

improving your organization in view of the fact that the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, having assumed the leadership of the all-Russian revolutionary movement, has now expanded to such an extent that it technically cannot cope with all the tasks that confront it. We believe that the question of reorganizing the revolutionary vanguard of Russia is a basic, cardinal question: Will we succeed in organizing a workers' representation and a representation of the revolutionary army on such principles as would enable them actually to subject the bourgeoisie to their control, actually to dictate revolutionary measures to the bourgeoisie, and at the same time to exert all their authority in support of those actions of the executive power which are essential to free Russia?

But should the moment arrive when this government renounces the revolutionary path and chooses the path of negotiations, the path of compromises, then you and we together, comrades, will march dauntlessly against this government and together we will cast it into oblivion in the same way as we did the old regime. But as long as this government, under the impact of revolutionary events, is following the revolutionary path, as long as the interests of the bourgeoisie are embodied in acts which coincide with the common national interests of the democracy, as long as the Provisional Government carries the banner of the Constituent Assembly . . . , and as long as its measures are directed toward the liquidation of the old order, we, together with you, will support it . . .

Comrades, allow me to close my speech with that national cry with which all speeches at public meetings are brought to a close. "Long Live Free Russia! Long Live the Constituent Assembly! Long Live the Democratic Republic!" (*Stormy applause.*)

Following Tsereteli, other Social Democratic comrades returning from exile delivered speeches. When the speeches were over, the soldiers' deputies stood up and sang "Eternal Glory" to the fallen fighters.

Izvestiia, no. 20, March 21, 1917, pp. 2–3; translated and reprinted in *The Russian Provisional Government 1917: Documents*, selected and edited by Robert Paul Browder and Alexander F. Kerensky, vol. III (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1961), pp. 1219–21.

V. I. Lenin, "The Tasks of the Proletariat in the Present Revolution ('April Theses')"

APRIL 7, 1917

Vladimir Il'ich Lenin (born Ulianov) (1870–1924) was the leader of the Bolshevik wing of Russian Social Democracy and the principal opponent of those socialists who supported the Provisional Government and a "bourgeois revolution." From his arrival in Petrograd (from exile in Switzerland) in April, Lenin staked out a clear position of opposition to compromise with the propertied classes, a call for an immediate end to the war, and the transfer of political power to the soviets, which represented exclusively the lower classes. His "April Theses" shocked even his fellow Bolsheviks, some of whom, like Joseph Stalin, were prepared (until Lenin's arrival) to compromise with the government. Lenin managed to rally his party comrades around his program, and the Bolsheviks, though still a minority party within the soviets, emerged from the early political clashes with a clear profile as uncompromising revolutionaries opposed to collaboration with the liberals, landlords, and industrialists.

I did not arrive in Petrograd until the night of April 3, and therefore at the meeting on April 4 I could, of course, deliver the report on the tasks of the revolutionary proletariat only on my own behalf, and with reservations as to insufficient preparation.

The only thing I could do to make things easier for myself—and for honest opponents—was to prepare the theses in *writing*. I read them out, and gave the text to Comrade Tsereteli. I read them twice very slowly: first at a meeting of Bolsheviks and then at a meeting of both Bolsheviks and Mensheviks.

I publish these personal theses of mine with only the briefest explanatory notes, which were developed in far greater detail in the report.

THESES

1. In our attitude towards the war, which under the new government of Lvov and Co. unquestionably remains on Russia's part a predatory imperialist war owing to the capitalist nature of that government, not the slightest concession to "revolutionary defensism" is permissible.

The class-conscious proletariat can give its consent to a revolutionary war, which would really justify revolutionary defensism, only on condition: (a) that the power pass to the proletariat and the poorest sections of the peasants aligned with the proletariat; (b) that all annexations be renounced in deed and not in word; (c) that a complete break be effected in actual fact with all capitalist interests.

In view of the undoubted honesty of those broad sections of the mass believers in revolutionary defensism who accept the war only as a necessity, and not as a means of conquest, in view of the fact that they are being deceived by the bourgeoisie, it is necessary with particular thoroughness, persistence and patience to explain their error to them, to explain the inseparable connection existing between capital and the imperialist war, and to prove that without overthrowing capital *it is impossible* to end the war by a truly democratic peace, a peace not imposed by violence.

The most widespread campaign for this view must be organized in the army at the front.

Fraternization

2. The specific feature of the present situation in Russia is that the country is *passing* from the first stage of the revolution—which, owing to the insufficient class-consciousness and organization of the proletariat, placed power in the hands of the bourgeoisie—to its *second* stage, which must place power in the hands of the proletariat and the poorest sections of the peasants. This transition is characterized, on the one hand, by a maximum of legally recognized rights (Russia is now the freest of all the belligerent countries in the world), on the other, by the absence of violence towards the masses, and, finally, by their unreasoning trust in the government of capitalists, those worst enemies of peace and socialism.

This peculiar situation demands of us an ability to adapt ourselves to the *special* conditions of party work among unprecedentedly large masses of proletarians who have just awakened to political life.

