

The Workers Government

Introduction

THE MATERIAL we reproduce here includes the major contributions in the debate at the 4th Congress of the Communist International (1922) on the question of the Workers' Government, and relevant section of the 4th Congress Theses on Tactics.

We have based ourselves on the two available English texts: the 'Bulletin of the 4th Congress' and the 'Report of the Moscow Conference 1922' later produced by the CPGB. The two texts are substantially similar, the 'Bulletin' being slightly fuller and the 'Report' appearing to include some corrections of mistakes in the 'Bulletin'. As a third text to check against we have used the German 'Protokoll' of the 4th Congress.

We publish this material as part of the discussion on the question of programme currently in progress in the I-CL. The last issue of 'International Communist', no. 2-3, included a text submitted for that discussion which gives an interpretation and statement of position on the workers' government question.

Just as the workers' government plays a pivotal role in the transitional programme, corresponding to the problem of linking day-to-day struggles within the present political system to the struggle to disrupt, overthrow, and replace that system, so the workers' government question is the clearest litmus test for the various conceptions of

programme current in the would-be Trotskyist movement.

The politics of 'pushing forward the revolutionary process' express themselves in calls for CP-SP, or Labour, governments, 'with socialist policies'. This is characteristic, in different ways, to different degrees, and at different times, of all the currents stemming from the 1951 Third World Congress: ISFI, USFI, ICFI. Their inversions, the syndicalist-leaning tendencies (IS/SWP, LO) have no use for the Workers' Government concept. And the most arid sectarianism reduce the concept to abstentionist banality (the Spartacist tendency with their definition of workers' government as pseudonym for dictatorship of the proletariat).

Some passages in the 4th Congress contributions are cryptic; some leave open questions (e.g. the development of the Labour Party) which have since been definitely answered. The 4th Congress debate was, clearly, the opening of a discussion soon to be effectively cut short by the Stalinist degeneration of the CI.

Two points, however, are absolutely clear. Throughout the debate, the central role of the revolutionary party as active protagonist is crucial. And the slogans discussed are always related to concrete realities — they are never just clever formulae invented for purposes of literary 'exposure' or 'raising the question of power'. Both elements are completely absent from the 'Labour government with socialist policies' approach which is current in present-day 'Trotskyism'.

M.T.

Theses on the Tactics of the C.I.

As a propagandist watchword the workers' government [and eventually of the workers' and peasants' government] is to be applied almost everywhere. But as a topical political watchword the workers' government is the most important only in those countries where the bourgeois society is particularly very unstable and where the balance of power between the workers' parties and the bourgeoisie makes the decision on the question of government a practical necessity. In those countries the watchword of the workers' government is an unavoidable consequence of the United Front tactics.

The parties of the Second International in these countries endeavour to "save" the situation by propagating and bringing about coalition between the bourgeoisie and the social-democrats. The recent attempts of some of the parties of the Second International [for instance, in Germany] to refuse to participate openly in such a coalition government, and at the same time tacitly carry on a coalition policy, are nothing but a manoeuvre to keep the indignant masses quiet and to deceive them in the most cunning and shameful way. To such an open or disguised bourgeois social-democratic coalition, the Communists oppose a United Front of the workers, a coalition of all the workers' parties on the economic and political field for the struggle against the bourgeois power and for the final overthrow of the latter. Through the united struggle of all the workers against the bourgeoisie, the entire State machinery is to get into the hands of the workers' government, thus consolidating the positions of power of the working class.

The most elementary tasks of a workers' government must consist in arming the proletariat, in disarming the bourgeois counter-revolutionary organisations, in introducing control of production, in putting the chief burden of taxation on the shoulders of the rich and in breaking down the

resistance of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie.

Such a workers' government is only possible if it arises out of the struggle of the masses and if it is based upon the support of active workers' organisations involving the lowest strata of the oppressed working masses. A workers' government which is the outcome of parliamentary groupings, that is to say, which is of purely parliamentary origin, may likewise become the occasion of a revival of the revolutionary movement. It is self-evident that the formation of a real workers' government and the continued existence of such a government whose policy is revolutionary, must lead to a bitter struggle and eventually to civil war with the bourgeoisie. The very attempt of the proletariat to establish such a government is bound to meet immediately with the most stubborn resistance on the part of the bourgeoisie. Therefore the watchword of the workers' government is likely to unite the proletariat and initiate revolutionary struggles.

Under certain circumstances the Communists must be prepared to form a government jointly with the non-Communist workers' parties and organisations. But, they can do this only in case there is the assurance that this workers' government will in good earnest carry on the struggle against the bourgeoisie in the above mentioned sense. Moreover the Communists can participate in such a government only on these self-evident conditions:—

[1] That participation in such a government must first have the consent of the Comintern.

[2] That the Communist representatives participating in such a government be under strictest control of their party.

[3] That the said Communist members of the workers' government be in close contact with the revolutionary organisations of the working masses.

[4] That the Communist party maintains its own character and complete independence in its agitational work.

With all its advantages, the watchword of the workers' government has its perils just as that of the United Front. In order to avoid such perils the Communist parties must bear in mind that every bourgeois government is at the same time a capitalist government, but that not every workers' government is a

really proletarian, i.e., a revolutionary instrument of the proletarian power.

