

**V I LENIN**

**Religion**

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## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Atheism is a natural and inseparable part of Marxism, of the theory and practice of scientific Socialism. In accordance with their fundamental philosophical outlook, Marx and Engels always called themselves materialists.

In developing their materialist philosophy, Marx and Engels had at first thoroughly to analyse the ideas which came from the religious world of thought. As early as 1844, Marx coined the phrase: "The criticism of religion is the beginning of all criticism." This analysis was accomplished with such completeness that later the atheistic character of their mature philosophy seemed to require little emphasis and was taken for granted. The same is true of many Marxists and not least of Lenin. It is not an accident, therefore, that the works of our great masters, Marx, Engels and Lenin, contain no complete and systematic statement of their proletarian atheism. It is not usual to talk of obvious facts.

This also explains why atheism has played such a small part in the labour movement generally. In the early days of the labour movement the mass of the workers turned away from religion. In 1874, Engels wrote: "Atheism is practically an accepted fact among European labour parties." Lenin, in 1909, spoke in a simi-

lar strain of "class-conscious Social-Democrats, who are of course atheists." Later on, however, this sturdy secularism of the labour movement began to deteriorate and the Social-Democratic parties, in their effort to win the support of the petty-bourgeoisie, began to pander to the religious prejudices of the latter.

While the first programme of the Social-Democrats of Germany (the Eisenach programme of 1869) clearly and correctly stated the demand for the separation of the church from the state, and the school from the church, the Gotha programme of the Socialist Workers' Party (1875) contained the formulation: "Religion to be declared a private matter." This opened wide the door to the opportunists. In his critique of this programme, Marx wrote that the workers' party should try rather "to free the conscience from religious superstition", and added wrathfully: "It does not like going beyond the 'bourgeois' level, however."\* The German Social-Democratic Party kept to the same idea in its Erfurt programme of 1891. Point 6 of that programme runs: "Ecclesiastical and religious bodies are to be considered as private associations." Engels had previously recommended the formula: "All religious bodies without exception are to be treated by *the state* as private associations. They are not to receive support from public funds or exercise any influence over public education." The Social-Democratic Party ignored Engels' recommendation and even withheld it from the party membership until October 1901.

In practice the point as adopted by the Party was interpreted as meaning: Religion is a private affair; that is to say, that it was not the concern of the Party as to whether a member was religious or not. This applied to the Social-Democratic parties in other countries as well, with the result that the idea gained ground among the Social-Democrats that Marxism was not anti-religious. Moreover, various sections of the socialist movement arose which claimed

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\* K. Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, 1875.

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to derive their socialist principles from religion, for example, the leaders of the Socialist Party of America, the Independent Labour Party in England, etc. Thus the very principles of Socialism were converted by the opportunists into a means of fostering religious superstitions among the workers. Since the war, Social-Democracy has avowedly and definitely repudiated Marxism and has taken a religious turn. It is necessary therefore to re-state the attitude of the Communists towards religion. This attitude is well explained in the collection of articles by Lenin on this subject contained in this booklet. From these the reader will also obtain Lenin's view on how to counteract the religious doping of the workers.

The collection here given contains the most important articles and letters written by Lenin on the question of religion in the period between 1902 and 1922. It should be remarked that in his comprehensive work, *Materialism and Empiriocriticism*, written in 1908, Lenin analysed the idealist philosophy which fosters religious views and in so doing dealt thoroughly with dialectical materialism.

The first two articles (written in 1905 and 1909 respectively) represent the most complete statement which we possess by any leading Marxist on the attitude of the modern working-class movement to religion. The third article, like the second, deals with the debate on religion in the tsarist Duma (1909), and pays special attention to the feeble and reactionary attitude of the liberal bourgeoisie to the reactionary church. The fourth article was written in 1902 on the occasion of a dispute between orthodox believers and a liberal-minded member of the aristocracy which elicited a valuable admission from the faithful, as to "what is the good of religion". The necessity for unceasing struggle on behalf of atheism within and outside the Party was emphasised by Lenin in the article which he wrote as an introduction to the first number of the scientific Bolshevik journal, *Under the Banner of Marxism*, and which we have reprinted as the fifth article in this booklet. We should note, in this, the demand for a united front of all consistent

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atheists and materialists. The article on Tolstoy (1908) will come as something of a shock to the intellectuals of western Europe, familiar as they are with books about Tolstoy, since it says in a few sentences what all those thick volumes left unsaid. Proceeding from his basis of historical materialism, Lenin goes to the very root of the religious ideas on which Tolstoyism is based, at the same time analysing the revolutionary importance of the peasantry.

