

В. И. ЛЕНИН
ЧТО ТАКОЕ СОВЕТСКАЯ ВЛАСТЬ?

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WHAT IS SOVIET POWER ?



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Workers of All Countries, Unite!

V. I. Lenin

**What Is
Soviet Power?**



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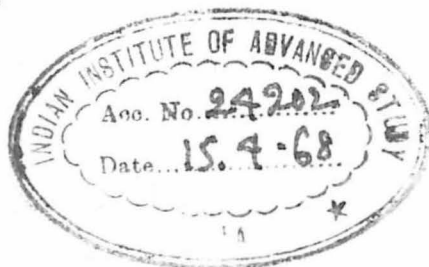
Publisher's Note

Lenin's speeches and writings contained in this booklet supply the answer to the question contained in the title. They show the nature of the social and political system that emerged in Russia as a result of the Socialist Revolution of 1917 and the tasks that confronted the Soviet government. Lenin shows how democracy was put into effect in the Soviet Republic at a far higher level than in any bourgeois country, how all the working people were drawn into the task of governing the state and how measures were adopted to ensure women's participation in social and political life on equal terms with men.

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To the Population ¹

Comrades—workers, soldiers, peasants and all working people!

The workers' and peasants' revolution has definitely triumphed in Petrograd, having dispersed or arrested the last remnants of the small number of Cossacks deceived by Kerensky.² The revolution has triumphed in Moscow too. Even before the arrival of a number of troop trains dispatched from Petrograd, the officer cadets³ and other Kornilovites⁴ in Moscow signed peace terms—the disarming of the cadets and the dissolution of the Committee of Salvation.⁵

Daily and hourly reports are coming in from the front and from the villages announcing the support of the overwhelming majority of the soldiers in the trenches and the peasants in the uyezds for the new government and its decrees on peace and the immediate transfer of the land to the peasants.⁶ The victory of the workers' and peasants' revolution is assured because the majority of the people have already sided with it.

It is perfectly understandable that the landowners and capitalists, and the *top groups* of office employees and civil servants closely linked with the bourgeoisie, in a word, all the wealthy and those supporting them, react to the new revolution with hostility, resist its victory, threaten to close the banks, disrupt or bring to a standstill the work of the different establishments, and hamper the revolution in every way, openly or covertly. Every politically-conscious worker was well aware that we would inevitably encounter resistance of this kind. The entire Party press of the Bolsheviks has written about this on numerous occasions. Not for a single minute will the working classes be intimidated by this resistance; they will not falter in any way

before the threats and strikes of the supporters of the bourgeoisie.

The majority of the people are with us. The majority of the working and oppressed people all over the world are with us. Ours is the cause of justice. Our victory is assured.

The resistance of the capitalists and the high-ranking employees will be smashed. Not a single person will be deprived of his property except under the special state law proclaiming nationalisation of the banks and syndicates. This law is being drafted. Not one of the working people will suffer the loss of a kopek; on the contrary, he will be helped. Apart from the strictest accounting and control, apart from levying the set taxes in full the government has no intention of introducing any other measure.

In support of these just demands the vast majority of the people have rallied round the Provisional Workers' and Peasants' Government.

Comrades, working people! Remember that now *you yourselves* are at the helm of state. No one will help you if you yourselves do not unite and take into *your* hands *all affairs* of the state. *Your* Soviets are from now on the organs of state authority, legislative bodies with full powers.

Rally around your Soviets. Strengthen them. Get on with the job yourselves; begin right at the bottom, do not wait for anyone. Establish the strictest revolutionary law and order, mercilessly suppress any attempts to create anarchy by drunkards, hooligans, counter-revolutionary officer cadets, Kornilovites and their like.

Ensure the strictest control over production and accounting of products. Arrest and hand over to the revolutionary courts all who dare to injure the people's cause, irrespective of whether the injury is manifested in sabotaging production (damage, delay and subversion), or in hoarding grain and products or holding up shipments of grain, disorganising the railways and the postal, telegraph and telephone services, or any resistance whatever to the great cause of peace, the cause of transferring the land to the peasants, of ensuring workers' control over the production and distribution of products.

Comrades, workers, soldiers, peasants and all working people! Take *all* power into the hands of *your* Soviets. Be

watchful and guard like the apple of your eye your land, grain, factories, equipment, products, transport—all that from now onwards will be *entirely* your property, public property. Gradually, with the consent and approval of the majority of the peasants, in keeping with their *practical* experience and that of the workers, we shall go forward firmly and unswervingly to the victory of socialism—a victory that will be sealed by the advanced workers of the most civilised countries, bring the peoples lasting peace and liberate them from all oppression and exploitation.

V. Ulyanov (*Lenin*),

Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars

November 5, 1917, Petrograd.

Pravda No. 4
(evening edition),
November 19(6), 1917

Collected Works, Vol. 26,
pp. 296-98

The Development of Soviet Organisation

From the Pamphlet
"The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government" 7

The socialist character of Soviet, i.e., *proletarian*, democracy, as concretely applied today, lies first in the fact that the electors are the working and exploited people; the bourgeoisie is excluded. Secondly, it lies in the fact that all bureaucratic formalities and restrictions of elections are abolished; the people themselves determine the order and time of elections, and are completely free to recall any elected person. Thirdly, it lies in the creation of the best mass organisation of the vanguard of the working people, i.e., the proletariat engaged in large-scale industry, which enables it to lead the vast mass of the exploited, to draw them into independent political life, to educate them politically by their own experience; therefore for the first time a start is made by the *entire* population in learning the art of administration, and in beginning to administer.

These are the principal distinguishing features of the democracy now applied in Russia, which is a higher *type* of democracy, a break with the bourgeois distortion of democracy, transition to socialist democracy and to the conditions in which the state can begin to wither away.