The Communist International must anticipate the following possibilities.—

OSTENSIBLE WORKERS' GOVERNMENTS

[1] A Liberal Workers' Government, such as existed in Australia, and likely to be formed in Great Britain in the near future.

[2] A Social-Democratic "workers' government" [Germany].

TRUE WORKERS' GOVERNMENTS

[3] A Workers' and peasants' government—such a possibility exists in the Balkans, in Czechoslovakia etc.

[4] A Workers' government in which Communists participate.

[5] A real proletarian Workers' government which the Communist party alone can embody in a pure form.

★ The first two types are not revolutionary workers' government, but a disguised coalition between the bourgeoisie and anti-revolutionary groups. Such workers' governments are tolerated, at critical moments, by the weakened bourgeoisie, in order to dupe the workers as to the true class character of the state, or with aid of the corrupt leaders to divert the revolutionary onslaught of the proletariat, and to gain time.

The Communists cannot take part in such governments. On the contrary, they must ruthlessly expose their true character to the masses. In this period of capitalist decline, when the main task is to win the majority of the proletarians for the proletarian revolution, such governments may serve as means to precipitate the destruction of bourgeois power.

The Communists are willing to make common cause also with those workers who have not yet recognised the necessity for proletarian dictatorship, with Social Democrats, Christian Socialists, non-party and Syndicalist workers. Thus, the Communists are prepared, under certain conditions and with certain guarantees, to support a non-Communist workers' government. At the same time, the Communists say to the masses quite openly that it is impossible to establish a real workers' government without a revolutionary struggle against the bourgeoisie.

The other two types of workers' government [workers' and peasants' government and workers' government with the participation of Communists] are not proletarian dictatorships, nor are they inevitable transition forms of government towards proletarian dictatorship, but where they are formed may serve as starting points for the struggle for dictatorship. Only the workers' government, consisting of Communists, can be the true embodiment of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

★ The German text is appreciably different from this point onwards. It runs as follows:—

The Communists are willing to make common cause also with those workers who have not yet recognised the necessity for proletarian dictatorship, with Social-Democrats and non-party workers. Thus, the Communists are prepared, under certain conditions and with certain guarantees, even to support a merely ostensible workers' government (naturally only insofar as it represents the interests of the workers). At the same time, the Communists say to the workers quite openly that it is impossible to achieve or maintain a real workers' government without a revolutionary struggle against the bourgeoisie. One can only describe as a true workers' government one which is resolute in taking up a serious struggle at least for the fulfilment of the most important day-to-day demands of the workers against the bourgeoisie. Communists can only take part in such a workers' government.

The first two types of ostensible workers' governments (liberal and Social-Democratic) are not revolutionary governments but can under certain conditions accelerate the process of disintegration of bourgeois power.

The other two types of workers' government ... [as in last paragraph of English text].

Radek: Speech on the tactics of the CI.

When comrade Zinoviev at the extended Executive session said that the workers' government was to us a pseudonym for Proletarian Dictatorship — so he was quoted here by comrade Mayer — I think that definition was not right and that it was due to the misgiving which has been characterised here by comrade Flecher as trimming to the western style. To many comrades, the idea of a workers' government sounds like a sweet lullaby. They say: Dictatorship — the devil knows when that may come, at all events it is a difficult thing to carry on agitation under the banner of dictatorship; I will rather talk of "Workers' government", this sound so sweet and innocent.

Nobody knows what it means. Maybe something will come out of it. At any rate it does not sound so dangerous.

This should be done away with by our method of agitation. A workers' government is not the Proletarian Dictatorship, that is clear. It is one of the possible transitory stages to the proletarian dictatorship. The possibility of such a transitory stage is due to the fact the working masses in the West are not so amorphous politically as in the East. They are members of parties and they stick to their parties. In the East, in Russia, it was easier to bring them into the fold of communism after the outbreak of the revolutionary storm. In your countries it is much more difficult. The German, Norwegian and Czechoslovakian workers will more readily declare against coalition with the bourgeoisie, preferring a coalition of labour parties which would guarantee the 8 hour day, and an extra crust of bread, etc. A Workers' Party usually arises in this manner either through preliminary struggles or on the basis of a parliamentary combination, and it would be folly to turn aside the opportunities of such a situation in stubborn doctrinaire fashion.

Now the question arises — shall we recline upon this soft cushion and take a good rest, or shall we rather lead the masses into the fight on the basis of their own illusions

for the realisation of the programme of a Workers' Government? If we conceive the Workers' Government as a soft cushion, we are ourselves politically beaten. We would then take our place beside the social-democrats as a new type of tricksters. On the other hand, if we keep alive the consciousness of the masses that a Workers' Government is an empty shell unless it has workers behind it forging their weapons and forming their factory councils to compel it to hold on to the right track and make no compromise to the Right, making that government a starting point for the struggle for Proletarian Dictatorship, such a Workers' Government will eventually make room for a Soviet Government and not become a soft cushion, but rather a lever for the conquest of power by revolutionary means. I believe one of the comrades has said, "The Workers Government is not a historic necessity but a historical possibility". This is, to my mind, a correct formula. It would be absolutely wrong to assert that the development of man from the ape to a People's Commissar must necessarily pass through the phase of a Workers' Government [Laughter]. Such a variant in history is possible, and in the first place it is possible in a number of countries having a strong proletarian and peasant movement, or where the working class overwhelmingly outweigh the bourgeoisie, as is the case in England. A parliamentary labour victory in England is quite possible. It will not take place in the present elections, but it is possible in the future, and then the question will arise: What is the Labour Government? Is it no more than a new edition of the bourgeois-liberal government, or can we compel it to be something more? I believe Austen Chamberlain was right in saying, "If a Labour Government comes into power in England, it will begin with a Clynes administration and end in a government of the Left Wing, because the latter can solve the unemployed problem".

