry on without them?
- 2 Why doesn’t the revolutionary theory of scientific socialism emerge directly out of the workers’ daily experiences in the workplace and the community?
- 3 What is “trade-union consciousness”? Lenin states that trade-union consciousness alone “means the ideological enslavement of the workers by the bourgeoisie.” (Lenin; b 384)Why is this?
- 4 Is trade-union activity sufficient to advance the class interests of the workers?
- 5 Why is an understanding of all the struggles and social conflicts that are going on in society essential to the training of workers in revolutionary activity?
- 6 Lenin insists that political questions — above all the question of political power — cannot be subordinate to issues of a trade-union character or be of equal importance, but rather that they are the most important questions facing the working class. Why is this?
- 7 How do Lenin’s thoughts on theory, on socialist and trade-union consciousness, and on the primacy of politics relate to the need for a revolutionary vanguard party?
- 8 Are there any groups today in Australia with views like those held by the Economists?

Class 6. What Is To Be Done? (II)

Reading

- a Lenin, “What Is To Be Done?”, *Collected Works*, Vol. 5, Ch. III, Section E, Ch. IV, Sections A-D, and Ch. V, Sections B and C [68 pages]
- b Lenin, “Where to Begin?”, *Collected Works*, Vol. 5 [8 pages]

Supplementary reading

- c Lenin, “What Is To Be Done?”, *op cit* (all)
- d Zinoviev, *History of the Bolshevik Party*, pp. 131-164

- e Communist International, *The Organisational Structure of the Communist Parties, the Methods and Content of Their Work*

Notes on the class

In reading this work, it is important to note views held by Lenin that were related to the specific problems of building a party that had to work underground and illegally because of the scope of tsarist repression. Members faced the constant danger of arrest. Thus in Section E of Chapter IV, Lenin stresses his opposition under Russian conditions to the kind of “broad” democracy within the party called for by the Economists. He noted that such a call could only be demagogic, since police-state conditions required party members to try to keep their activities and their identities hidden from the tsarist political police (the Okhrana) — and this obviously made complete democracy in decision-making or selection of leadership (which requires full freedom of information and discussion) impossible. However, even under these conditions the Bolsheviks were famous (and often ridiculed) for their wide-ranging internal debates.

Insofar as it was possible, the Bolsheviks held discussions, elected delegates, held democratic conferences, and tried to make basic policy decisions in a democratic manner. When conditions changed in February 1917 after the tsar’s fall, full-fledged internal democracy became possible. Unity in action and centralism in decision-making, however, remained fundamental elements of the Bolsheviks’ organisational functioning for combating the centralised power of the capitalist class and the capitalist state.

Note should be taken of comments that reflect the social conditions of Russia, where the most basic democratic tasks accomplished by the bourgeois revolutions in other countries remained to be completed. Russia in 1902 was not only a prison house of oppressed nationalities (non-Russians accounted for 54% of the population), but harboured a vast land-starved peasantry subjected to conditions similar to those of feudalism. There were no recognised civil or political liberties such as freedom of speech, press, public meetings or political association, and the government was an autocracy complete with a state church topped by an absolute monarchy.

These points must be distinguished from Lenin’s general concepts and ideas, which are highly relevant to building revolutionary parties under many different conditions.

As the crisis of capitalism deepens attempts are made to roll back the democratic rights of working people. Therefore, we can learn much from the resolute way Lenin fought for democratic rights, and the importance he gave to struggles on these issues. But there is a crucial difference between the situation in Russia in 1902 and bourgeois

democracies like present-day Australia.

The bourgeois parties in Russia in 1902 were involved in a fight — weak and compromising as it was — for democratic demands. Until 1905, they even gave some support to popular movements for such demands. In Australia and other advanced capitalist countries, bourgeois parties directly administer the oppressive state and are the main political force in efforts to curb democratic rights.

Many of the specific proposals Lenin makes for party organisation are related to underground conditions of existence. This is why he favoured in this period a party made up of professional revolutionaries who were full-time paid party organisers. Under changed conditions, the conception of professional revolutionary was considerably broadened.

The creation of professional revolutionaries wholly devoted to the working class's struggle for socialism, and carrying out political work in a consistent and professional rather than haphazard and amateur way, was later generalised by Lenin in his work in constructing the Communist International as a goal for Marxist parties everywhere. This was true regardless of whether individual party members were on the full-time staff of the party, working in factories or studying at schools or universities.

The readings for this class also include a section of Lenin's arguments on the need for a national newspaper.

Discussion points

- 1 Lenin's opponents accused him of downplaying "workers' demands" by putting such stress on democratic demands and the struggles of other social groups (e.g., students, peasants). Why did Lenin believe the party must champion and seek to lead the struggle for democratic demands? Why did he believe the party should champion the needs of all the oppressed? Did this mean he downplayed demands in the interests of the workers?
- 2 Lenin said that the ideal of the party should "not be the trade-union secretary, but *the tribune of the people*." (Lenin; a, 423) What did this mean? What were the implications of this for party work in the trade unions?
- 3 Lenin said that without the combination of "socialist convictions with professional skill" (Lenin; a, 472) in agitation and organisation, the proletariat cannot be victorious in its struggle to overthrow capitalism. Why is this?
- 4 Lenin said that "no revolutionary movement can endure without a stable organisation of leaders maintaining continuity," that, "the broader the popular mass drawn spontaneously into the struggle, which forms the basis of the movement and participates in it, the more urgent [is] the need for such an

- organisation” and that “such an organisation must consist chiefly of people professionally engaged in revolutionary activity”. (Lenin; a, 464) Why is this?
- 5 How is the concept of an organisation of professional revolutionaries related to what Lenin says in the beginning of *What Is To Be Done?* about trade-union consciousness and socialist consciousness? How is it related to his concept that the struggle for Marxist theory and program is as important as practical class-struggle activity for a revolutionary socialist party?
 - 6 Why should a revolutionary party be democratic? Why is an organisation made up chiefly of professional revolutionaries more likely to be able to be democratic than an organisation consisting largely of members who only engage in revolutionary activity when there is a mass revolutionary movement?
 - 7 Why should a revolutionary party have a centralised decision-making structure? Some radicals have suggested that “local organising” or a “coalition” (i.e., a federation) of different movements can substitute for a centralised party of revolutionary action. Why is such an organisational form inadequate to the task of leading a proletarian revolution?
 - 8 Lenin saw a national newspaper as the collective propagandist, collective agitator, and collective organiser of the party. How does it fulfil these functions?