It goes without saying that the element of petty-bourgeois disorganisation (which must *inevitably* be apparent to some extent in *every* proletarian revolution, and which is especially apparent in our revolution, owing to the petty-bourgeois character of your country, its backwardness and the consequences of a reactionary war) cannot but leave its impress upon the Soviets as well.

We must work unremittingly to develop the organisa-

tion of the Soviets and of the Soviet government. There is a petty-bourgeois tendency to transform the members of the Soviets into "parliamentarians", or else into bureaucrats. We must combat this by drawing *all* the members of the Soviets into the practical work of administration. In many places the departments of the Soviets are gradually merging with the Commissariats. Our aim is to draw *the whole of the poor* into the practical work of administration, and all steps that are taken in this direction—the more varied they are, the better—should be carefully recorded, studied, systematised, tested by wider experience and embodied in law. Our aim is to ensure that *every* toiler, having finished his eight hours' "task" in productive labour, shall perform state duties *without pay*; the transition to this is particularly difficult, but this transition alone can guarantee the final consolidation of socialism. Naturally, the novelty and difficulty of the change lead to an abundance of steps being taken, as it were, gropingly, to an abundance of mistakes, vacillation—without this, any marked progress is impossible. The reason why the present position seems peculiar to many of those who would like to be regarded as socialists is that they have been accustomed to contrasting capitalism with socialism abstractly, and that they profoundly put between the two the word "leap" (some of them, recalling fragments of what they have read of Engels's writings, still more profoundly add the phrase "leap from the realm of necessity into the realm of freedom"⁸). The majority of these so-called socialists, who have "read in books" about socialism but who have never seriously thought over the matter, are unable to consider that by "leap" the teachers of socialism meant turning-points on a world-historical scale, and that leaps of this kind extend over decades and even longer periods. Naturally, in such times, the notorious "intelligentsia" provides an infinite number of mourners of the dead. Some mourn over the Constituent Assembly, others mourn over bourgeois discipline, others again mourn over the capitalist system, still others mourn over the cultured landowner, and still others again mourn over imperialist Great Power policy, etc., etc.

The real interest of the epoch of great leaps lies in the fact that the abundance of fragments of the old, which

sometimes accumulate more rapidly than the rudiments (not always immediately discernible) of the new, calls for the ability to discern what is most important in the line or chain of development. History knows moments when the most important thing for the success of the revolution is to heap up as large a quantity of the fragments as possible, i.e., to blow up as many of the old institutions as possible; moments arise when enough has been blown up and the next task is to perform the "prosaic" (for the petty-bourgeois revolutionary, the "boring") task of clearing away the fragments; and moments arise when the careful nursing of the rudiments of the new system, which are growing amidst the wreckage on a soil which as yet has been badly cleared of rubble, is the most important thing.

It is not enough to be a revolutionary and an adherent of socialism or a Communist in general. You must be able at each particular moment to find the particular link in the chain which you must grasp with all your might in order to hold the whole chain and to prepare firmly for the transition to the next link; the order of the links, their form, the manner in which they are linked together, the way they differ from each other in the historical chain of events, are not as simple and not as meaningless as those in an ordinary chain made by a smith.

The fight against the bureaucratic distortion of the Soviet form of organisation is assured by the firmness of the connection between the Soviets and the "people", meaning by that the working and exploited people, and by the flexibility and elasticity of this connection. Even in the most democratic capitalist republics in the world, the poor never regard the bourgeois parliament as "their" institution. But the Soviets are "theirs" and not alien institutions to the mass of workers and peasants. The modern "Social-Democrats" of the Scheidemann⁹ or, what is almost the same thing, of the Martov¹⁰ type are repelled by the Soviets, and they are drawn towards the respectable bourgeois parliament, or to the Constituent Assembly, in the same way as Turgenev¹¹, sixty years ago, was drawn towards a moderate monarchist and noblemen's Constitution and was repelled by the peasant democracy of Dobrolyubov¹² and Chernyshevsky.¹³

It is the closeness of the Soviets to the "people", to the working people, that creates the special forms of recall and other means of control from below which must be most zealously developed now. For example, the Councils of Public Education, as periodical conferences of Soviet electors and their delegates called to discuss and control the activities of the Soviet authorities in this field, deserve full sympathy and support. Nothing could be sillier than to transform the Soviets into something congealed and self-contained. The more resolutely we now have to stand for a ruthlessly firm government, for the dictatorship of individuals *in definite processes of work*, in definite aspects of *purely executive* functions, the more varied must be the forms and methods of control from below in order to counteract every shadow of a possibility of distorting the principles of Soviet government, in order repeatedly and tirelessly to weed out bureaucracy.

Written in March-April 1918
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in *Pravda* No. 83
and *Izvestia VTs/K* No. 85
Signed: *N. Lenin*

Collected Works, Vol. 27,
pp. 272-75

From the Programme of the R.C.P.(B.)¹⁴

In the Political Sphere

Prior to the capture of political power by the proletariat it was (obligatory) necessary to make use of bourgeois democracy, parliamentarism in particular, for the political education and organisation of the working masses; now that the proletariat has won political power and a higher type of democracy is being put into effect in the Soviet Republic, any step backward to bourgeois parliamentarism and bourgeois democracy would undoubtedly be reactionary service to the interests of the exploiters, the landowners and capitalists. Such catchwords as supposedly popular, national, general, extra-class but actually bourgeois democracy serve the interests of the exploiters alone, and as long as the land and other means of production remain private property the most democratic republic must inevitably remain a bourgeois dictatorship, a machine for the suppression of the overwhelming majority of working people by a handful of capitalists.

The historical task that has fallen to the lot of the Soviet Republic, a new type of state that is transitional until the state disappears altogether, is the following.