Thus, comrades, I believe the Executive on the whole has taken the right attitude in this question, when on the one hand it warns against the proposition of either Soviet government or nothing, and, on the other hand, against the illusion which makes the Workers' Government a sort of parachute.

Dombsky [Polish CP] Speech against the workers' government slogan

I must cut short my remarks and come directly to the question of partial demands and workers' government, which has been the subject of discussion here. As regards the workers' government, I was in the same boat as my friend Duret, I could not understand the meaning of the workers' government in our tactic. At last I have heard a clear definition of this government. Comrade Radek has solaced me in private conversation that such a government is not contemplated for Poland [Radek: I never said it] Oh, then Poland will also have to bear the punishment of this sort of government. It is thus an international problem. Comrade Radek says that the workers' government is not a necessity but a possibility and it were folly to reject such possibilities. The question is whether we inscribe such possibilities on our banner, we try to accelerate the realisation of these policies once we have them on our banner. I believe it is quite possible that at the eleventh hour a so-called workers' government should come which is not the proletarian dictatorship. But I believe when such a government comes, it will be the resultant of various forces such as: our struggle for the proletarian dictatorship, the struggle of the social-democrats against it and so forth. Is it proper to build our plans on such an assumption? I think not because I believe we should insist on our struggle for the proletarian dictatorship. If the workers' government is to come, it will come even if we agitate and fight for our full programme. It may happen that the working masses would turn their back on the national labour party and join the social-democrats, as has been the case in Upper Silesia. It would be a step forward, at all events. But it is not

our duty to agitate for such a step. We must agitate for our own Communist Party.

But some comrades give a different interpretation to the slogan of workers' government. We are really out for the Proletarian Dictatorship, but we dare not say it. The working masses are afraid of the Communist Dictatorship, and even when we declare that the Proletarian Dictatorship is not the Communist Dictatorship, they do not believe us.

I therefore think that when we meet with opposition to the Communist Dictatorship on the part of opponents whom this "Commis-sar" dictatorship paints in the blackest colours, it should be our position to counteract such a position, not by launching slogans that are pseudonyms, as comrade Zinoviev aptly remarked. Pseudonyms will not win the fight for us. We must state our revolutionary demands quite clearly. This does not mean to say that we ought not to make any partial demands. We should draw up partial demands and we have done so in every struggle in as much as these were necessary for the struggle of the working masses for the improvement of their lot, and for them to weaken the chains of bondage. These slogans we ought to formulate and to support. But we should not advance any slogans in which we do not believe ourselves, we should have no slogans intended to expose anybody or as a means for manoeuvring. We must have slogans either partial or ultimate in which we believe ourselves, and for which we are ready to fight.

In conclusion, I would like to say this: the working class is not so foolish and not so cowardly as some are inclined to think. The working class wants to fight for the revolution. He who speaks to the workers in their own language for any length of time is bound to be understood. It is sheer ignorance of the situation of the working struggle to suppose that the workers can be ordered about like an army, now to the right, then to the left, without their own intelligent comprehension. This war can end in victory only when our slogans are perfectly clear and understood by every soldier. Only in this manner can the working class carry on the struggle consistently towards the ultimate goal.

Zinoviev: Speech on the tactics of the CI

Comrades, you will allow me to discuss in detail the question of Workers' government. It is not yet quite clear to me whether there are serious differences of opinion with regard to this question, whether this question has been completely ventilated, or whether a good deal of our differences were caused by variations in terminology. In the course of the Congress, and during the working out of the resolution on tactical questions, with which we shall deal after the question of the Russian Revolution, this will become clear. As far as I am concerned the question has nothing to do with the word "pseudonym" which has been quoted here. I am quite willing, under these circumstances to give up the word. But the main thing is the significance. I think, comrades, that the question will be made clear if I express myself as follows: it is clear to us that every bourgeois government is a capitalist government. It is hard to imagine a bourgeois government — the mule of the bourgeois class — which is not at the same time a capitalist government. But I fear that one cannot reverse that saying. Every workers' government is not a proletarian government; not every workers' government is a socialist government.

This contrast is radical. It reveals the fact that the bourgeoisie have their outposts within our class, but that workers have not their outposts within the capitalist class. It is impossible for us to have our outposts in the camp of the bourgeoisie.