Class 7. Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism (I)

Reading

- a Lorimer, Introduction to Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, Parts I-VI [16 pages]
- b Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, Sections I-VII [66 pages]

Discussion points

- 1 Why does capitalist competition inevitably lead to the formation of monopolies? What does Lenin mean when he says that capitalist monopolies are “in permanent and insoluble contradiction” with their environment? (Lenin; b, 100)
- 2 What is the role of banks under monopoly capitalism? How does this role develop out of the function of banks in the previous, free competition, stage of capitalism?
- 3 What is finance capital? What impact does its emergence have on the capitalist economy?

- 4 What contradictions are involved in the formation of cartels?
- 5 “Typical of the old capitalism, when free competition held undivided sway, was the export of *goods*. Typical of the latest stage of capitalism, when monopolies rule, is the export of *capital*.” (Lenin; b, 70) Why does the domination of monopolies in the industrialised countries lead to the export of capital?
- 6 Why did the export of capital from the industrialised countries lead to the partitioning of the non-industrialised world into colonial empires?
- 7 What was Kautsky’s definition of imperialism? How did it differ from Lenin’s? What was Lenin’s criticism of Kautsky’s definition of imperialism?
- 8 What impact does imperialism have on the development and rate of growth of the world capitalist economy?

Class 8. Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism (II)

Reading

- a Lorimer, Introduction to Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, Parts V and VI [6 pages]
- b Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, Preface to the French and German Editions, Sections VIII-X [29 pages]
- c Lenin, “Imperialism and the Split in Socialism”, in *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* [13 pages]
- d Lenin, “The Revolutionary Proletariat and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination”, *Collected Works*, Vol. 21 [8 pages]
- e Lenin, “Report of the Commission on the National and the Colonial Questions [to the Second Congress of the Communist International]”, *Collected Works*, Vol. 31 [6 pages]

Discussion points

- 1 Why does Lenin describe imperialist capitalism as “parasitic” and “decaying”?
- 2 What does Lenin mean when he defines imperialism as “capitalism in transition, or, more precisely, as moribund capitalism”? (Lenin; b, 122)
- 3 What was Kautsky’s theory of “ultra-imperialism”? What was Lenin’s criticism of it?
- 4 “Imperialism has the tendency to create privileged sections ... among the workers, and to detach them from the broad masses of the proletariat.” (Lenin; b, 105) Why and how does this occur?

- 5 Why is the labour aristocracy the “principal prop of the Second International, and in our days, the principal *social* (not military) *prop of the bourgeoisie*”? (Lenin; b, 31)
- 6 Why does Lenin say that “a ‘*bourgeois labour party*’ is *inevitable* and typical in *all* imperialist countries”? (Lenin; c, 132-133)
- 7 Why does the emergence of imperialism mean that socialists “must *link* the revolutionary struggle for socialism with a revolutionary program on the national question”? (Lenin; d, 408)
- 8 What does the right of nations to self-determination mean? Why do Marxists defend this right?
- 9 “We have discussed whether it would be right or wrong, in principle and in theory, to state that the Communist International and the Communist parties must support the bourgeois-democratic movement in backward countries.” (Lenin; e, 241) What was Lenin’s answer to this question?
- 10 Why and how did Lenin and the Comintern think that the backward countries could bypass the capitalist stage of industrialisation?

Class 9. The State & Revolution (I)

Reading

- a Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, Chs. I-III [39 pages]

Supplementary reading

- b Engels, “The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State”, Chs. V-IX, Marx & Engels *Selected Works*, Vol. 3

Discussion points

- 1 What is the cause of the existence of states? What purpose do they serve? Why is it false to view the state as an organ for the reconciliation of class antagonisms? What are the chief instruments of state power?
- 2 Does the existence of legislative institutions (parliaments) elected by all of the people invalidate the Marxist view of the state as an instrument of class rule?
- 3 Why do the workers need their own state to abolish capitalism and build socialism? Why can’t the capitalist state machine simply be taken over by workers and used to advance their class interests?
- 4 Lenin writes: “The suppression of the bourgeois state by the proletarian state is

impossible without a violent revolution.” (p. 27) Why is this?

- 5 Marxists have stated that their aim is to replace the capitalist state with the “dictatorship of the proletariat”. What does this mean? How does the use of the term “dictatorship” here differ from the common use of this term to describe brutally repressive *governments* that deny democratic rights? Why is the “dictatorship of the proletariat” consistent with a qualitative widening of democratic rights for working people?
- 6 Lenin writes: “To confine Marxism to the theory of the class struggle means curtailing Marxism, distorting it, reducing it to something acceptable to the bourgeoisie.” (p. 36) Why is this?
- 7 What lessons did Marx draw from the experience of the 1871 uprising of the Parisian workers (the “Paris Commune”) about the specific forms of the workers’ state power that was to replace the capitalist state? Why was the Commune-type state not a state in the strict sense of the term?
- 8 Lenin says, “We cannot imagine democracy, even proletarian democracy, without representative institutions, but we can and *must* imagine democracy without parliamentarism, if criticism of bourgeois society is not mere words for us, if the desire to overthrow the rule of the bourgeoisie is our earnest and sincere desire ...” (p. 46) Why is this? How would the representative institutions of a working-class democracy differ from parliamentarism?
- 9 If Marxists are opposed to the parliamentary system, why do we favour participation in parliamentary elections?
- 10 Lenin wrote: “All officials, without exception, elected and subject to recall *at any time*, their salaries reduced to the level of ordinary ‘workmen’s wages’ — these simple and ‘self-evident’ democratic measures, while completely uniting the interests of the workers and the majority of peasants, at the same time serve as a bridge leading from capitalism to socialism.” (p. 44) How would these measures unite the interests of the workers with the majority of the middle class (the peasantry, in Russia’s case)? How would they “serve as a bridge leading from capitalism to socialism”? What further measures would need to be taken to abolish capitalism and establish the foundations for building socialism?