3. No support for the Provisional Government; the utter falsity of all its promises should be made clear, particularly of those relating to the renunciation of annexations. Exposure in place of the impermissible, illusion-breeding "demand" that *this* government, a government of capitalists, should *cease* to be an imperialist government.

4. Recognition of the fact that in most of the soviets of workers' deputies our party is in a minority, so far a small minority, as against a *bloc of all* the petty-bourgeois opportunist elements, from the Popular Socialists and the Socialist-Revolutionaries down to the OK (Chkheidze, Tsereteli, etc.), Steklov, etc., etc., who have yielded to the influence of the bourgeoisie and spread that influence among the proletariat.¹

The masses must be made to see that the soviets of workers' deputies are the only *possible* form of revolutionary government, and that therefore our task is, as long as *this* government yields to the influence of the bourgeoisie, to present a patient, systematic, and persistent *explanation* of the errors of their tactics, an explanation especially adapted to the practical needs of the masses.

As long as we are in the minority we carry on the work of criticizing and exposing errors and at the same time we preach the necessity of transferring the entire state power to the soviets of workers' deputies, so that the people may overcome their mistakes by experience.

5. Not a parliamentary republic—to return to a parliamentary republic from the Soviets of workers' deputies would be a retrograde step—but a Republic of Soviets of Workers', Agricultural Laborers' and Peasants' Deputies throughout the country, from top to bottom.

Abolition of the police, the army and the burcaucracy.²

The salaries of all officials, all of whom are elective and displaceable at any time, not to exceed the average wage of a competent worker.

6. The weight of emphasis in the agrarian program to be shifted to the soviets of agricultural laborers' deputies.

Confiscation of All Landed Estates

Nationalization of all lands in the country, the land, to be disposed of by the local soviets of agricultural laborers' and peasants' deputies. The organization of separate soviets of deputies of poor peasants. The setting up of a model farm on each of the large estates (ranging in size from 100 to 300 *desiatiny*, according to local and other conditions, and to the decisions of the local bodies) under the control of the soviets of agricultural laborers' deputies and for the public account.³

1. The Popular Socialists were the most moderate of the pro-peasant parties, a right-wing faction that broke off from the Socialist Revolutionaries in 1906 and gave their support to the Provisional Government. The Socialist Revolutionaries remained through 1917 the most popular party among the peasantry, who were the overwhelming majority of the Russian population. The OK or Organizational Committee was the central committee of the Menshevik wing of Social Democracy from 1905 until August 1917, when at the so-called "Unification Congress," the Mensheviks elected a Central Committee for their organizations.

2. Lenin added, "i.e., the standing army to be replaced by the arming of the whole people."

3. *Desiatina* is a Russian unit of land measurement equal to 2.7 acres.

7. The immediate amalgamation of all banks in the country into a single national bank, and the institution of control over it by the soviets of workers' deputies.

8. It is not our immediate task to "introduce" socialism, but only to bring social production and the distribution of products at once under the control of the soviets of workers' deputies.

9. Party tasks:

- (a) Immediate convocation of a party congress;
- (b) Alteration of the party program, mainly:
 - (1) On the question of imperialism and the imperialist war;
 - (2) On our attitude towards the state and our demand for a "commune state;"⁴
 - (3) Amendment of our out-of-date minimum program.
- (c) Change of the party's name.⁵

10. A new International.

We must take the initiative in creating a revolutionary International, an International against the *social-chauvinists* and against the "Center."⁶

Pravda, no. 26, April 7, 1917; translated in V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, XXIV (London: Laurence and Wishart, 1964), pp. 21-24.

Tsereteli and Lenin's Exchange of Words During the First All-Russian Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies"

JUNE 3-4, 1917

Early in June, representatives of the workers' and soldiers' councils (soviets) from all over Russia gathered in Petrograd to discuss the current political situation and to show support for the Provisional Government. Lenin's Bolsheviks were a small minority at the congress but already represented the most effective and influential party opposed to the Government. In this brief exchange, Lenin distinguished between the "reformist democracy" of Tsereteli and the Mensheviks and his own conception of "revolutionary democracy," which would be based in the soviets and would represent only "the toiling classes," the peasants, soldiers, and workers.

TSERETELI: At the present moment, there is not a political party in Russia which would say: hand the power over to us, resign, and we will take your place. Such a party does not exist in Russia. (Lenin: "It does exist.") . . . They [the Bolsheviks] say—When we have a majority, or when the majority comes over to our point of

4. Lenin added, "i.e., a state of which the Paris Commune was the prototype."

5. Lenin added, "Instead of 'Social Democracy,' whose official leaders *throughout* the world have betrayed socialism and deserted to the bourgeoisie (the 'defensists' and the vacillating 'Kautskyites'), we must call ourselves the *Communist Party*."

6. Lenin added, "The 'Center' in the international Social Democratic movement is the trend which vacillates between the chauvinists (= 'defensists') and internationalists, i.e., Kautsky and Co. in Germany; Longuet and Co., in France, Chkheidze and Co. in Russia, Turati and Co. in Italy, MacDonald and Co. in Britain, etc."