The two letters from Lenin to Maxim Gorky, written in 1913, are a valuable part of this collection. The letters are directed against the revival of an emotional variety of Socialism, with a religious tendency, as preached at that time, after the defeat of the 1905 revolution, by the group of "God-seekers" which had gathered around Lunacharsky and Gorky. The fact that this tendency had developed among Lenin's close friends and comrades made his polemic against it the more biting. In conclusion, we have given extracts from Lenin's great speech to the Young Communists in 1920, on the difference between Communist and religious ethics.

From the writings of Lenin the following four principles stand out as the most important:

(1) Atheism is an integral part of Marxism. Consequently a class-conscious Marxist party must carry on propaganda in favour of atheism.

(2) The demand for the complete separation of the church and the state, and the church and the school, must be made.

(3) The winning over of the proletariat is accomplished, principally by dealing with their everyday economic and political interests; consequently the propaganda in favour of atheism must grow out of, and be carefully related to, the defence of these interests.

(4) The final emancipation of the toiling masses from religion will occur only after the proletarian revolution, only in a Communist society. This, however, is not a reason for postponing the propaganda for atheism. Rather does it emphasise its urgency in subordination to the general needs of the workers' class struggle.



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Lenin's attitude towards religion can be seen most clearly in the programme of the Communist Party of Russia drawn up in March, 1919. Under the heading of "General Political Questions," section 13, we read:

With regard to religion, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union does not confine itself to the already-decreed separation of the church and the state, and of the school and the church, ie, measures advocated in the programmes of bourgeois democracy, which the latter has nowhere consistently carried out to the end owing to the diverse and actual ties which bind capital with religious propaganda.

The Communist Party of the Soviet Union is guided by the conviction that only the conscious and deliberate planning of all the social and economic activities of the masses will cause religious prejudices to die out. The Party strives for the complete dissolution of the ties between the exploiting classes and the organisation of religious propaganda, facilitates the real emancipation of the working masses from religious prejudices and organises the widest possible scientific, educational and anti-religious propaganda. At the same time it is necessary carefully to avoid giving such offence to the religious sentiments of believers, as only leads to the strengthening of religious fanaticism.

Similarly, the programme of the Communist International, adopted at the Sixth World Congress in 1928, states:

One of the most important tasks of the cultural revolution affecting the wide masses is the task of systematically and unswervingly combating *religion* – the opium of the people. The proletarian government must withdraw all state support from the church, which is the agency of the former ruling class; it must prevent all church interference in state-organised educational affairs, and

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ruthlessly suppress the counter-revolutionary activity of the ecclesiastical organisations. At the same time, the proletarian state, while granting liberty of worship and abolishing the privileged position of the formerly dominant religion, carries on anti-religious propaganda with all the means at its command and reconstructs the whole of its educational work on the basis of scientific materialism.<sup>2</sup>

We said at the beginning of this introduction that Marxism cannot be conceived without atheism. We would add here that atheism without Marxism is incomplete and inconsistent. The decline of the bourgeois freethinkers' movement offers an instructive confirmation of this argument. Wherever materialism in science fails to develop into historical materialism – that is, into Marxism – it ends up in idealism and superstition.

## **Socialism and religion<sup>3</sup>**

Present-day society is wholly based on the exploitation of the vast masses of the working class by a tiny minority of the population, the class of the landowners and that of the capitalists. It is a slave society, since the "free" workers, who all their life work for the capitalists, are "entitled" only to such means of subsistence as are essential for the maintenance of slaves who produce profit, for the safeguarding and perpetuation of capitalist slavery.