(1) The creation and development of universal mass organisations of precisely those classes that are oppressed under capitalism—the proletariat and semi-proletariat. A bourgeois-democratic republic at best permits the organisation of the exploited masses, by declaring them free to organise, but actually has always placed countless obstacles in the way of their organisation, obstacles that were connected with the private ownership of the means of production in a way that made them irremovable. For the first time in history, Soviet power has not only greatly facilitated the organisation of the masses who were oppressed under capitalism, but has made that organisation the essen-

tial permanent basis of the entire state apparatus, local and central, from top to bottom. Only in this way is it possible to ensure democracy for the great majority of the population (the working people), i.e., actual participation in state administration, in contrast to the actual administration of the state mainly by members of the bourgeois classes as is the case in the most democratic bourgeois republics.

(2) The Soviet system of state administration gives a certain actual advantage to that section of the working people that all the capitalist development that preceded socialism has made the most concentrated, united, educated and steeled in the struggle, i.e., to the urban industrial proletariat. This advantage must be used systematically and unswervingly to counteract the narrow guild and narrow trade interests that capitalism fostered among the workers and which split them into competitive groups, by uniting the most backward and disunited masses of rural proletarians and semi-proletarians more closely with the advanced workers, by snatching them away from the influence of the village kulaks and village bourgeoisie, and organising and educating them for communist development.

(3) Bourgeois democracy that solemnly announced the equality of all citizens, in actual fact hypocritically concealed the domination of the capitalist exploiters and deceived the masses with the idea that the equality of exploiters and exploited is possible. The Soviet organisation of the state destroys this deception and this hypocrisy by the implementation of real democracy, i.e., the real equality of all working people, and by excluding the exploiters from the category of members of society possessing full rights. The experience of world history, the experience of all revolts of the exploited classes against their exploiters shows the inevitability of long and desperate resistance of the exploiters in their struggle to retain their privileges. Soviet state organisation is adapted to the suppression of that resistance, for unless it is suppressed there can be no question of a victorious communist revolution.

(4) The more direct influence of the working masses on state structure and administration—i.e., a higher form of democracy—is also effected under the Soviet type of

state, first, by the electoral procedure and the possibility of holding elections more frequently, and also by conditions for re-election and for the recall of deputies which are simpler and more comprehensible to the urban and rural workers than is the case under the best forms of bourgeois democracy.

(5) Secondly, by making the economic, industrial unit (factory) and not a territorial division the primary electoral unit and the nucleus of the state structure under Soviet power. This closer contact between the state apparatus and the masses of advanced proletarians that capitalism has united, in addition to effecting a higher level of democracy, also makes it possible to effect profound socialist reforms.

(6) Soviet organisation has made possible the creation of armed forces of workers and peasants which are much more closely connected with the working and exploited people than before. If this had not been done it would have been impossible to achieve one of the basic conditions for the victory of socialism—the arming of the workers and the disarming of the bourgeoisie.

(7) Soviet organisation has developed incomparably farther and deeper that feature of bourgeois democracy which marks historically its great progressive nature as compared with medieval times, i.e., the participation of the people in the election of individuals to office. In none of the most democratic bourgeois states have the working masses ever been able to enjoy the electoral rights formally granted them by the bourgeoisie (who actually hinder their enjoyment) anywhere near as extensively, frequently, universally, easily and simply as they are enjoyed under Soviet power. Soviet power has, at the same time, swept away those negative aspects of bourgeois democracy that the Paris Commune¹⁵ began to abolish, i.e., parliamentarism, or the separation of legislative and executive powers, the narrow, limited nature of which Marxism has long since indicated. By merging the two aspects of government the Soviets bring the state apparatus closer to the working people and remove the fence of the bourgeois parliament that fooled the masses with hypocritical signboards concealing the financial and stock-exchange deals of parliamentary businessmen and en-

sured the inviolability of the bourgeois apparatus of state administration.

(8) Soviet state organisation alone has enabled the proletarian revolution to smash the old bourgeois state apparatus at one blow and destroy it to the very foundations; had this not been done no start could have been made on socialist development. Those strongholds of the bureaucracy which everywhere, both under monarchies and in the most democratic bourgeois republics, has always kept the state bound to the interests of the landowners and capitalists, have been destroyed in present-day Russia. The struggle against the bureaucracy, however, is certainly not over in our country. The bureaucracy is trying to regain some of its positions and is taking advantage, on the one hand, of the unsatisfactory cultural level of the masses of the people and, on the other, of the tremendous, almost superhuman war efforts of the most developed section of the urban workers. The continuation of the struggle against the bureaucracy, therefore, is absolutely necessary, is imperative, to ensure the success of future socialist development.

(9) Work in this field is closely connected with the implementation of the chief historical purpose of Soviet power, i.e., to advance towards the final abolition of the state, and should consist of the following. First, every member of a Soviet must, without fail, do a certain job of state administration; secondly, these jobs must be consistently changed so that they embrace all aspects of government, all its branches; and, thirdly, literally all the working population must be drawn into independent participation in state administration by means of a series of gradual measures that are carefully selected and unfailingly implemented.

(10) By and large, the difference between bourgeois democracy and parliamentarism on the one hand, and Soviet or proletarian democracy on the other, boils down to this: the centre of gravity of the former is in its solemn and pompous declarations of numerous liberties and rights which the majority of the population, the workers and peasants, cannot enjoy to the full. Proletarian, or Soviet, democracy, on the contrary, has transferred the centre of gravity away from the declaration of rights and

liberties for the entire people to the actual participation of none but the working people, who were oppressed and exploited by capital, in the administration of the state, the actual use of the best buildings and other premises for meetings and congresses, the best printing-works and the biggest warehouses (stocks) of paper for the education of those who were stultified and downtrodden under capitalism, and to providing a real (actual) opportunity for those masses gradually to free themselves from the burden of religious prejudices, etc., etc. It is precisely in making the benefits of culture, civilisation and democracy really available to the working and exploited people that Soviet power sees its most important work, work which it must continue unswervingly in the future.