Every bourgeois Government is a capitalist government, and even many Workers' governments can be bourgeois governments according to their social content. I believe that one can imagine four kinds of Workers' Governments and even then we will not have exhausted the possibilities. You can have a Workers' government which, according to its composition, would be a Liberal Workers' Government, for example, the Australian Labour Government; and several of our Australian comrades say that the term

Workers' Government is incorrect because in Australia we have had such Workers' Governments of a bourgeois nature. These were really Workers' Governments, but their composition was of a purely Liberal character. They were bourgeois Workers' Governments, if one may so term them. Let us take this example: the general elections are taking place in England. It is not probable, but one may well accept in theory, as a possibility, that a Workers' Government will be elected, which will be similar to the Australian Labour Government and will be of Liberal composition. This Liberal Workers' Government in England can, under certain circumstances, constitute the starting point of revolutionising the situation. That could well happen. But by itself, it is nothing more than a Liberal Workers' Government. We, the Communists, now vote in England for the Labour Party. That is the same as voting for a Liberal Workers' Government. The English Communists are compelled by the existing situation to vote for a Liberal Workers' Government. These are absolutely the right tactics. Why? Because this objective would be a step forward; because a Liberal government in Britain would disturb the equilibrium, and would extend the bankruptcy of capitalism. We have seen in Russia during the Kerensky regime how the position of capitalism was smashed, despite the fact that the Liberals were the agents of capitalism. Plekhanov, in the period from February to October 1917, called the Mensheviks semi-Bolsheviks. We said that this was an exaggeration; they are not semi-Bolsheviks, but just quarter-Bolsheviks. We said this because we were at war with them, and because we saw their treachery to the proletariat. Objectively, Plekhanov was right. Objectively, the Menshevik government was best adapted to make a hash of capitalism, by making its position impossible. Our party, which was then fighting the Mensheviks, would not and could not see this. The parties stood arrayed for conflict. Under such conditions, we can only see that they are traitors to the working class. They are not opponents of the bourgeoisie, but when, for a period, they hold the weapons of the bourgeoisie in their hands, they make certain steps which are objectively against the bourgeois state. Therefore, in England, we support the

Liberal Workers Government and the Labour Party. The english bourgeoisie are right when they say that the workers' government will start with Clynes and end in the hands of the left wing.

That is the first type of a possible Workers' Government.

The second type is that of a Socialist Government. One can imagine that the United Social Democratic Party in Germany forms a purely socialist government. That would also be a Workers' Government, a Socialist Government — with the word — Socialist — of course in inverted commas. One can easily imagine a situation where we would give such a government certain conditional credit, a certain conditional support. One can imagine a Socialist government as being a first step in the revolutionising of the situation.

A third type is the so-called coalition government; that is, a government in which Social Democrats, Trade Union leaders and even perhaps Communists take part. One can imagine such a possibility. Such a government is not yet the dictatorship of the proletariat, but it is perhaps a starting point for the dictatorship. When all goes right, we can kick one social-democrat after another out of the government until the power is in the hands of the Communists. This is a historical possibility.

Fourthly, we have a workers' government which is really workers' government — that is a Communist Workers' Government, which is the true Workers' Government. I believe that this fourth possibility is a pseudonym for the dictatorship of the proletariat, that it is truly a Workers' government in the true sense of the word. But this by no means exhausts the question. There can be a fifth or a sixth type, and they can be excellent starting points for the revolutionising of the situation.

I fear that in seeking for a strictly scientific definition, we overlook the political significance of the term. I do not care for hair-splitting about a scientific definition, but I am concerned about not confusing the revolutionary definition. One has the feeling that before that — if we join the Social Democrats, if we join the Social-Democrats, we shall have a Workers' Government. They forget that having joined we must then overthrow the bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie will not give up their power voluntarily; they

will resist with all their might. The question is to consider all eventualities within the perspective of world revolution and civil war. One should never forget that, outside the Labour parties, there stands a bourgeoisie which for hundreds of years has been in power and which will exert every effort to retain this power.

Therefore, in order to construct a workers' Government in the revolutionary sense, one must overthrow the bourgeoisie; and that is and that is the most important. We must not forget that we have here to distinguish between two things: [1] Our methods of agitation; how we can best speak to the simple workers, how we can enable them best to understand the position. For that purpose, I believe the slogan of the "Workers' Government is best adapted. [2] How will events develop historically, in what concrete forms will the revolution manifest itself? And all rambling discussions over slogans are worth nothing. We will now slightly raise the curtain of history.

How will the revolution proceed? We will attempt all ways: through the workers' government, through a coalition government and through a civil war. But all prophecies are out of place here. The revolution will probably come quite differently from the way we imagine it. We have already seen this in the Russian Revolution. Five years ago it was believed that the blockade, the famine etc. would force us to surrender. We foresaw all sorts of eventualities, except the eventuality of the new economic policy, except the victory of the revolution. The situation varies in each country. The revolution will probably come quite differently in Germany and England. This does not mean that, as conscious revolutionaries, we should not try to peep behind the curtain. We are thinking beings, the leaders of the working class. We must look at the question from all sides. It is nevertheless difficult to make any prediction. If we now look at the slogan of the workers' government from this new standpoint, as a concrete road to the realisation of the proletarian revolution, we may doubt whether the world revolution must necessarily pass through the stage of the workers' government. Our friend Radek said yesterday that the workers' government is a possible intermediate step to the dictatorship of the proletariat. I agree, it is a

possibility, or more exactly, an exceptional possibility. This does not mean that the slogan of the workers' government is not good. It is a good instrument of agitation where the relation of forces makes it possible. But if we put this question: Is the workers' government a necessary step towards the revolution? I must answer that this is not a question that we can solve here. It is a way, but the least probable of all. In countries with a highly developed bourgeois class, the proletariat can conquer power by force alone, through civil war. In such a case an intermediary step is not to be thought of. It might take place, but it is useless to argue about it. All that is necessary is that we see clearly all the possible ways towards the revolution. The workers' government may be nothing more than a liberal labour government, as it might be in England and Australia. Such a workers' government can also be useful to the working class. The agitation for a workers' government is wise, we may gain advantages therefrom. But in no case must we forget our revolutionary prospects. I have here a beautiful article by the Czecho-Slovak minister Benisch. I will read you a passage.