The economic oppression of the workers inevitably calls forth and engenders every kind of political oppression and social humiliation, the coarsening and darkening of the spiritual and moral life of the masses. The workers may secure a greater or lesser degree of political liberty to fight for their economic emancipation, but no amount of liberty will rid them of poverty, unemployment, and oppression until the power of capital is overthrown. Religion is one of the forms of spiritual oppression which everywhere weighs down heavily upon the masses of the people, overburdened by their perpetual work for others, by want and isolation. Impotence of the exploited classes in their struggle against the exploiters just as inevitably gives rise to the belief in a better life after death as impotence of the savage in his battle with nature gives rise to belief

in gods, devils, miracles, and the like.

Those who toil and live in want all their lives are taught by religion to be submissive and patient while here on earth, and to take comfort in the hope of a heavenly reward. But those who live by the labour of others are taught by religion to practise charity while on earth, thus offering them a very cheap way of justifying their entire existence as exploiters and selling them at a moderate price tickets to well-being in heaven. Religion is opium for the people.<sup>4</sup> Religion is a sort of spiritual booze, in which the slaves of capital drown their human image, their demand for a life more or less worthy of man.

But a slave who has become conscious of his slavery and has risen to struggle for his emancipation has already half ceased to be a slave. The modern class-conscious worker, reared by large-scale factory industry and enlightened by urban life, contemptuously casts aside religious prejudices, leaves heaven to the priests and bourgeois bigots, and tries to win a better life for himself here on earth. The proletariat of today takes the side of socialism, which enlists science in the battle against the fog of religion, and frees the workers from their belief in life after death by welding them together to fight in the present for a better life on earth.

"Religion must be declared a private affair." In these words socialists usually express their attitude towards religion. But the meaning of these words should be accurately defined to prevent any misunderstanding. We demand that religion be held a private affair so far as the state is concerned. But by no means can we consider religion a private affair so far as our Party is concerned.

Religion must be of no concern to the state, and religious societies must have no connection with governmental authority. Everyone must be absolutely free to profess any religion he pleases, or no religion whatever, ie, to be an atheist, which every socialist is, as a rule. Discrimination among citizens on account of their religious convictions is wholly intolerable. Even the bare mention of a citi-

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zen's religion in official documents should unquestionably be eliminated.<sup>5</sup> No subsidies should be granted to the established church nor state allowances made to ecclesiastical and religious societies. These should become absolutely free associations of like-minded citizens, associations independent of the state.

Only the complete fulfilment of these demands can put an end to the shameful and accursed past when the church lived in feudal dependence on the state, and Russian citizens lived in feudal dependence on the established church, when medieval, inquisitorial laws (to this day remaining in our criminal codes and on our statute-books) were in existence and were applied, persecuting men for their belief or disbelief, violating men's consciences, and linking cosy government jobs and government-derived incomes with the dispensation of this or that dope by the established church. Complete separation of Church and State is what the socialist proletariat demands of the modern state and the modern church.

The Russian revolution must put this demand into effect as a necessary component of political freedom. In this respect, the Russian revolution is in a particularly favourable position, since the revolting officialism of the police-ridden feudal autocracy has called forth discontent, unrest and indignation even among the clergy. However abject, however ignorant Russian Orthodox clergymen may have been, even they have now been awakened by the thunder of the downfall of the old, medieval order in Russia. Even they are joining in the demand for freedom, are protesting against bureaucratic practices and officialism, against the spying for the police imposed on the "servants of God". We socialists must lend this movement our support, carrying the demands of honest and sincere members of the clergy to their conclusion, making them stick to their words about freedom, demanding that they should resolutely break all ties between religion and the police. Either you are sincere, in which case you must stand for the complete separation of Church and State and of School and Church, for religion

to be declared wholly and absolutely a private affair. Or you do not accept these consistent demands for freedom, in which case you evidently are still held captive by the traditions of the inquisition, in which case you evidently still cling to your cosy government jobs and government-derived incomes, in which case you evidently do not believe in the spiritual power of your weapon and continue to take bribes from the state. And in that case the class-conscious workers of all Russia declare merciless war on you.