The policy of the R.C.P. on the national question, unlike the bourgeois-democratic declaration of the equality of nations, which cannot be implemented under imperialism, is that of steadily drawing together and merging the proletarians and the working masses of all nations in their revolutionary struggle for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie. Among the working people of the nations that entered into the Russian Empire the mistrust of the Great Russians that has been inherited from the epoch of tsarist and bourgeois Great-Russian imperialism is rapidly vanishing, under the influence of their acquaintance with Soviet Russia, but that mistrust has not yet completely disappeared among all nations and among all sections of the working people. It is, therefore, necessary to exercise special caution in respect of national feelings and to ensure the pursuance of a policy of actual equality and freedom to secede so as to remove the grounds for this mistrust and achieve the close voluntary union of the Soviet republics of all nations. Aid to backward and weak nations must be increased by assisting the independent organisation and education of the workers and peasants of all nations in the struggle against medieval and bourgeois oppression and also by assisting in the development of the language and literature of nations that have been oppressed or have been underprivileged.

What Is Soviet Power? 16

What is Soviet power? What is the essence of this new power, which people in most countries still will not, or cannot, understand? The nature of this power, which is attracting larger and larger numbers of workers in every country, is the following: in the past the country was, in one way or another, governed by the rich, or by the capitalists, but now, for the first time, the country is being governed by the classes, and moreover, by the masses of those classes, which capitalism formerly oppressed. Even in the most democratic and freest republics, as long as capital rules and the land remains private property, the government will always be in the hands of a small minority, nine-tenths of which consist of capitalists, or rich men.

In this country, in Russia, for the first time in the world history, the government of the country is so organised that only the workers and the working peasants, to the exclusion of the exploiters, constitute those mass organisations known as Soviets, and these Soviets wield all state power. That is why, in spite of the slander that the representatives of the bourgeoisie in all countries spread about Russia, the word "Soviet" has now become not only intelligible but popular all over the world, has become the favourite word of the workers, and of all working people. And that is why, notwithstanding all the persecution to which the adherents of communism in the different countries are subjected, Soviet power must necessarily, inevitably, and in the not distant future, triumph all over the world.

We know very well that there are still many defects in the organisation of Soviet power in this country. Soviet power is not a miracle-working talisman. It does

not, overnight, heal all the evils of the past—illiteracy, lack of culture, the consequences of a barbarous war, the aftermath of predatory capitalism. But it does pave the way to socialism. It gives those who were formerly oppressed the chance to straighten their backs and to an ever-increasing degree to take the whole government of the country, the whole administration of the economy, the whole management of production, into their own hands.

Soviet power is the road to socialism that was discovered by the masses of the working people, and that is why it is the true road, that is why it is invincible.

Speech delivered
late in March 1919

Collected Works, Vol. 29,
pp. 248-49

How the Working People Can Be Saved from the Oppression of the Landowners and Capitalists for Ever

The enemies of the working people, the landowners and capitalists say that the workers and peasants cannot live without them. "If it were not for us," they say, "there would be nobody to maintain order, to give out work, and to compel people to work. If it were not for us everything would collapse, and the state would fall to pieces. We have been driven away, but chaos will bring us back again." But this sort of talk by the landowners and capitalists will not confuse, intimidate, or deceive the workers and peasants. An army needs the strictest discipline; nevertheless the class-conscious workers succeeded in uniting the peasants, succeeded in taking the old tsarist officers into their service, succeeded in building a victorious army.

The Red Army established unprecedentedly firm discipline—not by means of the lash, but based on the intelligence, loyalty and devotion of the workers and peasants themselves.

And so, to save the working people from the yoke of the landowners and capitalists for ever, to save them from the restoration of their power, it is necessary to build up a great Red Army of Labour. That army will be invincible if it is cemented by labour discipline. The workers and peasants must and will prove that they can properly distribute labour, establish devoted discipline and ensure loyalty in working for the common good, and can do it themselves, without the landowners and in spite of them, without the capitalists and in spite of them.

Labour discipline, enthusiasm for work, readiness for self-sacrifice, close alliance between the peasants and the workers—this is what will save the working people from the oppression of the landowners and capitalists for ever.

Speech delivered
late in March 1919

Collected Works, Vol. 29,
pp. 250-51

The Tasks of the Working Women's Movement in the Soviet Republic

**Speech delivered at the fourth Moscow city
conference of non-party working women
September 23, 1919**

Comrades, it gives me pleasure to greet a conference of working women. I will allow myself to pass over those subjects and questions that, of course, at the moment are the cause of the greatest concern to every working woman and to every politically-conscious individual from among the working people; these are the most urgent questions—that of bread and that of the war situation. I know from the newspaper reports of your meetings that these questions have been dealt with exhaustively by Comrade Trotsky as far as war questions are concerned and by Comrades Yakovleva and Svidersky as far as the bread question is concerned; please, therefore, allow me to pass over to those questions.

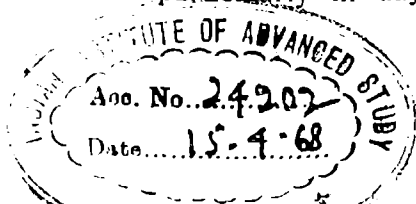
I should like to say a few words about the general tasks facing the working women's movement in the Soviet Republic, those that are, in general, connected with the transition to socialism, and those that are of particular urgency at the present time. Comrades, the question of the position of women was raised by Soviet power from the very beginning. It seems to me that any workers' state in the course of transition to socialism is faced with a double task. The first part of that task is relatively simple and easy. It concerns those old laws that kept women in a position of inequality as compared to men.