The "Tachas", organ of minister Benisch, writes, on September 18: "The Communist Party is building the United Front of the workers on a slogan of a fight against unemployment."

"We cannot deny that the communists are clever. They know how to present to the workers the same thing under different forms. For instance, some time ago, the communists began a campaign for the formation of Soviets. When they saw that this campaign was unsuccessful, they stopped their agitation, but resumed it a year and a half later under the mask of United Front committees. The United Front of the proletariat might become a tremendous force if based on progressive ideas, but the ideas of Moscow are not progressive."

This bourgeois is right, I believe. We communists who deal with the masses intellectually enslaved by the bourgeoisie, must make all efforts to enlighten our class. I have said that a workers' government might in reality be a bourgeois government; but they might appear a workers' government with real revolutionary tendencies. It is our duty to enlighten in all ways the more

receptive sections of the working class. But the contents of our declaration must always remain the same.

Another thing, comrades, Soviet Government does not always mean dictatorship of the proletariat. Far from it. A soviet government existed for eight months in Russia parallel with the Kerensky government, but this was not the dictatorship of the proletariat. Nevertheless, we defended the slogan of the Soviet Government; and we only gave it up for a very short time.

This is why I believe that we can adopt the policy of the workers' government with a peaceful heart, under the only condition that we do not forget what it really amounts to. Woe to us if we ever allow the suggestion to creep up in our propaganda that the workers' government is a necessary step, to be achieved peacefully as a period of semi-organic construction which may take the place of civil war etc. If such views exist among us, we must combat them ruthlessly; we must educate the working class by way of telling them: Yes, dear friends, to establish a workers' government, the bourgeoisie must first be overthrown and defeated.

This is the most important part of the slogan. We will say to the workers: Do you want a workers' government, if so, well and good, we are ready to come to an agreement even with the social-democrats, though we warn you that they are going to betray you; we favour a workers' government, but under the one condition that you be ready to fight with us against the bourgeoisie. If this is your wish, then we will take up the fight against the bourgeoisie; and if the workers' government results from the struggle, it will stand on sound principles, and will be a real beginning to the dictatorship of the proletariat. There is no question here of the word pseudonym, I leave that word to Comrade Meyer; but we must draw a sharp line in this question. It is in no way a strategic move likely to replace civil war. The International must adopt the right tactics, but there are no tactics by means of which we could outwit the bourgeoisie and glide smoothly into the realm of a workers' government. The important thing is that we overthrow the bourgeoisie, after which various forms of the workers' government may be established.

In England in the given situation, a gov-

ernment may have objectively revolutionary effects, and therefore we will support it even if it be of a limited, menshevik-liberal nature. But in doing so we by no means avoid civil war. As a matter of fact it would be civil war only in another form which may become even more cruel than any other. The existence of such a workers' government does not mean the avoidance of civil war. We know that just such a menshevik-liberal government may oppose us more cruelly than a bourgeois government; Noske and our own mensheviks have given sufficient proof of this. This is why I say that this slogan may be a good means of agitation when we understand well its revolutionary possibilities: for instance, take the slogan of a Blum-Frossard government in France. The Executive is responsible for this. We had proposed this slogan in the course of our discussions. But it was premature in France. Why? Because, on account of the traditions of the Party, the slogan was understood as a pure parliamentary combination. The Executive was theoretically right when it said that the slogan of the workers' government must not be rejected. It was a possibility, it contained revolutionary prospects, but in France, under the circumstances, it was premature. If we had based our united action on the eight-hour day, we might have had better results. As it was, some comrades at once grew suspicious, and rumours were soon set afloat of the unification of the parties, etc. We must take the facts as they are. Some of our friends of the Left have perhaps been guilty of exaggeration. If I am not mistaken, it was comrade Souvarine who said that there was a time in Russia when a Lenin-Martov government was contemplated. That is not true. Such possibility never came up in Russia. We must not forget that with the fall of Czarism, the overthrow of the bourgeoisie was also half accomplished. The February Revolution, indeed, was a bourgeois revolution; but it was not wholly bourgeois, it was already then a great popular revolution which contained the seed of the October Revolution. Soldiers' Soviets had been organised from the very first day; soviets which were not to be disbanded after a few months as Noske had done in Germany, but such as began the fight against Kerensky from the very beginning.

At such a time when the mensheviks formed a kind of secondary government, the

slogan of a workers' government was in place. As we know this led to no positive results. The civil war was not avoided. We did not form an alliance with Martov, but with the Left wing Social Revolutionaries who represented the revolutionary peasantry. In this sense, the slogan was justified. But to attempt the same thing in France, and to say that this was the same as a Martov-Lenin government, was a wrong appreciation of the situation.