Class 10. The State & Revolution (II)

Reading

- a Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, Chs. IV-VI [48 pages]

Supplementary reading

- b Lenin, “The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky”, *Democracy and Revolution*
- c Marx, “Critique of the Gotha Program”, Marx & Engels *Selected Works*, Vol. 3

Discussion points

- 1 What is the difference between the Marxist and the anarchist view of the state? Do Marxists and anarchists share the same view of how the future classless society would be organised?
- 2 Why did Marx and Engels criticise the German socialists’ use of the formula “people’s state” to describe their political goals?
- 3 Lenin writes: “Approaching the matter [of the forms of the state] from the standpoint of the proletariat and the proletarian revolution, Engels, like Marx, upheld democratic centralism ... one and indivisible.” (p. 64) How would such a centralised republic avoid “ordering from above” and allow local self-government? Why did it provide greater local freedom than a federal republic? Why did Engels believe a federal republic would be a “step forward” in Britain?
- 4 What is democracy? What change occurs to democracy in the transition period from capitalism to communist society? Why will democracy wither away as society reaches the higher phase of communism? What will replace it?
- 5 Why does Lenin argue that the German Social-Democratic leader Karl Kautsky “has not understood the difference between bourgeois parliamentarism, which combines democracy (*not for the people*) with bureaucracy (*against the people*), and proletarian democracy, which will take immediate steps to cut bureaucracy down to the roots ...”? (p. 93) What is bureaucracy? Why does parliamentary democracy inevitably go hand in hand with bureaucracy? How will proletarian democracy “cut bureaucracy down to its roots”?
- 6 Lenin cites the following statements by Kautsky: “... under no circumstances, can it [that is, the proletarian victory over a hostile government] lead to the *destruction* of the state power; it can lead only to a certain *shifting* [verschiebung] of the balance of forces *within the state power* ... The aim of our political struggle remains, as in the past, the conquest of state power by winning

a majority in parliament and by raising parliament to the rank of master of the government.” (p. 99) Why does Lenin criticise these statements as “the purest and most vulgar opportunism”?

Class 11. ‘Left-Wing’ Communism (I)

Reading

- a Lorimer, Introduction to Lenin, *‘Left-Wing’ Communism — An Infantile Disorder*, Parts I-VII [20 pages]
- b Lenin, *‘Left-Wing’ Communism — An Infantile Disorder*, Sections I-VI [32 pages]

Supplementary reading

- c Trotsky, “The School of Revolutionary Strategy,” *The First Five Years of the Communist International*, Vol. 2
- d Trotsky, “Preface to the Polish edition of Lenin’s *‘Left-Wing’ Communism — An Infantile Disorder*,” *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1932)*

Discussion points

- 1 What were the principal stages in the development of Bolshevism?
- 2 What is ultraleftism? Why does Lenin call it petty-bourgeois revolutionism? How do the methods of struggle favoured by ultraleftists differ from proletarian methods of struggle?
- 3 What aspects of the tactics used in the making of the 1917 Russian Revolution have international applicability? What misconceptions about Bolshevik strategy and tactics encouraged ultraleftism in the Communist International?
- 4 Lenin writes that the broadest masses become convinced of the correctness of the program of the Marxist party “*from their own experience.*” (Lenin; b, 31) How does ultraleftism ignore this idea?
- 5 Why does Lenin favour taking advantage of every opportunity for legal work? What is wrong with the ultraleft view that legal activity inevitably leads to reformism?
- 6 What are the flaws in the position that revolutionaries should only work in organisations that put forward a “revolutionary line”? What do Marxists counterpose to this ultraleft approach?
- 7 Why is it wrong to make support for socialist revolution a condition for membership in trade unions? How would such an approach affect the prospects

for winning workers to revolutionary socialism?

Class 12. 'Left-Wing' Communism (II)

Reading

- a Lenin, *Left-Wing' Communism: An Infantile Disorder*, Sections VII-X and Appendix [41 pages]

Supplementary reading

- b Communist International, "The Communist Parties and Parliamentarism", in *Left-Wing' Communism: An Infantile Disorder*

Discussion points

- 1 Why did Lenin consider participation by revolutionaries in bourgeois parliaments as "obligatory"? What were the ultraleftists' arguments against this? Evaluate these arguments.
- 2 How did Lenin define electoral boycott? Under what circumstances is a boycott of bourgeois elections justified? Why is it wrong to counterpose the struggle for organs of workers' power like soviets to participation by revolutionaries in bourgeois elections?
- 3 Why did the Bolsheviks not call for the overthrow of the bourgeois Provisional Government immediately after the February 1917 revolution? Why did they call for the creation of a bourgeois parliament (the Constituent Assembly)? Why didn't this contradict the revolutionary stand of opposition to all forms of capitalist rule?
- 4 Why is it dangerous to draw immediate tactical conclusions from correct historical generalisations (e.g., "parliament is outmoded" or "capitalism is ripe for revolution")? What did Lenin ascribe this mistake to?
- 5 Lenin writes that "to reject compromises 'on principle', to reject the permissibility of compromises in general, no matter of what kind, is childishness ..." (p. 42) Why is this? Why is it necessary for revolutionaries to resort to compromises in their struggle against capitalism? What distinguishes such tactics from the illegitimate compromises of opportunists?
- 6 Why is it vital for a Marxist party to "search after forms of the *transition* or the *approach* to the proletarian revolution"? (p. 90) Why can't revolutionaries just "make the revolution" without worrying about "forms of the *transition* or the

- approach*”? What do sectarians and ultralefts counterpose to this?
- 7 Did the tactics of the ultraleftists aid or retard a mass break with the opportunists in Lenin’s time? Do they aid or retard it today in Australia?
 - 8 Why did Lenin argue for the British Communists to call for the election of a Labour government? What did Lenin mean when he said they should support the Labour Party “in the same way as the rope supports a hanged man”? (p. 86) Is this tactic still valid today, for example, in relation to the Australian Labor Party?