Participants in all emancipation movements in Western Europe have long since, not for decades but for centuries, put forward the demand that obsolete laws be annulled and women and men be made equal by law, but none of the democratic European states, none of the most

advanced republics have succeeded in putting it into effect, because wherever there is capitalism, wherever there is private property in land and factories, wherever the power of capital is preserved, the men retain their privileges. It was possible to put it into effect in Russia only because the power of the workers has been established here since October 25, 1917. From its very inception Soviet power set out to be the power of the working people, hostile to all forms of exploitation. It set itself the task of doing away with the possibility of the exploitation of the working people by the landowners and capitalists, of doing away with the rule of capital. Soviet power has been trying to make it possible for the working people to organise their lives without private property in land, without privately-owned factories, without that private property that everywhere, throughout the world, even where there is complete political liberty, even in the most democratic republics, keeps the working people in a state of what is actually poverty and wage-slavery, and women in a state of double slavery.

Soviet power, the power of the working people, in the first months of its existence effected a very definite revolution in legislation that concerns women. Nothing whatever is left in the Soviet Republic of those laws that put women in a subordinate position. I am speaking specifically of those laws that took advantage of the weaker position of women and put them in a position of inequality and often, even, in a humiliating position, i.e., the laws on divorce and on children born out of wedlock and on the right of a woman to summon the father of a child for maintenance.

It is particularly in this sphere that bourgeois legislation, even, it must be said, in the most advanced countries, takes advantage of the weaker position of women to humiliate them and give them a status of inequality. It is particularly in this sphere that Soviet power has left nothing whatever of the old, unjust laws that were intolerable for working people. We may now say proudly and without any exaggeration that apart from Soviet Russia there is not a country in the world where women enjoy full equality and where women are not placed in the humiliating position felt particularly in day-to-day



family life. This was one of our first and most important tasks.

If you have occasion to come into contact with parties that are hostile to the Bolsheviks, if there should come into your hands newspapers published in Russian in the regions occupied by Kolchak¹⁷ or Denikin¹⁸, or if you happen to talk to people who share the views of those newspapers, you may often hear from them the accusation that Soviet power has violated democracy.

We, the representatives of Soviet power, Bolshevik Communists and supporters of Soviet power are often accused of violating democracy and proof of this is given by citing the fact that Soviet power dispersed the Constituent Assembly. We usually answer this accusation as follows; that democracy and that Constituent Assembly¹⁹ which came into being when private property still existed on earth, when there was no equality between people, when the one who possessed his own capital was the boss and the others worked for him and were his wage-slaves—that was a democracy on which we place no value. Such democracy concealed slavery even in the most advanced countries. We socialists are supporters of democracy only insofar as it eases the position of the working and oppressed people. Throughout the world socialism has set itself the task of combating every kind of exploitation of man by man. That democracy has real value for us which serves the exploited, the underprivileged. If those who do not work are disfranchised that would be real equality between people. Those who do not work should not eat.

In reply to these accusations we say that the question must be presented in this way—how is democracy implemented in various countries? We see that equality is proclaimed in all democratic republics but in the civil laws and in laws on the rights of women—those that concern their position in the family and divorce—we see inequality and the humiliation of women at every step, and we say that this is a violation of democracy specifically in respect of the oppressed. Soviet power has implemented democracy to a greater degree than any of the other, most advanced countries because it has not left in its laws any trace of the inequality of women. Again I say that no other state and no other legislation has ever done for

women a half of what Soviet power did in the first months of its existence.

Laws alone, of course, are not enough, and we are by no means content with mere decrees. In the sphere of legislation, however, we have done everything required of us to put women in a position of equality and we have every right to be proud of it. The position of women in Soviet Russia is now ideal as compared with their position in the most advanced states. We tell ourselves, however, that this is, of course, only the beginning.

Owing to her work in the house, the woman is still in a difficult position. To effect her complete emancipation and make her the equal of the man it is necessary for the national economy to be socialised and for women to participate in common productive labour. Then women will occupy the same position as men.

Here we are not, of course, speaking of making women the equal of men as far as productivity of labour, the quantity of labour, the length of the working day, labour conditions, etc., are concerned; we mean that the woman should not, unlike the man, be oppressed because of her position in the family. You all know that even when women have full rights, they still remain factually downtrodden because all housework is left to them. In most cases housework is the most unproductive, the most barbarous and the most arduous work a woman can do. It is exceptionally petty and does not include anything that would in any way promote the development of the woman.

In pursuance of the socialist ideal we want to struggle for the full implementation of socialism, and here an extensive field of labour opens up before women. We are now making serious preparations to clear the ground for the building of socialism, but the building of socialism will begin only when we have achieved the complete equality of women and when we undertake the new work together with women who have been emancipated from that petty, stultifying, unproductive work. This is a job that will take us many, many years.

This work cannot show any rapid results and will not produce a scintillating effect.

We are setting up model institutions, dining-rooms and nurseries, that will emancipate women from housework.

And the work of organising all these institutions will fall mainly to women. It has to be admitted that in Russia today there are very few institutions that would help woman out of her state of household slavery. There is an insignificant number of them, and the conditions now obtaining in the Soviet Republic—the war and food situation about which comrades have already given you the details—hinder us in this work. Still, it must be said that these institutions that liberate women from their position as household slaves are springing up wherever it is in any way possible.

We say that the emancipation of the workers must be effected by the workers themselves, and in exactly the same way the emancipation of working women is a matter for the working women themselves. The working women must themselves see to it that such institutions are developed, and this activity will bring about a complete change in their position as compared with what it was under the old, capitalist society.

In order to be active in politics under the old, capitalist regime special training was required, so that women played an insignificant part in politics, even in the most advanced and free capitalist countries. Our task is to make politics available to every working woman. Ever since private property in land and factories has been abolished and the power of the landowners and capitalists overthrown, the tasks of politics have become simple, clear and comprehensible to the working people as a whole, including working women. In capitalist society the woman's position is marked by such inequality that the extent of her participation in politics is only an insignificant fraction of that of the man. The power of the working people is necessary for a change to be wrought in this situation, for then the main tasks of politics will consist of matters directly affecting the fate of the working people themselves.