Even our best comrades have made mistakes in the application of this policy. I do not believe that this Congress, after the work of the commissions has been accomplished, will reject the slogan of the workers' government. This slogan is indisputably correct as a means to approach the masses. It is only a question of knowing how to apply it. It contains the same dangers as the United Front. When one speaks of government, one naturally thinks of Parliamentary combinations, with a distribution of cabinet seats, etc. We shall meet even greater difficulties here than in the application of the United Front. But this is no reason why we should reject it, as our French comrades have proposed.

Radek: speech on the capitalist offensive.

★ As with other speeches, we reproduce only the part of the speech on the Workers' Gov't question — omitting also, in this case, a few short passages from that part.

Agreed, that the starting points of our activities must be the demand for higher wages, the demand for retention of the eight-hour day and the demand for the development of the industrial council movement. But these demands do not suffice. Workers who belong to no political party at all can and do demand the daily wage of one thousand marks, whilst five hundred marks will not procure them the necessaries of life. But they see that to increase their wages in paper money provides no issue from their troubles. To begin with, such watchwords may suffice; but the longer the struggle lasts, the more

essential does it become to proclaim political watchwords, the watchwords of social organisation. When the time is ripe for the voicing of such demands, it is time to move from the defensive to the offensive. We must put forward in these circumstances the demand for control of production and make clear to the workers that this is the only way out of economic chaos.

Now I come to a question which plays a great part in our resistance to the capitalist offensive. I refer to the question of the Labour Government. The important point for us in this connection is, rather than classification, to propound the question: What are the masses of the workers, not merely the Communists, thinking of when they speak of Labour Governments? I confine myself to countries in which these ideas have already found an echo: Britain, Germany, and Czechoslovakia. In England, think of the Labour Party. Communism there is not yet a mass power. In the countries where capitalism is decaying, this idea is intimately associated with that of the United Front. Just as the workers say that the meaning of the United Front is that the Communists and Social-Democrats must make common cause in the factory when there is a strike, so for the masses of the workers the idea of a Labour Government has a similar significance. The workers are thinking of a government of all the working class parties. What does that mean for the masses practically and politically? The political decision of the question will depend on the fact whether the social-democracy does or does not go with the bourgeoisie. Should it do so, then the Labour Government can only take the form of the dictatorship of the Communist proletariat. We cannot decide for the social democrats what their policy should be. What we have to decide is this. When we lead the masses in the struggle against the capitalist offensive, are we ready to fight on behalf of such a labour coalition government? Are we or are we not ready to bring about the conditions essential to its realisation?

That is a question which for the masses would only be confused by theoretical calculations. In my opinion, when we are concerned with the struggle for the United Front, we ought to say bluntly that, if the social-democratic workers will force their leaders to break with the bourgeoisie, then we are ready to participate in a labour

government, so long as that government is an instrument of the class struggle. I mean, if it is ready to fight beside us shoulder to shoulder.

Let us suppose that ripe plums were to fall into our mouths. There has been no serious alteration in the position of affairs in Germany. Stinnes has the coal; von Seeckt has the soldiers; Scheidemann has only the Wilhelmstrasse. We, too, are invited to the Wilhelmstrasse. If comrade Meyer will only be good enough to wear a frock coat [laughter] and will take comrade Ruth Fischer by the arm and, in spite of her struggles [laughter], lead here with him into the Chancellor's palace. Suppose that such fancies were to become actualities, what would be the effective difficulties in the way of the realisation of the plan? General Seeckt would come along and would throw comrade Meyer and Scheidemann and comrade Ruth Fischer into the street, and that would be the end of the Labour Government.

When we are thinking of the struggle against the capitalist offensive, what we have in mind is not a parliamentary combination, but a platform for the mobilisation of the masses, an arena for the struggle. The form the question takes is this. Will the social-democrats be excluded from the coalition by the bourgeoisie; will they continue to rot in the coalition; or shall we help the masses to compel them to fight? Perhaps you will ask why the deuce we should bother what they do? If it only concerned the fate of the leaders of the social-democrats, we should certainly be quite happy to leave them to rot. But when the question at issue is the mobilisation of the social-democratic masses, we must formulate a positive programme.

To what extent does such a programme conflict with the dictatorship of the proletariat? To what extent does it conflict with the civil war? It conflicts to the same extent to which an ante-room conflicts with the room to which it leads [hear! hear!]. Even if the bourgeoisie should anywhere leave the government in the hands of the social-democracy and the communists [a historical possibility, as the Hungarian example shows], there will follow a period of fierce struggles. But a situation might arise resembling that in which the bourgeoisie found itself on November 9th in Germany — when the bourgeoisie simply vanished.

The bourgeoisie might find itself in a position in which it would leave power in the hands of the social-democrats and the Communists in the hope that we should not be able to retain power. Whether we secure it through renunciation on the part of the bourgeoisie, civil war will be the outcome of a Labour Government. The working class will not be able to retain power without civil war.

It is not as if we Communists were to say: "We simply cannot get on without a civil war" — in the same spirit in which Tom Sawyer felt it necessary to free the nigger through a subterranean passage made for the purpose, although the door of the cell was not locked. It is not that we say to ourselves: "I won't accept power except through the civil war; I shan't be happy until I have a civil war" [laughter]. The simple point is, comrade Zinoviev said, that the bourgeoisie can renounce in this case or that, but will not definitely abandon power without fighting.