Class 13. The Transitional Program

Required reading

- a Lorimer, Introduction to Trotsky, *The Transitional Program and the Struggle for Socialism*, pp. 6-21 [16 pages]
- b Trotsky, “The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International”, *The Transitional Program and the Struggle for Socialism*, pp. 23-59 [37 pages]

Supplementary reading

- c “A Discussion with Trotsky on the Transitional Program” in Trotsky, *The Transitional Program and the Struggle for Socialism*, pp. 68-78

Discussion points

- 1 “Classical social democracy, functioning in an epoch of progressive capitalism, divided its program into two parts independent of each other: the *minimum program*, which limited itself to reforms within the framework of bourgeois society, and the *maximum program*, which promised substitution of socialism for capitalism in the indefinite future. Between the minimum and the maximum program, no bridge existed.” (Trotsky; b, 26) Why was such a program adequate in the epoch of “progressive capitalism”? What does such a program lead to in the epoch of decaying capitalism?
- 2 “It is necessary to help the masses in the process of the daily struggle to find the bridge between present demands and the socialist program of the revolution.” (Trotsky; b, 25) Why is a “bridge” necessary between the program of “minimum” (immediate and democratic) demands and the maximum program of socialist revolution in the present epoch?
- 3 “This bridge should include a system of *transitional demands* ...” (Trotsky; b, 25)

What is the difference between transitional demands and immediate demands? Why is the demand for a 32-hour workweek on 40 hours pay an immediate demand while the demand for sliding scale of wages (automatic wage indexation) a transitional demand?

- 4 “Property owners and their lawyers will prove the ‘unrealisability’ of these demands. Smaller, especially ruined capitalists, in addition will refer to their account ledgers.” (Trotsky; b, 27) How do Marxists advise workers to respond to such capitalist blackmail?
- 5 “The struggle against unemployment is not to be considered without calling for a broad and bold organisation of *public works*. But public works can have a continuous and progressive significance for society, as for the unemployed themselves, only when they are made part of a general plan, worked out to cover a considerable number of years.” (Trotsky; b, 32) Why is this?
- 6 “The working out of even the most elementary plan — from the point of view of the exploited, not the exploiters — is impossible without workers’ control ... Thus, workers control becomes a *school for planned economy*.” (Trotsky; b, 32) What is “workers control”? How does it differ from the workers’ management of socialised industry?
- 7 “Only the expropriation of the private banks and the concentration of the entire credit system in the hands of the state will provide the latter with the necessary actual, i.e., material resources — and not merely paper and bureaucratic resources — for economic planning ... However, *the state-isation of the banks* will produce these favourable results only if the state power passes completely from the hands of the exploiters into the hands of the toilers.” (Trotsky; b, 34) How can propaganda and agitation for the implementation of a system of transitional demands to deal with the problem of unemployment be used to “help the masses in the process of daily struggle to find the bridge between present [immediate] demands and the socialist program of [proletarian] revolution”?
- 8 “*The arming of the proletariat* is an imperative concomitant element to its struggle for liberation. When the proletariat wills it, it will find the road and the means to arming.” (Trotsky; b, 36) Why is it essential for the proletariat, in order to liberate itself, to become armed? Why is the question of the *arming of the working class* in the imperialist countries a problem of political will (i.e., class consciousness and organisation) rather than a problem of the workers’ individual ability to obtain firearms? What is the Marxist approach to solving this problem?

- 9 “From April to September 1917, the Bolsheviks demanded that the SRs and Mensheviks break with the liberal bourgeoisie and take power into their own hands ... the demand of the Bolsheviks, addressed to the Mensheviks and SRs: ‘Break with the bourgeoisie, take the power into your own hands!’ had for the masses a tremendous educational significance ... The agitation around the slogan of a workers’ and farmers’ government preserves under all conditions a tremendous educational value.” (Trotsky; b, 43- 44) How did the Bolsheviks *agitate* for a workers’ and peasants’ government in 1917? Is it true that “*agitation* around the slogan of a workers’ and farmers’ government preserves under *all conditions* a tremendous educational value”? How, for example, could such *agitation* be carried out today in Australia in a manner that would win broad masses of workers away from allegiance to the Laborites to supporting a Marxist party?
- 10 “Sectarians are capable of differentiating between but two colors: red and black. So as not to tempt themselves, they simplify reality ... These sterile politicians generally have no need of a bridge in the form of transitional demands because they do not intend to cross over to the other shore. They simply dawdle in one place, satisfying themselves with a repetition of the self-same meagre abstractions.” (Trotsky; b, 56-57) What does Trotsky mean when he writes that “revolutionary” sectarians simplify reality so as not “to tempt themselves”? How do the Trotskyist sects transform transitional demands into sterile abstractions?

Miscellaneous Classes

Class 1. Bourgeois Democracy & Socialist Democracy

Reading [126 pages]

- a Lenin, *Democracy and Revolution*, pp. 5-19, 35-80, 113-149, 164-168, 193-195 [106 pages]
- b Serge, "The Constituent Assembly", in *Readings for Classes*, pp. 43-52 [20 pages]

Discussion points

- 1 "... all transitional 'forms of government' under capitalism, are only variations of the *bourgeois state*, that is, of the *dictatorship of the bourgeoisie*." (a, 43) Discuss.
- 2 "... the ruling party in a democracy extends the protection of the minority only to another *bourgeois* party ..." (a, 49) Discuss.
- 3 "The exploiter and the exploited cannot be equal." (a, 56) Discuss in relation to democracy under capitalism.
- 4 "... people became more and more unequal ... But in the sphere of the legal edifice of the state, these glaring contradictions disappeared, and there penetrated thither only insubstantial legal shadows." (Trotsky in a, 166) Discuss Trotsky's analysis of the "metaphysics of democracy".
- 5 "The substance of soviet government is that the permanent and only foundation of state power, the entire machinery of state, is the mass-scale organisation of the classes oppressed by capitalism ..." (a, 142) Discuss.
- 6 "... the disenfranchisement of the bourgeoisie is not a necessary and indispensable feature of the dictatorship of the proletariat." (a, 73) Discuss. What other departures from "pure democracy" were contained in the first Soviet constitution? (See the "ABC of Communism", §53.)
- 7 "Every direct or indirect attempt to consider the question of the Constituent Assembly from a formal, legal point of view, within the framework of ordinary

bourgeois democracy and disregarding the class struggle and civil war, would be a betrayal of the proletariat's cause, and the adoption of the bourgeois standpoint." (a, 116) Discuss the whole episode of the Constituent Assembly.