Here, too, the participation of working women is essential—not only of party members and politically-conscious women, but also of the non-party women and those who are least politically conscious. Here Soviet power opens up a wide field of activity to working women.

We have had a difficult time in the struggle against the

forces hostile to Soviet Russia that have attacked her. It was difficult for us to fight on the battlefield against the forces who went to war against the power of the working people and in the field of food supplies against the profiteers, because of the too small number of people, working people, who came whole-heartedly to our aid with their own labour. Here, too, there is nothing Soviet power can appreciate as much as the help given by masses of non-party working women. They may know that in the old, bourgeois society, perhaps, a comprehensive training was necessary for participation in politics and that this was not available to women. The political activity of the Soviet Republic is mainly the struggle against the land-owners and capitalists, the struggle for the elimination of exploitation; political activity, therefore, is made available to the working woman in the Soviet Republic and it will consist in the working woman using her organisational ability to help the working man.

What we need is not only organisational work on a scale involving millions; we need organisational work on the smallest scale and this makes it possible for women to work as well. Women can work under war conditions when it is a question of helping the army or carrying on agitation in the army. Women should take an active part in all this so that the Red Army sees that it is being looked after, that solicitude is being displayed. Women can also work in the sphere of food distribution, on the improvement of public catering and everywhere opening dining-rooms like those that are so numerous in Petrograd.

It is in these fields that the activities of working women acquire the greatest organisational significance. The participation of working women is also essential in the organisation and running of big experimental farms and should not take place only in isolated cases. This is something that cannot be carried out without the participation of a large number of working women. Working women will be very useful in this field in supervising the distribution of food and in making food products more easily obtainable. This work can well be done by non-party working women and its accomplishment will do more than anything else to strengthen socialist society.

We have abolished private property in land and almost completely abolished the private ownership of factories; Soviet power is now trying to ensure that all working people, non-party as well as Party members, women as well as men, should take part in this economic development. The work that Soviet power has begun can only make progress when, instead of a few hundreds, millions and millions of women throughout Russia take part in it. We are sure that the cause of socialist development will then become sound. Then the working people will show that they can live and run their country without the aid of the landowners and capitalists. Then socialist construction will be so soundly based in Russia that no external enemies in other countries and none inside Russia will be any danger to the Soviet Republic.

Pravda No. 213,
September 25, 1919

Collected Works, Vol. 30,
pp. 40-46

Soviet Power and the Status of Women

The second anniversary of Soviet power is an occasion for taking stock of what has been done during this period and for reflecting on the significance and the aims of the revolution that has been accomplished.

The bourgeoisie and its supporters charge us with having violated democracy. We, on the other hand, assert that the Soviet revolution has given an unprecedented impulse to the development of democracy in breadth and in depth, democracy, that is, for the working people oppressed by capitalism, democracy for the overwhelming majority of the people, socialist democracy (for the working people), as distinct from bourgeois democracy (for the exploiters, for the capitalists, for the rich).

Who is right?

To give proper thought to this question and achieve a deeper understanding of it one must take stock of the experience of these two years and make better preparations for further development.

The status of women makes clear in the most striking fashion the difference between bourgeois and socialist democracy and furnishes a most effective reply to the question posed.

In a bourgeois republic (i.e., where there is private ownership of land, factories, shares, etc.), be it the most democratic republic, women have never had rights fully equal to those of men, *anywhere in the world, in any one of the more advanced countries*. And this despite the fact that more than 125 years have passed since the great French (bourgeois-democratic) Revolution.

In words bourgeois democracy promises equality and freedom, but in practice *not a single* bourgeois republic.

even the more advanced, has granted women (half the human race) and men complete equality in the eyes of the law, or delivered women from dependence on and the oppression of the male.

Bourgeois democracy is the democracy of pompous phrases, solemn words, lavish promises and high-sounding slogans about *freedom and equality*, but in practice all this cloaks the lack of freedom and the inequality of women, the lack of freedom and the inequality for the working and exploited people.

Soviet or socialist democracy sweeps away these pompous but false words and declares ruthless war on the hypocrisy of "democrats", landowners, capitalists and farmers with bursting bins who are piling up wealth by selling surplus grain to the starving workers at profiteering prices.

Down with this foul lie! There is no "equality", nor can there be, of oppressed and oppressor, exploited and exploiter. There is no real "freedom", nor can there be, so long as women are handicapped by men's legal privileges, so long as there is no freedom for the worker from the yoke of capital, no freedom for the labouring peasant from the yoke of the capitalist, landowner and merchant.

Let the liars and the hypocrites, the obtuse and the blind, the bourgeois and their supporters, try to deceive the people with talk about freedom in general, about equality in general and about democracy in general.

We say to the workers and peasants—tear the mask from these liars, open the eyes of the blind. Ask them:

Is there equality of the two sexes?

Which nation is the equal of which?

Which class is the equal of which?

Freedom from what yoke or from the yoke of which class? Freedom for which class?

He who speaks about politics, democracy and freedom, about equality, about socialism, *without posing* these questions, without giving them priority, who does not fight against hushing them up, concealing and blunting them, is the worst enemy of the working people, a wolf in sheep's clothing, the rabid opponent of the workers and

peasants, a lackey of the landowners, the tsars and the capitalists.

In the course of two years of Soviet power in one of the most backward countries of Europe more has been done to emancipate woman, to make her the equal of the "strong" sex, than has been done during the past 130 years by all the advanced, enlightened, "democratic" republics of the world taken together.