So far as the party of the socialist proletariat is concerned, religion is not a private affair. Our Party is an association of class-conscious, advanced fighters for the emancipation of the working class. Such an association cannot and must not be indifferent to lack of class-consciousness, ignorance or obscurantism in the shape of religious beliefs. We demand complete disestablishment of the Church so as to be able to combat the religious fog with purely ideological and solely ideological weapons, by means of our press and by word of mouth. But we founded our association, the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party,<sup>6</sup> precisely for such a struggle against every religious bamboozling of the workers. And to us the ideological struggle is not a private affair, but the affair of the whole Party, of the whole proletariat.

If that is so, why do we not declare in our Programme that we are atheists? Why do we not forbid Christians and other believers in God to join our Party?

The answer to this question will serve to explain the very important difference in the way the question of religion is presented by the bourgeois democrats and the Social-Democrats.

Our Programme is based entirely on the scientific, and moreover the *materialist*, world-outlook. An explanation of our Programme, therefore, necessarily includes an explanation of the true historical and economic roots of the religious fog. Our propaganda necessarily includes the propaganda of atheism; the publication of the appropriate scientific literature, which the autocratic feudal

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government has hitherto strictly forbidden and persecuted, must now form one of the fields of our Party work. We shall now probably have to follow the advice Engels once gave to the German Socialists: to translate and widely disseminate the literature of the eighteenth-century French Enlighteners and atheists.\*

But under no circumstances ought we to fall into the error of posing the religious question in an abstract, idealistic fashion, as an "intellectual" question unconnected with the class struggle, as is not infrequently done by the radical-democrats from among the bourgeoisie. It would be stupid to think that, in a society based on the endless oppression and coarsening of the worker masses, religious prejudices could be dispelled by purely propaganda methods. It would be bourgeois narrow-mindedness to forget that the yoke of religion that weighs upon mankind is merely a product and reflection of the economic yoke within society. No number of pamphlets and no amount of preaching can enlighten the proletariat, if it is not enlightened by its own struggle against the dark forces of capitalism. Unity in this really revolutionary struggle of the oppressed class for the creation of a paradise on earth is more important to us than unity of proletarian opinion on paradise in heaven.

That is the reason why we do not and should not set forth our atheism in our Programme; that is why we do not and should not prohibit proletarians who still retain vestiges of their old prejudices from associating themselves with our Party. We shall always preach the scientific world-outlook, and it is essential for us to combat the inconsistency of various "Christians". But that does not mean in the least that the religious question ought to be advanced to first place, where it does not belong at all; nor does it mean that we should allow the forces of the really revolutionary economic and political struggle to be split up on account of third-rate

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\* See 'Flüchtlings-Literatur' by F. Engels, *Volksstaat*, No. 73, 26 June 1874.

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opinions or senseless ideas, rapidly losing all political importance, rapidly being swept out as rubbish by the very course of economic development.

Everywhere the reactionary bourgeoisie has concerned itself, and is now beginning to concern itself in Russia, with the fomenting of religious strife – in order thereby to divert the attention of the masses from the really important and fundamental economic and political problems, now being solved in practice by the all-Russian proletariat uniting in revolutionary struggle. This reactionary policy of splitting up the proletarian forces, which today manifests itself mainly in Black-Hundred<sup>7</sup> pogroms, may tomorrow conceive some more subtle forms. We, at any rate, shall oppose it by calmly, consistently and patiently preaching proletarian solidarity and the scientific world-outlook – a preaching alien to any stirring up of secondary differences.

The revolutionary proletariat will succeed in making religion a really private affair, so far as the state is concerned. And in this political system, cleansed of medieval mildew, the proletariat will wage a broad and open struggle for the elimination of economic slavery, the true source of the religious humbugging of mankind.



## **The attitude of the workers' party to religion<sup>8</sup>**

Deputy Surkov's speech in the Duma during the debate on the Synod estimates, and the discussion that arose within our Duma group when it considered the draft of this speech have raised a question which is of extreme importance and urgency at this particular moment. An interest in everything connected with religion is undoubtedly being shown today by wide circles of "society", and has penetrated into the ranks of intellectuals standing close to the working-class movement, as well as into certain circles of the workers. It is the absolute duty of Social-Democrats to make a public statement of their attitude towards religion.