- 8 "How could such a miracle have occurred? How could the Bolsheviks, who polled one-fourth of the votes, have won a victory over the petty-bourgeois democrats, who were in alliance (coalition) with the bourgeoisie, and who together with the bourgeoisie polled three-fourths of the votes?" (a, 120) Discuss the three conditions for the initial victory of the revolution which Lenin outlines.
- 9 What further condition had to be fulfilled to guarantee the survival of the revolution? How did the Bolsheviks carry this out?
- 10 How does Lenin respond to the argument that the proletarian revolution can be (should be) decided by the masses voting for it?

Class 2. Their morals and ours

Reading [95 pages]

- a Trotsky et al, *Their Morals and Ours* [82 pages]
- b Williams, "Mercy or Death to the Whites?", APPENDIX [9 pages]
- c Medvedev, "Against Torture", in *Readings for Classes*, pp. 53-56 [4 pages]

Discussion points

- 1 "... morality has always been class morality ..." (Engels; a, 74) Discuss. What is the morality of the different classes?
- 2 "Morality serves the purpose of helping human society rise to a higher level and rid itself of the exploitation of labour." (Lenin; a, 84). Discuss Lenin's speech to the Young Communist League.
- 3 "The theory of eternal morals can in no way survive without God." (Trotsky; a, 13) Discuss.
- 4 "Norms 'obligatory upon all' become the less forceful the sharper the character assumed by the class struggle." (Trotsky; a, 17) What are norms "obligatory upon all"? What is the point Trotsky is making about their field of action?
- 5 "The appeal to abstract [moral] norms is not a disinterested philosophical mistake but a necessary element in the mechanics of class deception." (Trotsky; a, 18) Discuss.
- 6 "The decay of capitalism denotes the decay of contemporary society with its

laws and morals.” (Trotsky; a, 19) Discuss.

- 7 What were Trotsky’s criticisms of the approach of the “democratic moralisers” and “petty-bourgeois moralists”?
- 8 “Problems of revolutionary morality are fused with the problems of revolutionary strategy and tactics.” (Trotsky; a, 37) Discuss.
- 9 Does the end justify the means? What is Trotsky’s argument here?
- 10 It would be good to fit in some discussion of a number of concrete examples which may serve to illustrate the above ideas (especially point 9). For instance:
 - The death penalty. What does our party program say about it? What is Cuba’s position? Etc.
 - Discuss the Russian Revolution and civil war (references b and c, taking of hostages, etc.).
 - Terrorism in liberation struggles, e.g., the bombings and assassinations carried out by the Basque nationalist group ETA or the suicide bombings carried out by the Palestinian group Hamas.
 - On may 27, 1990, two Australian tourists were executed in the Netherlands by an IRA action team which mistook them for off-duty British soldiers. Obviously, it was a shattering personal tragedy for the dead Australians and all those connected with them. The IRA apologised. The media, of course, went into a frenzy of anti-IRA and anti-Republican propaganda. What can we say about this incident: Was the IRA action “immoral”; Was it the result of a flawed strategy; or what?

Appendix

Mercy or Death to the Whites?

By Albert Rhys Williams

[Rhys Williams (like John Reed, an American journalist who was sympathetic to the Bolsheviks), later helped organise — at Lenin’s suggestion — an International Brigade to defend the revolution against the forces of the Allied interventionists.]

It was a black outlook for the White Guards hemmed inside the telephone station. But now comes this jubilant news that an armoured car is hurrying to their rescue. They gaze intently down the street for the first glimpse of it.

As it comes swinging in from the Nevsky, they hail it with cheers. Like a great iron steed it lumbers along and stops before the barricades. Cheers again from the Whites. Ill-starred cheers! They do not know that they are cheering their end. They do not know that this is not their car, it has passed into the hands of the Reds. It is a Trojan horse, within whose armoured belly are concealed the soldiers of the revolution. It slews about until its muzzle is pointed through the archway. Then suddenly it spouts a stream of lead as a garden hose spouts water. Screams now instead of cheers! Tumbling over boxes and one another, the officers, in one shrieking, tangled mass, go crashing through the hallway and up the stairs.

Poetic justice! Here where a few hours earlier these counterrevolutionists pressed their revolvers against the temples of the revolution, the revolution presses its machine guns against their temples.

The White Guards in a funk

At the top of the stairway the Whites disentangle themselves, not to make a stand, but to run better. Ten resolute men could have held this stairway against a thousand. But there are not 10 men to do it. There is not one. There is only a panic-stricken pack, in

From Williams, “Mercy or Death to the Whites”, *Through the Russian Revolution* (Boni & Liveright: New York, 1921).

the clutch of a fear that drains the blood from their faces, the reason from their brains. All courage gone. All prudence gone. Gone even the herd-instinct of unity in the face of common peril.

“*Sauve qui peut*” (let him save himself who can) becomes the cry of the older officers.

They fling away caps, belts and swords; insignia of honour now become badges of shame and death. They rip off shoulder straps, gold-braid and buttons. They plead for a workman’s costume, a cloak, an overcoat — anything to disguise their rank. An officer coming upon a greasy blouse hanging on a peg becomes a maniac with joy. A captain finding the apron of a cook puts it on, plunges his arms in flour and already white from terror becomes the whitest White Guard in all Russia.