Education, culture, civilisation, freedom—all these high-sounding words are accompanied in all the capitalist, bourgeois republics of the world with incredibly foul, disgustingly vile, bestially crude laws that make women unequal in marriage and divorce, that make the child born out of wedlock and the "legally born" child unequal and that give privileges to the male and humiliate and degrade womankind.

The yoke of capital, the oppression of "sacred private property", the despotism of philistine obtuseness, the avarice of the small property-owner—these are the things that have prevented the most democratic bourgeois republics from abolishing these foul and filthy laws.

The Soviet Republic, the republic of workers and peasants, wiped out these laws at one stroke and did not leave standing a single stone of the edifice of bourgeois lies and bourgeois hypocrisy.

Down with this lie! Down with the liars who speak about freedom and equality *for all*, while there is an oppressed sex, oppressing classes, private ownership of capital and shares and people with bursting bins who use their surplus grain to enslave the hungry. Instead of freedom for all, instead of equality for all, let there be *struggle* against the oppressors and exploiters, *let the opportunity* to oppress and exploit *be abolished*. That is our slogan!

Freedom and equality for the oppressed sex!

Freedom and equality for the workers and labouring peasants!

Struggle against the oppressors, struggle against the capitalists, struggle against the kulak profiteers!

This is our fighting slogan, this is our proletarian truth, the truth of the fight against capital, the truth that we hurl in the face of the world of capital with its honeyed,

hypocritical and pompous phrases about freedom and equality *in general*, about freedom and equality *for all*.

And it is because we have laid bare this hypocrisy, because, with revolutionary vigour, we are ensuring freedom and full rights for the oppressed working people, against the oppressors, against the capitalists, against the kulaks—precisely because of this Soviet rule has become so dear to the workers of the whole world.

It is because of this, the sympathies of the working masses, the sympathies of the oppressed and exploited in all countries of the world are with us on this occasion of the second anniversary of Soviet rule.

Because of this, on the occasion of the second anniversary of Soviet rule, despite the famine and cold, despite all the suffering caused by the imperialists' invasion of the Russian Soviet Republic, we are fully convinced of the justness of our cause, firmly convinced of the inevitable victory of Soviet power on a world scale.

Pravda No. 249,
November 6, 1919
Signed: *N. Lenin*

Collected Works, Vol. 30,
pp. 120-23

Two Years of Soviet Power

The newspaper *Bednota*²⁰ is read mostly by peasants. On this, the second, anniversary of the establishment of Soviet power, I wish to extend greetings to the many millions of working peasants who have been liberated from landowner and capitalist oppression and say a few words about that liberation.

Soviet power, which overthrew the rule of capital and placed power in the hands of the working people, has to contend in Russia with unparalleled and incredible difficulties.

The landowners and capitalists of Russia, now joined by the landowners and capitalists of the whole world, are still making frenzied attempts to destroy Soviet power. They fear the example it has set; they fear that it will win the sympathy and support of workers the world over.

Conspiracies within the country, the bribing of the Czechoslovak forces, the landing of foreign troops in Siberia, Archangel, the Caucasus, South Russia and near Petrograd, the hundreds of millions of rubles being spent to help Kolchak, Denikin, Yudenich and other tsarist generals—every conceivable method is being employed by the capitalists of all countries, who have accumulated millions and thousands of millions from war contracts, in an attempt to overthrow the Soviet government.

But all in vain. The Soviet government stands firm, overcoming all these unparalleled and incredible difficulties, despite the measureless suffering caused by war, blockade, famine, shortages, break-down of the transport system and general economic dislocation.

Soviet power in Russia has already won the support of the workers of the whole world. There is not a single

country where the people do not talk of Bolshevism and Soviet power.

The capitalists talk of it with hatred and rabid malice, slandering and vilifying it without end. But this malice gives them away, and the mass of workers are turning their backs on the old leaders and coming out in support of Soviet power.

Despite the crushing, painful burden imposed by the enemy assault on Russia, Soviet power has triumphed throughout the world—triumphed in the sense that everywhere the sympathy of the working people is already on our side.

The victory of the Soviet power throughout the world is assured. It is only a question of time.

Why is Soviet power so firm and stable, despite the incredible ordeals, the terrible famine and the difficulties created by war and economic dislocation?

Because it is the power of the working people themselves, of the millions of workers and peasants.

The workers hold state power. The workers help the millions of labouring peasants.

The Soviet government has overthrown the landowners and capitalists and is steadfastly defending the people against attempts to restore their rule.

The Soviet government gives all the aid it is capable of to the labouring peasants, the poor and middle peasants, who make up the vast majority.

The Soviet government holds a tight rein on the kulak, the village money-bag, the proprietor, the profiteer, on everyone who wants to get rich without having to work, everyone who battens on the misery and hunger of the people.

The Soviet government is *for* the labouring people, *against* the profiteers, proprietors, capitalists and landowners.

That is the source of the strength, stability and invincibility of Soviet power throughout the world.

Tens and hundreds of millions of workers and peasants all over the world are suffering oppression, humiliation and plunder at the hands of landowners and capitalists. The old state apparatus, whether of a monarchy or a

"democratic" (pseudo-democratic) republic, helps the exploiters and oppresses the workers.

Tens and hundreds of millions of workers and peasants in all lands know this; they see it and experience it in their everyday life.

The imperialist war²¹ lasted over four years; tens of millions were killed and crippled. What for? For the division of the capitalists' spoils, for markets, profits, colonies and the power of the banks.

The Anglo-French imperialist predators defeated the German imperialist predators. With every passing day they are exposing themselves for what they are—robbers and plunderers, oppressors of the working folk who batten on the misery of the people and tyrannise weak nations.

That is why support for Soviet power is growing among the workers and peasants of the world.

The severe and arduous struggle against capital was victoriously begun in Russia. It is now spreading in all countries.

It will end in the victory of the World Soviet Republic.