Social-Democracy bases its whole world-outlook on scientific socialism, ie, Marxism. The philosophical basis of Marxism, as Marx and Engels repeatedly declared, is dialectical materialism, which has fully taken over the historical traditions of eighteenth-century materialism in France and of Feuerbach<sup>9</sup> (first half of the nineteenth century) in Germany – a materialism which is absolutely atheistic and positively hostile to all religion. Let us recall that the whole of Engels's *Anti-Dühring*, which Marx read in manuscript, is an indictment of the materialist and atheist Dühring for not being a consistent materialist and for leaving loopholes for religion

and religious philosophy. Let us recall that in his essay on Ludwig Feuerbach, Engels reproaches Feuerbach for combating religion not in order to destroy it, but in order to renovate it, to invent a new, "exalted" religion, and so forth.

Religion is the opium of the people – this dictum by Marx is the cornerstone of the whole Marxist outlook on religion.\* Marxism has always regarded all modern religions and churches, and each and every religious organisation, as instruments of bourgeois reaction that serve to defend exploitation and to befuddle the working class.

At the same time Engels frequently condemned the efforts of people who desired to be "more left" or "more revolutionary" than the Social-Democrats, to introduce into the programme of the workers' party an explicit proclamation of atheism, in the sense of declaring war on religion.

Commenting in 1874 on the famous manifesto of the Blanquist fugitive Communards who were living in exile in London, Engels called their vociferous proclamation of war on religion a piece of stupidity, and stated that such a declaration of war was the best way to revive interest in religion and to prevent it from really dying out. Engels blamed the Blanquists for being unable to understand that only the class struggle of the working masses could, by comprehensively drawing the widest strata of the proletariat into conscious and revolutionary social *practice*, really free the oppressed masses from the yoke of religion, whereas to proclaim that war on religion was a political task of the workers' party was just anarchistic phrase-mongering.† And in 1877, too, in his *Anti-Dühring*, while ruthlessly attacking the slightest concessions made

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\* See K. Marx, Introduction to *Contribution to the Critique of the Hegelian Philosophy of Right*, January 1844. (K. Marx and F. Engels, *On Religion*, p. 42, Moscow, 1957.)

† See 'Flüchtlings-Literatur. II. Das Programme der Blanquisten' by F. Engels, *Volksstaat*, No. 73, 26 June 1874.

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by Dühring the philosopher to idealism and religion, Engels no less resolutely condemns Dühring's pseudo-revolutionary idea that religion should be prohibited in socialist society.

To declare such a war on religion, Engels says, is to "out-Bismarck Bismarck", ie, to repeat the folly of Bismarck's struggle against the clericals (the notorious "Struggle for Culture", *Kulturkampf*, ie, the struggle Bismarck waged in the 1870s against the German Catholic party, the "Centre" party, by means of a police persecution of Catholicism). By this struggle Bismarck only *stimulated* the militant clericalism of the Catholics, and only injured the work of real culture, because he gave prominence to religious divisions rather than political divisions, and diverted the attention of some sections of the working class and of the other democratic elements away from the urgent tasks of the class and revolutionary struggle to the most superficial and false bourgeois anti-clericalism.

Accusing the would-be ultra-revolutionary Dühring of wanting to repeat Bismarck's folly in another form, Engels insisted that the workers' party should have the ability to work patiently at the task of organising and educating the proletariat, which would lead to the dying out of religion, and not throw itself into the gamble of a political war on religion.\*

This view has become part of the very essence of German Social-Democracy, which, for example, advocated freedom for the Jesuits, their admission into Germany, and the complete abandonment of police methods of combating any particular religion. "Religion is a private matter": this celebrated point in the Erfurt Programme (1891) summed up these political tactics of Social-Democracy.

These tactics have by now become a matter of routine; they have managed to give rise to a new distortion of Marxism in the opposite direction, in the direction of opportunism.

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\* See F. Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, 1877, pp. 434-37, Moscow, 1959.