But for most of them there is no cover save the darkness of closets, booths and attic corners. Into these they crawl like hunted animals in collapse. To treachery against their enemies these officers now add treason to their allies. They had led the Junkers into this trap. Now the trap is closing, and the officers abandon them.

First to rally their wits, the Junkers begin to cry out, “Our officers! Where are our officers?” No answer to their cries. “Damn the cowards!” they shout. “They have deserted us.”

Rage at this betrayal fuses the Junkers together. Their best tactics would be to hold the stairway, but they shrink away from it. Red vengeance crouching at the foot fills them with dread. It will not let them move forward. They fall back into a thick-walled room with a narrow entrance. There, like rats clustering in a hole, they wait the onrush of the Red tide that may come rising up the stairway, flooding the corridors, drowning them out.

To some of these young fellows, sprung from the middle class, this is a doubly tragic ending. Death at the hands of peasants and workers with whom they have no quarrel! But, caught in this camp of the counterrevolution, they must share its doom. They know how richly they deserve it. This sense of guilt unnerves them. Their guns fall from their hands. They slink down on chairs and tables, moaning, their eyes fixed on the entrance through which the Red tide is to come crashing in. They listen for the swirl of the first wave flinging itself on the stairway; hammering on the door. Save their own hammering pulses there is not a sound.

Reds, Whites & girls petrified by fear

There is another chamber of torture in this building. It holds Antonov, the Red sentries, and all captives bagged by the Whites during the day. They sit helpless, locked in their prison, while outside rages the battle sealing the fate of their revolution, and their own

fate. No one comes to tell them how the battle goes. Only through the thick walls comes the muffled crackle of rifles, the crash of falling glass.

Now all these noises abruptly cease. What does it mean? The triumph of the counterrevolution? The Whites victorious? What next? The opening of the door? The firing-squad lining them up before a wall?

Bandages tied round their eyes? The report of rifles? Their own death? The death of the revolution? So many muse, heads sunk in hands, while the clock above the door pitilessly tells off the seconds. Each stroke may be the last. Awaiting that last, they sit straining to hear the tread of the firing-squad coming down the corridor. But save for the ticking clock, not a sound.

Still another torture chamber, this one filled with women. It is the top floor, with hundreds of telephone girls huddled around the switchboards. The eight-hour bombardment, the stampede of the officers, their frenzied cries for help, have shattered the nerves of these girls and their minds run wild. They run to wild stories of Bolshevik atrocities, the rape of the Women's Battalion, crimes imputed to these Red hordes swarming into the courtyard below.

In their fevered imagination they are already victims of a like brutality, writhing in the arms of these monsters. They break into tears. They write frantic little last farewells. They cling together in white-faced groups, listening for the first yells of the ruffians, the thumping of their boots along the hall. But there are no thumping boots — only their own thumping hearts.

The building becomes quiet as a tomb. It is not the quiet of the dead, but tense and vibrant, the silence of hundreds of living beings paralysed with terror. The silence is contagious. It passes through the walls and lays hold of the Red throngs outside. They in turn become still, stricken by the same paralysis of fear. They shrink away from the stairway lest it belch out clouds of gas, a fusillade of bombs. Hundreds outside in terror of the Whites within! Hundreds inside in terror of the Reds without! Thousands of human beings torturing each other.

Inside the building this ordeal by silence becomes unendurable. I, at least, can endure it no longer. For relief I run forward, not knowing where; anywhere to get away from the silence. Opening a side door by accident I catapult into the chamber filled with junkers. They jump as though it is the crack of doom.

“American correspondent”, they gasp. “Oh! Help us! Help us!”

“How can I?” I falter. “What shall I do?”

“Something — anything!” they implore. “Only save us.”

Some one says, “Antonov”. The others catch up the name, repeating it like an incantation. “Antonov. Yes, Antonov. Go to Antonov. Downstairs — Antonov. Quick,

before it is too late — Antonov!” They point the way.

In a minute I make another headlong entrance before another astounded audience — the captive Reds and Antonov.

“You are all free. The officers have fled. The Junkers surrender. They beg you to save them. Any terms. All they ask is their lives. Only hurry, hurry.”

In a moment this prisoner Antonov awaiting death becomes the arbiter of death. The condemned is asked to be the judge. A startling change! But the face of this little, tired overworked revolutionist did not change. If the thought of revenge flashed into his mind, it as quickly flashed out again. “So I am not to be a corpse but a commander”, he said wanly. “Next thing is to see the Junkers is it? Very well.” He put on his hat and walked upstairs to the Junkers.

“Antonov! *Gospadeen* Antonov! Commander Antonov!” they wailed. “Spare our lives. We know we are guilty. But we throw ourselves on the mercy of the revolution.”

Sorry ending to a gay adventure! In the morning sallying out to kill Bolsheviks and in the evening begging Bolsheviks for their own lives. Saying “*Tovarish*” as one might say “swine”, then breathing it reverently as a term of honour.

“*Tovarish* Antonov”, they implored, “give us your word as a Bolshevik, a true Bolshevik. Give us your word for our safety.”

“My word”, said Antonov. “I give it.”

“They may not take your word, *Tovarish* Antonov”, muttered one poor wretch. “They may kill us anyhow.”

“If they kill you”, assured Antonov, “they must first kill me.”

“But we don’t want to be killed”, whimpered the poor fellow.

The mob decrees death to the White Guards

Antonov could not conceal his contempt. Turning into the hall, he started down the stairs. To the taut nerves every step sounded like the detonation of a gun.

The Red throng outside heard the steps and raised their rifles expecting a fusillade. And then this surprise! Antonov, their own leader!

“*Nash! Nash!*” (Ours! Ours!) acclaimed a hundred voices. “Antonov! Long live Antonov!” rose from another hundred throats. The shout raised in the courtyard was caught up in the street and the crowd surged forward crying, “The officers, Antonov? Where are the officers and the Junkers?”

“Done for”, announced Antonov. “Their arms are down.”