Bednota No. 478,
November 7, 1919
Signed: *N. Lenin*

Collected Works, Vol. 30,
pp. 124-26

Notes

- ¹ This manifesto was published on November 7 (20), 1917, ten days after the socialist revolution in Russia took place and the Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets had placed state power in the hands of the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies. p. 5
- ² Kerensky, Alexander (b. 1881), headed the bourgeois Provisional Government from July to October 1917. When the Provisional Government was overthrown by the socialist revolution of November 7 (October 25, O.S.), 1917, Kerensky attempted a counter-revolutionary revolt against Soviet power. p. 5
- ³ At the time of the October Revolution the officer cadets, under the leadership of the counter-revolutionary parties of the bourgeoisie and the landowners, took up arms against the workers and soldiers who were establishing Soviet power in Moscow, Petrograd and other cities. They were defeated, surrendered and were disarmed. p. 5
- ⁴ Kornilov, Lavr (1870-1918)—tsarist general, monarchist; one of the leaders of the counter-revolution in 1917 and 1918. p. 5
- ⁵ The committee here referred to was the Committee of Public Safety formed by counter-revolutionary parties in Moscow on November 7 (October 25, O.S.), 1917, to combat the socialist revolution. The committee capitulated and was dissolved on November 2 (15). p. 5
- ⁶ The first decrees promulgated by Soviet power were the Decree on Peace which proposed to all peoples and governments participating in the First World War to start immediate peace negotiations, and the Decree on the Land that abolished landed proprietorship in Russia and transferred all land to the peasants. p. 5
- ⁷ Lenin wrote this pamphlet in March 1918 after the young Soviet Republic had concluded peace with Germany and obtained a respite in which to start peaceful socialist work. In this edition we publish a chapter from the pamphlet, in which Lenin outlined the chief political and economic problems facing the Soviet people. p. 8.

- ⁸ This expression is taken from **Anti-Dühring**, Moscow, 1959, p. 391.
p. 9
- ⁹ **Scheidemann, Philip** (1865-1939)—one of the leaders of the opportunist wing of the German Social-Democratic Party. He headed the German bourgeois government from February to June 1919 and was the organiser of brutal repressions against revolutionary workers.
p. 10
- ¹⁰ **Martov, L.** (pseudonym of Yuli Tserdobaum—1873-1923)—one of the leaders of the Mensheviks, the opportunist wing of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party; after the October Revolution went over to the side of counter-revolution.
p. 10
- ¹¹ **Turgenev, Ivan** (1818-1883)—prominent Russian writer, liberal in politics.
p. 10
- ¹² **Dobrolyubov, Nikolai** (1836-1861)—Russian man of letters, revolutionary democrat, supporter of Chernyshevsky.
p. 10.
- ¹³ **Chernyshevsky, Nikolai** (1828-1889)—Russian revolutionary democrat, writer, philosopher, economist. Headed the Russian revolutionary movement in the fifties and early sixties of the nineteenth century. Arrested in 1862 and sent to penal servitude in Siberia.
p. 10
- ¹⁴ This is an excerpt from the draft of a programme for the R.C.P.(B.) compiled by Lenin for the Eighth Party Congress which was held in March 1919. The draft formed the basis of the Programme adopted by the Congress.
p. 12
- ¹⁵ **The Paris Commune** (1871) was the proletariat's first attempt to establish dictatorship. The Paris Commune lasted from March 18 to May 28, 1871; it separated the church from the state and the school from the church, replaced the regular army by the armed people, introduced the election of judges and government officials and fixed the salaries of officials at the same level as the wages of factory workers, adopted measures to improve the economic condition of factory workers and the urban poor, etc.
p. 14
- ¹⁶ This speech was delivered at the end of March 1919 and recorded on a gramophone disc.
p. 17
- ¹⁷ **Kolchak, Alexander** (1873-1920)—tsarist admiral, monarchist; in 1918 headed the counter-revolution in the Urals and Siberia. With the support of the Western Powers he declared himself Supreme Ruler of Russia. Kolchak's forces and the British,

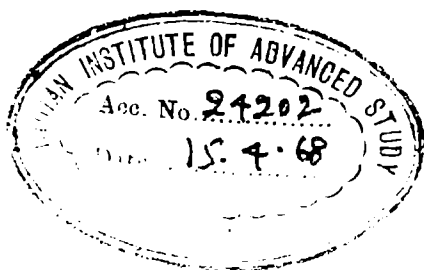
French, American and Japanese interventionists who supported him were defeated by the Red Army in 1919. p. 22

- ¹⁸ **Denikin, Anton (1872-1947)**—tsarist general, monarchist; aided by the Western Powers, he established the military dictatorship of the bourgeoisie and landowners in the south of Russia and the Ukraine in 1919. Launched an attack on Moscow in 1919 which failed, his forces were defeated by the Red Army early in 1920. p. 22

- ¹⁹ **The Constituent Assembly** was convened on January 5, 1918, in Petrograd. The election lists had been drawn up before the October Revolution so that the composition of the Constituent Assembly conformed to the old alignment of forces when the bourgeoisie had been in power. This resulted in a sharp difference between the will of the vast majority of the people who supported Soviet power and the policy pursued by the Constituent Assembly which had a majority of members of the Socialist-Revolutionary, Menshevik and Cadet parties, who expressed the interests of the bourgeoisie and landowners. The Constituent Assembly refused to discuss the "Declaration of the Rights of the Working and Exploited People" and to approve the decrees on peace, the land and the transfer of power to the Soviets, passed by the Second Congress of Soviets, and was dissolved by a decision of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee on January 6 (19), 1918. p. 22

- ²⁰ **Bednota (The Poor)**—a daily newspaper published in Moscow by the Central Committee of the Communist Party from March 27, 1918, to January 31, 1931. p. 31

- ²¹ **The imperialist war** refers to the First World War, 1914-18. p. 33



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