If the social-democrats are incompetent to fight, then we shall simply march over them. Where the Labour Government comes into existence, it will merely be a stepping stone to the dictatorship of the proletariat, for the bourgeoisie will not tolerate a Labour Government even though founded on democratic principles. The social-democratic worker will find himself forced to become a Communist, will find himself compelled to engage in civil war, in order to defend his rule. For this reason I believe that, in practice, as things will actually develop, there is little danger of stagnation — in so far, at least, as we are concerned with the realities of the class struggle, and not with the problems of the parliamentary government in remote nooks of the west like Brunswick and Thuringia, where we can perhaps sit in the seats of power without civil war.

As far as we are concerned with the broad front of the proletarian struggle for freedom, the watchword of the labour government is necessary to supply us with a directive; it is a watchword that whets the edge of our political weapons. The moment when the workers find themselves simultaneously engaged in the fight for the labour government and in the fight for control of production, will be the moment when our fundamental offensive will begin, the moment when we shall cease

to content ourselves with trying to defend what we have, and shall advance to the attack on new positions! Our offensive will begin as soon as the workers are ready to fight for these two watchwords.

The Communists cannot artificially foster this offensive. The great defect of the March Action lay in the attempt to substitute for the fighting energy of the masses the readiness of our own party to fight. The readiness of our party for the fight must show itself in the agitation and organisation of the masses. It is extremely significant of the present position of the labour movement that, even in the countries where we have the best developed parties, our agitation still exhibits an abstract character, that it is not yet instinct with the passion of persons convinced they are fighting for aims realisable in the near future. All their work produces the impression of pure agitation. If we desire that our debates shall not die of anaemia, and that our congresses shall not resemble party conventicles in which nothing but theoretical evolutionary tendencies are discussed, the parties must pursue in practice a very different policy from that they have pursued in the past. There must be a change, not merely in political aim, but also in the energy of the struggle.

The Communist International is not merely the party for the conquest of power, it is the party for conducting the fight. It is nonsense, therefore, to say: "These are piping times of peace so the party cannot fight". Such a view would make of the Communist International a parasite upon the proletarian world revolution instead of a combatant on its behalf. The watchword must be, not one of disillusionment and of waiting for the revolution, but one of fighting for every inch of ground. All our discussions are devoid of meaning unless we understand that we can only form Communist Parties upon condition that their main activity is not to be in the rooms where resolutions are passed and studied, but on the battlefield where our aims find practical fulfillment, in the united front of the proletariat, in the fight along the lines that are made actual by contemporary history.

Radek: summing up speech on the capitalist offensive.

.... He [Urbahns] said that our greatest illusion was that the Social Democrats will fight, that their leaders who have acted since 1914 as agents of the bourgeoisie are all of a sudden going to lead this struggle. Comrade Urbahns who has heard for years that they were agents of the bourgeoisie says naturally: How can agents of the bourgeoisie fight? Well, dear comrades, if politics were such an easy thing that after I have said once that they were agents of the bourgeoisie they would be for ever damned, then politics would be very easy.

There is no doubt that as far as leaders of the Social Democracy are concerned, they are consciously against a revolution. But these leaders live in Germany, France and England, not in a vacuum, or just to polemicise with comrade Urbahns and myself. These leaders find support in Germany in a party with a million members and in the many millions who follow the party. These leaders are either openly for the bourgeoisie or attempt to break away from it, depending at conditions at any given time.

Let me recall to you a very simple incident. On the 5th of November 1918, Scheidemann and Ebert were negotiating with the general staff. They promised to save the Crown Prince and the Monarchy if the Kaiser should abdicate. Then on the 9th of November, Scheidemann jumped up on the tribune of the Reichstag and shouted Long live the Republic! Some say he did it the better to betray us later [interruption: Quite true]. But since then a small thing has happened, which comrade Urbahns did not take at all into consideration, namely the overthrow of the Hohenzollerns, the revolution, and the counter-revolution. The Scheidemanns have betrayed us, but before that, they had helped us to overthrow

Wilhelm. The only one who denies this is he who does not want to see or hear anything which is disagreeable to him.

At the meeting of the enlarged Executive and in his speech on tactics, Zinoviev used a very happy phrase: "True, the social democrats are traitors to the proletariat, but they can also betray the bourgeoisie whenever this becomes necessary for their salvation. Now the second question is to what extent we can rely on this. Comrades, if curses could kill a party, we would ask comrade Zinoviev to sign an ukase ordering Scheidemann and company to disappear from the face of the earth. Since this is impossible, we must fight them. The only question is when we will be able to destroy them. It is possible that these people are so tightly bound to the bourgeoisie that they cannot break away from them, so that we will have to destroy them together with the bourgeoisie. But it is also possible that there will come a time when, the coalition with the bourgeoisie having become impossible for them, they will be forced to enter into a coalition with us. In this coalition they will attempt to betray us. We will be able to conquer them only after their actions within the coalition will have discredited them totally, and the masses will have gone over to us. He who does not take into account all these possibilities, who is ever repeating, he loves me, he loves me not, will he betray me wholly or only partly, shall I be afraid or shall I not be afraid, reminds me of the girls of whom Heine says that they have nothing else but their virtue. Well, comrade Urbahns, you have even lost that for you are not against the workers' government on principle; such a depreciated virtue has very little weight in a question of principles.