Like the bursting of a dam came the roar from a thousand throats. Yells of triumph and howls of rage proclaiming “Death to the officers! Death to the Junkers!”

Good reason for the Whites to tremble! At the mercy of those to whom they had

forfeited all claims for mercy. Not by fighting, but by fighting foully they had roused this volcano of wrath. In the eyes of these soldiers and workmen the Whites were murderers of the Red comrades, assassins of the revolution, miscreants to be exterminated like vermin. Fear only had kept the Reds from plunging up the stairway. Now all cause for caution was gone. The infuriated men stormed forward filling the night with their cries: "Wipe out the butchers! Kill the White Devils! Kill every one of them!"

A torch here and there in the blackness lit up the bearded faces of peasants, soldier-faces, the faces of city artisans grimed and thin, and in the front rank the open, alert countenances of the big sailors from the Baltic fleet. On all of them, in flashing eyes, and clenched jaws vengeance was written, the terrible vengeance of the long-suffering. Pressed from the rear, the mass lunged forward against the stairway where Antonov stood, calm and impassive, but looking so frail and helpless before this avalanche of men.

Raising his hand and voice, Antonov cried out, "*Tovarishi*, you cannot kill them. The Junkers have surrendered. They are our prisoners."

The throng was stunned. Then in a hoarse cry of resentment it found its voice. "No! No! They are not our prisoners", it protested. "They are dead men."

"They have given up their arms", continued Antonov. "I have given them their lives."

"You may give them their lives. We don't. We give them the bayonet!" bawled a big peasant turning to the crowd for approval.

"The bayonet! Yes, we give them the bayonet!" they howled in a blast of approbation.

Antonov faced the tornado. Drawing a big revolver, he waved it aloft, crying out, "I have given the junkers my word for their safety. You understand! I will back my word with this."

The crowd gasped. This was incredible.

"What's this? What do you mean?" they demanded.

Clutching his revolver, finger on the trigger, Antonov repeated his warning: "I promised them their lives. I will back that promise with this."

"Traitor! Renegade!" a hundred voices thundered at him. "Defender of the White Guards!" a big sailor flung in his face. "You want to save the rascals. But you can't. We'll kill them."

"The first man who lays his hands on a prisoner — *I will kill him on the spot!*" Antonov spoke slowly with emphasis on each word. "*You understand! I will shoot him dead!*"

"Shoot us?" queried the affronted sailors.

“Shoot us! Shoot us!” bellowed the whole indignant mob.

For it was just that — a mob, with all the vehement passions of the mob. A mob with every primitive instinct inflamed and ascendant: cruel, brutal, lusting for blood. In it flamed the savagery of the wolf, the ferocity of the tiger. A huge beast drawn out of the jungles of the city, stirred up by these White hunters, wounded, and bleeding from its wounds, all day exasperated and tormented, at last, in a paroxysm of joy and rage it was about to pounce upon its tormentors and tear them to pieces. At this moment this little man stepped between it and its prey! To me the most emotional thing in the whole revolution is this little man standing in that stairway, so unemotionally looking that mob in the eye; rather, in its thousand glaring eyes. There was pallor in his face, but no tremor in his limbs. And no quaver in his voice, as he said again slowly and solemnly, “The first man who tries to kill a Junker, I will kill him.”

The sheer audacity, the impudence of it took their breath away.

“What do you mean?” they yelled. “To save these officers, counterrevolutionists, you kill us workmen — revolutionists?”

“Revolutionists!” retorted Antonov, derisively. “Revolutionists! Where do I see revolutionists here? You dare call yourselves revolutionists? *You*, who think of killing helpless men and prisoners!” His taunt went home. The crowd winced as though struck by a whip.

“Listen!” he went on. “Do you know what you are doing? Do you realise where this madness leads? When you kill a captive White Guard you are not killing the counterrevolution, you are killing the revolution. For this revolution I gave 20 years of my life in exile and prison. Do you think that I, a revolutionist, will stand by and watch revolutionists crucify the revolution?”

“But if they had *us* there would be no quarter”, bellowed a peasant, “they would kill us.”

“True, they would kill us”, answered Antonov. “What of that? They are not revolutionists. They belong to the old order, to the tsar and the knout, to murder and death. But *we* belong to the revolution. And the revolution means something better. It means liberty and life for all. That’s why you give it your life and blood. But you must give it more. You must give it your reason. Above the satisfaction of your passions you must put service to the revolution. For the triumph of the revolution you have been brave. Now, for the honour of the revolution be merciful. You love the revolution. I only ask you not to kill the thing you love.”

He was aflame, his face incandescent, his arms and voice imploring. His whole being, focusing itself in that last appeal, left him exhausted.

“Speak to them, comrade!” he entreated.

Four weeks earlier I had spoken to these sailors from the turret of their battleship *The Republic*. As I stepped to the front they recognised me.

“The American *tovarish*”, they shouted.

Loudly and fervently I spoke about the revolution, about the battle waged throughout Russia for land and freedom, about their own betrayal by the White Guards and the justice in their wrath. But the eyes of the world turned to them as the fighting vanguard of the social revolution. Would they take the old bloody path of retaliation or blaze the way to a nobler code? They had shown themselves daring for the preservation of the revolution. Would they show themselves magnanimous for its glory?

It was an effective speech at the outset. But not because of its content. The recitation of the Lord’s Prayer or Webster’s Oration would have been almost as effective. Not one in a hundred understood what I was saying. For I spoke in English.

But these words — strange and foreign — crackling out in the dark held them and made them pause — precisely what Antonov was working for — that this hurricane of passion might subside a little, to gain time for another impulse to get the upper hand.

The mob disciplined by the revolution

For while this was a mob, it was a revolutionary mob. Deep-rooted in the hearts of at least half this workman-soldier crowd was one powerful abiding loyalty — the revolution. The word was a fetish. Their dreams and hopes and longings were all woven around “the revolution”. They were its servants. It was their master.

