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# The Fundamentals of Bolshevism.

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In considering the greatest of revolutions — the Bolshevik proletarian revolution in Russia — it is appropriate to attempt to give at least a short characterization of Bolshevism, of that political faith — one might say, philosophic conception of the world — which is destined to play a role of the first importance, as recent events in Europe indicate, not only in the Russian, but in the coming world Socialist Revolution.

Brief characterizations, limited to “formulas,” which are, perhaps, suited to a textbook, are, generally speaking, insufficient, superficial, and inexact. But if, in spite of this, we should give such a brief definition of the nature of Bolshevism, we should reduce it, in our opinion, to the following two fundamental characteristic traits: Bolshevism, or to be more exact, the Bolshevik Party, is first of all a party of revolutionary action, a party of dynamic Socialism, if we may express it that way. The direct object, the constant aim of this revolutionary activity of the Bolshevik or Communist Party — the basis equally of its program and of its tactics, is a revolutionary seizure of power by the proletariat, the realization of the dictatorship of the proletariat, as an inevitable and necessary condition for the accomplishment of the transition from Capitalism to Socialism.

Inflexible, knowing no periods of weakness and no compromise, waging the proletarian class struggle towards the revolutionary seizure of complete governmental power, a class struggle which puts above everything else its final revolutionary aims, and by these measuring all daily activities

— such is a brief characterization of what is known as Bolshevik theory, or the Bolshevik Party — the left revolutionary wing of the former Russian Social Democratic Labor Party.

For anyone who is acquainted with the elements of scientific Socialism and the Socialist movement in different countries, there is nothing new or specifically “Russian” in these characteristics. He will recognize in them the familiar features of revolutionary Marxism which has stepped out of the bulky volumes and become realized in life. Bolshevism is revolutionary preaching translated into revolutionary deeds.

At the dawn of the history of the Russian Social Democracy, during the period of its formation into a political party, when it faced organizational problems first of all, this revolutionary nature of Bolshevism found its expression in the demand for a strictly centralized organization.

“We are, essentially, a party of revolutionary action, not merely of revolutionary education prepared for many years to come” — this was the reply usually given by the Bolsheviks to the Mensheviks, who were demanding more “democratic” organization. “Our foe, Capitalism, and its chief instrument in its struggle against us — the governmental machine — are powerful just because of their centralism. If we intend to defeat this enemy of ours, if we desire to bring our struggle to a successful revolutionary seizure of the state power, we should be equally centralized, democratically centralized, and equally united by a common will, which is being changed through demo-

cratic discipline and unity of action. The difference is only in the character of that centralism. While capitalist centralism is autocratic, the centralism of the suppression of the will of the majority on a 'united minority,' our organization centralism should be the democratic centralism should be of a 'united majority.' But we must not sacrifice Socialism, the true democracy of tomorrow; we must not sacrifice the successful struggle for Socialism for the deceptive, painted 'democracy' of today, of our organization."

"We must learn how to combine together the meeting democracy of the toiling masses, full of spring's stormy nature, with iron discipline," says Lenin in his brochure, *The Problems of the Soviet Government*. This combination of democracy with centralism, of democracy with iron discipline, is not merely a problem for the proletariat during the period of realization of its dictatorship, but equally a necessary condition of achieving this dictatorship.

"Democratic centralism" — such was the organization "formula" advanced by the Bolsheviki during the period of 1903.

And in this seemingly "insignificant" organization problem, the general revolutionary proletarian nature of Bolshevism expressed itself. The nearsighted philistines, the middle-class ideologists of "small deeds," who because of the trees see not the wood, may assure us that the "original controversy between the Bolsheviki and Mensheviki was of an insignificant, certainly not of a fundamental character." . . . A more thoughtful and penetrating thinker will already recognize in this apparently insignificant controversy the embryonic elements of those vital, fundamental differences which now in some countries have already, and in others are about to, split the Socialist parties into two uncompromising camps — revolutionary Socialists and the hopeless opportunists, the social patriots, social reformers, and all sort of social insipids.

In the "insignificant" slogans of organization

advanced by the Bolsheviki as early as 1903, are to be found already the elements of that great slogan, dictatorship of the proletariat, which was introduced by them later in 1905, and, finally, accomplished in the form of the Soviet government in 1917.

The attitude on this question was characteristic of the two factions of the former Russian Social Democratic Labor Party, the Bolsheviki and the Mensheviki, the latter of whom have now finished their circle of development by a union with the Tsar's generals and international imperialists.

True to the revolutionary problems of the proletariat, aware of the dynamic role which the proletariat was fated to play in the coming revolution, the Bolsheviki stood for participation in the provisional revolutionary government. And then they advanced their slogan — dictatorship of the proletariat and the proletarian peasantry.

"It would require gigantic efforts of revolutionary energy in all advanced classes in order to defend the conquests of the revolution," wrote Lenin in the *Vpered* in 1905; and this "defend" is nothing [less] than the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry! The provisional revolutionary government (the government of workers and peasants) was put forward by the Bolsheviki as a means to realize the slogan of "dictatorship" in revolutionary activity. Later this revolutionary government assumed the form of the Soviets.

The Mensheviki at that period would have risen against any such participation in the provisional government, considering that it would be "inadmissible for a party of Social Democrats to commit such vulgarity of a Jaures type;" as regards the revolutionary slogan, "Long Live the Revolutionary Government," the organ of the Mensheviki at that time, *Iskra*, instructively wrote: "long live" and "government" is a blasphemy.

Only 13 years have passed, and the revolutionary events in Russia give us the opportunity

of judging the real counterrevolutionary substance of this fraudulent “uncompromising” of the Mensheviks. The participation of workers and peasants in a revolutionary government they considered as “vulgar Juarezism,” but participation in all sorts of counterrevolutionary coalition governments — this ... they found to be their “sacred duty.” A revolutionary coalition of workers and peasants for the purpose of defending a democratic revolution — is “inadmissible,” is an “unconscious betrayal of the interests of the proletariat!” But a union with the counterrevolutionary bourgeoisie for the purpose of crushing the proletarian government is, ... “saving the revolution!”

Thus, in the revolutionary stress of events, which has forged into “a steel sword” the true revolutionary slogans of some, the empty chatter of others has scattered into its counterrevolutionary fragments.

“Give me the fulcrum and I will overturn the whole universe,” exclaimed Archimedes once upon a time.

“Give me the proletarian dictatorship and I will overturn the capitalist world, the world of slavery and tears, and on its ruins I will build the glorious commonwealth of freedom and happiness, the Socialist society!” — says now the revolutionary proletariat rallying under the banner of Bolshevism.

From democratic centralism in organization, as a means of promoting the final revolutionary aims of the proletariat, to the dictatorship of the proletariat; from the position of a faction of a “seditious” revolutionary party, to the role of “governmental party” in the first Socialist republic on earth — such is the course of development, the sweep made by revolutionary Socialism — Bolshevism in Russia.

*Edited by Tim Davenport.*

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