What does the slogan of the workers' government signify? Comrade Urbahns has hinted at the great differences which exist between Trotsky, Zinoviev and myself on this question. Many times already we have read in the bourgeois press of Europe of how the cavalry of Bukharin is fighting with the infantry of Zinoviev, how one day Trotsky arrested Lenin and on the other day Lenin arrested Trotsky. But to try to make secrets out of this is not necessary. We are not machines. Our thoughts are not all alike. One person approaches a question from one point of view, the other from another. One looks at things from the point of view of one

country, the other from another, which results in different shades of meaning.

The question is whether the Executive favours action among the masses for a workers' government or not? The second question is, what does the workers' government signify? At the present moment in Germany this means that we will declare to the Social Democrats that we are ready to fight with them against the bourgeois coalition, that we will support a workers' government, or even take part in it. Is this the standpoint of the Executive or not? I say it is and this is what matters politically. Comrade Urbahns said that as far as the workers' government is concerned he considers it impossible. Therefore, if the bourgeois coalition fails, comrade Urbahns will follow this method of agitation — he will come to the social democratic dock workers in Hamburg and tell them: you are seven times as strong as we are, we put forth the demand for a workers' government and are going to fight for it, but it is impossible.

Of course, this is idiotic. Now I should like to say a few words here to comrade Smeral. His great mistake is that because of his opportunist policy in the past, he believes that every time he rises to speak, he must cross himself and say, "Do not imagine that this is an opportunist standpoint". If you believe it let us argue it out. I agree with comrade Smeral that in Germany the struggle for the formation of a workers' government may begin shortly, perhaps even in the next few months. Then all at once comrade Smeral begins to swear at the Left and says: I do not believe in the workers' government, but others believe in it and therefore let us act as if we also believe in it. If this is the way to conduct a political campaign, then I know nothing of politics. To appear before the masses with such a programme at a time when the dollar is worth 10 thousand marks, when wages are being lowered, the coalition broken up because Stinnes is against a stabilisation of the mark, is absolute nonsense.

A compromise may be achieved, but in this crisis, in this incapability of the bourgeoisie to stabilise anything, in this chaos, I believe that the Communist Party points the road to salvation. It must say to the masses: you are afraid of the dictatorship of the proletariat and we are for the dictatorship. You

think that it can be achieved peacefully, try it. You can get the majority in Germany, go and win the proletarian majority. You will have to adopt dictatorship, and we will struggle with you. In such a situation our comrades who maintain that they are more closely connected with the masses than anyone else, will come forward and say: to the devil with the bourgeois coalition, let us have the workers' government, for we are in favour of it. The others say, "we do not think" but you think so! [Laughter]. Comrades, try and look pleasant, we are going to manoeuvre with you!

Is it possible to carry on such a campaign? Must we not tell the masses what we want, and what we intend to oppose to the capitalist attack? We must tell the masses that we wish to put against the capitalist attack, as a practical aim, the unity of the working class, which is politically disunited at present. If the party gets into power before the majority of the working class is ready to dare all, we shall be with it during all the stages of the struggle in the full conviction that the struggle will bring them over to our viewpoint...

... Comrades, I want to say a few words about the peril from the Right. The British delegate Webb spoke here and admonished the Executive to keep to the 21 conditions. I heard today for the first time that our good comrade Webb was robbed of his sleep for fear that there might be 20 conditions. I can reassure him. Comrade Zinoviev said that at the next negotiations with groups coming from the Right, there will be 42 conditions. Perhaps this will satisfy comrade Webb. However, the party which he represents is not as radical as he is. We are obliged to criticise a little the party which he represents in connection with a serious error of action. I have before me the election address of the Communist Party of Great Britain.

How does the British Communist Party apply its United Front tactics? It says: "We are a section of the working class, namely its Left Wing. Nevertheless, we want to stand together with all the other workers' parties". Whither Naomi goes thither goes Ruth also. I do not mean comrade Ruth Fischer [laughter], but the kindhearted biblical Ruth. And then the election address goes on: "What is the Labour Party? The workers are fine fellows, they want to fight,

but the leaders are not quite so fine". And then it says: "In the past as in the present there was treachery on the part of the leaders. Such treachery might happen once. But nevertheless, the Labour Party is against the capitalists". By Jove, if this is a sample of unity tactics, perhaps we better leave them alone. The Executive has shown in its manifesto that the entire policy of the Labour Party is nothing but a continuous betrayal of working class interests. But the Executive also said to the workers: if the Labour Party is victorious and forms a government, it will betray you in the end and will show to the workers that its aim is the perpetuation of capitalism. Then the workers will either desert it or the Labour Party will be compelled to fight owing to the pressure of the workers, and in that case we shall back it. We issued a definite watchword:

vote for it, but prepare to struggle against it. If thereupon comrade Webb comes here and warns us against the opportunists, we can only say to him: "Comrade Webb, book your berth as quickly as possible and return to England, in order to fight against opportunism there, and you will have our heartiest support".