True, at this moment another master held them, displacing every idea of the revolution. Revenge was in the saddle, recklessly lashing the mob along. But this was temporary. The permanent allegiance of their lives was to the revolution. Given the chance it would rise up, expel the usurper, assert its authority and again control its followers. Antonov did not stand alone against a multitude. In that mob, there were a thousand Antonovs, sharing with him the same high zeal for the revolution. Antonov was just one unit of that mob, flesh of its flesh, spirit of its spirit, sharing its antagonism to the Junkers and officers, aflame with its same hot passions.

Antonov happened to be first of this mob to rein in his passions, the first in whose consciousness the revolution replaced revenge. The change made in his heart by the concept of the revolution would likewise be wrought in the hearts of the soldiers and workers. This Antonov knew. By repeating the magic word “revolution” he sought to bring them to their revolutionary selves; he sought to evoke revolutionary order out of chaos. And he did.

Before our eyes we saw again the ancient miracle of the word — the stilling of the

tempest. The howling and the raging died away, save for here and there an angry voice still persisting. But as Woskov interpreted my words, and Antonov spoke again, these centres of dissent subsided. Chastened and in a receptive mood, these soldiers and sailors were substituting for their own will to revenge the will of the revolution. Only let them understand that will.

“What is it, Antonov?” they cried. “What do you want us to do?”

“To treat the Junkers as prisoners of war”, said Antonov. “To carry out the terms of surrender. I have pledged these Junkers their lives. I ask you to back my pledge with yours.”

The mob became a soviet. A sailor spoke; then two soldiers and a workingman. The vote was taken by show of hands. A hundred battlestained hands went up, and another hundred until nearly a thousand hands were lifted. A thousand clenched fists threatening death to the officers now raised in an open-handed promise of life.

At this juncture arrived a delegation from the Petrograd Duma commissioned “to liquidate the civil strife with the shedding of as little blood as possible”. But the revolution was liquidating its own affairs without the shedding of any blood at all. It ignored these gentlemen, and detailed a squad to enter the building and bring the White Guards down. First came the Junkers, and then the officers, ferreted out of their hiding places, one of them dragged out by his heels. Hustled out upon the elevated stone steps, they stood blinking in the torchlight, facing the muzzles of a thousand guns, the scorn of a thousand hearts, the grilling of a thousand pairs of eyes.

There were a few jeers, cries of “assassins of the revolution!” and then silence — the solemn silence of a court. For this was a court — the tribunal of the disinherited. The oppressed sitting in judgement on their oppressors. The new order passing sentence upon the old. The grand assizes of the revolution.

“Guilty! All guilty!” was the verdict. Guilty as enemies of the revolution. Guilty as retainers of the tsar and the exploiting classes. Guilty as violators of the Red Cross and the laws of war. Guilty on all counts as traitors to the workers of Russia, and to the workers of the world.

The wretched prisoners in the dock shrank before the blast and bowed their heads. Some of them would have found it easier to stand up to a volley from the guns. But the guns were there to guard them.

Five sailors shouldering rifles took their stand at the foot of the steps. Antonov seized the hand of an officer and placed it in the hand of a sailor.

“Number one”, he said. “A helpless, disarmed prisoner. His life is in your hands. Guard it for the honour of the revolution.” The squad encircled the prisoner and marched through the archway.

With a like formula the next prisoner was handed over, and the next, and the next; each one entrusted to a detachment of four or five. “The end of the rubbish”, muttered an old peasant as the last officer was delivered to his escort, and the procession filed out into the Morskaya.

Near the Winter Palace infuriated mobs fell upon the Junkers and tore them from the hands of their convoys. But the revolutionary sailors, charging the mobs, rescued the prisoners and brought them safely to the prison Fortress of Peter and Paul.

The revolution was not everywhere powerful enough to check the savage passions of the mobs. Not always was it on time to allay the primitive bloodlusts. Unoffending citizens were assaulted by hooligans. In out-of-the-way places half-savages, calling themselves Red Guards, committed heinous crimes. At the front General Dukhonin was dragged from his carriage and torn to pieces despite the protesting commissars. Even in Petrograd some Junkers were clubbed to death by the storming crowds; others were pitched headlong into the Neva. ■



1920 Russian revolutionary poster by El Lissitzky (1890-1941): “Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge.”

List of Books & Pamphlets Used in Classes

- Cannon, *Fighting for Socialism in the 'American Century'* (Resistance Books: Chippendale, 2000)
- Cannon, *The Struggle for a Proletarian Party* (Resistance Books: Chippendale, 2001)
- Cannon et al, *Readings for Classes*
- Communist International, *The Organisational Structure of the Communist Parties, the Methods and Content of Their Work*
- Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* (Resistance Books: Chippendale, 1999)
- Hansen, *Organisational Methods and Political Principles* (Resistance Books: Chippendale, 2000)
- Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vols. 5, 7, 21, 31
- Lenin, *Democracy and Revolution* (Resistance Books: Chippendale, 2001)
- Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (Resistance Books: Chippendale, 1999)
- Lenin, *The State and Revolution* (Resistance Books: Chippendale, 1999)
- Lenin, *'Left-Wing' Communism — An Infantile Disorder* (Resistance Books: Chippendale, 1999)
- Marx & Engels, *The Communist Manifesto and Its Relevance for Today* (Resistance Books: Chippendale, 1998)
- Marx-Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 1-3
- Mohideen et al, *Organisational Principles and Methods of the Democratic Socialist Party* (Resistance Books: Chippendale, 1998)
- Party-building reports from the last DSP congress and subsequent National Committee plenums
- Trotsky, *The First Five Years of the Communist International*, Vol. 2
- Trotsky et al, *Their Morals and Ours* (Resistance Books: Chippendale, 2000)
- Trotsky, *The Transitional Program and the Struggle for Socialism* (Resistance Books:

Chippendale, 1999)

Trotsky, *Writings of Leon Trotsky* (1932) (Pathfinder Press: New York, 1973)

Zinoviev, *History of the Bolshevik Party* (New Park: London, 1973) ■



Russian revolutionary poster, 1920. Caption reads: "On the ruins of capitalism towards worldwide brotherhood of the workers."

Resistance books