This point in the Erfurt Programme has come to be interpreted as meaning that we Social-Democrats, our Party, *consider* religion to be a private matter, that religion is a private matter for us as Social-Democrats, for us as a party. Without entering into a direct controversy with this opportunist view, Engels in the nineties deemed it necessary to oppose it resolutely in a positive, and not a polemical form. To wit: Engels did this in the form of a statement, which he deliberately underlined, that Social-Democrats regard religion as a private matter *in relation to the state*, but not in relation to themselves, not in relation to Marxism, and not in relation to the workers' party.\*<sup>10</sup>

Such is the external history of the utterances of Marx and Engels on the question of religion. To people with a slapdash attitude towards Marxism, to people who cannot or will not think, this history is a skein of meaningless Marxist contradictions and waverings, a hodge-podge of "consistent" atheism and "sops" to religion, "unprincipled" wavering between a r-r-revolutionary war on God and a cowardly desire to "play up to" religious workers, a fear of scaring them away, etc, etc. The literature of the anarchist phrase-mongers contains plenty of attacks on Marxism in this vein.

But anybody who is able to treat Marxism at all seriously, to ponder over its philosophical principles and the experience of international Social-Democracy, will readily see that the Marxist tactics in regard to religion are thoroughly consistent, and were carefully thought out by Marx and Engels; and that what dilettantes or ignoramuses regard as wavering is but a direct and inevitable deduction from dialectical materialism. It would be a profound mistake to think that the seeming "moderation" of Marxism in regard to religion is due to supposed "tactical" considerations, the desire "not to scare away" anybody, and so forth. On the contrary, in this

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\* See 1891 Preface by F. Engels to K. Marx, *The Civil War in France* (K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 1, p. 479, Moscow, 1958).

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question, too, the political line of Marxism is inseparably bound up with its philosophical principles.

Marxism is materialism. As such, it is as relentlessly hostile to religion as was the materialism of the eighteenth-century Encyclopaedists<sup>11</sup> or the materialism of Feuerbach. This is beyond doubt. But the dialectical materialism of Marx and Engels goes further than the Encyclopaedists and Feuerbach, for it applies the materialist philosophy to the domain of history, to the domain of the social sciences. We must combat religion – that is the ABC of *all* materialism, and consequently of Marxism. But Marxism is not a materialism which has stopped at the ABC. Marxism goes further. It says: We must *know how* to combat religion, and in order to do so we must explain the source of faith and religion among the masses *in a materialist way*.

The combating of religion cannot be confined to abstract ideological preaching, and it must not be reduced to such preaching. It must be linked up with the concrete practice of the class movement, which aims at eliminating the social roots of religion. Why does religion retain its hold on the backward sections of the town proletariat, on broad sections of the semi-proletariat, and on the mass of the peasantry? Because of the ignorance of the people, replies the bourgeois progressist, the radical or the bourgeois materialist. And so: "Down with religion and long live atheism; the dissemination of atheist views is our chief task!"

The Marxist says that this is not true, that it is a superficial view, the view of narrow bourgeois uplifters. It does not explain the roots of religion profoundly enough; it explains them, not in a materialist but in an idealist way.

In modern capitalist countries these roots are mainly *social*. The deepest root of religion today is the socially downtrodden condition of the working masses and their apparently complete helplessness in face of the blind forces of capitalism, which every day and every hour inflicts upon ordinary working people the most horrible

suffering and the most savage torment, a thousand times more severe than those inflicted by extra-ordinary events, such as wars, earthquakes, etc. "Fear made the gods." Fear of the blind force of capital – blind because it cannot be foreseen by the masses of the people – a force which at every step in the life of the proletarian and small proprietor threatens to inflict, and does inflict "sudden", "unexpected", "accidental" ruin, destruction, pauperism, prostitution, death from starvation – such is *the root* of modern religion which the materialist must bear in mind first and foremost, if he does not want to remain an infant-school materialist. No educational book can eradicate religion from the minds of masses who are crushed by capitalist hard labour, and who are at the mercy of the blind destructive forces of capitalism, until those masses themselves learn to fight this *root* of religion, fight *the rule of capital* in all its forms, in a united, organised, planned and conscious way.

Does this mean that educational books against religion are harmful or unnecessary? No, nothing of the kind. It means that Social-Democracy's atheist propaganda must be *subordinated* to its basic task – the development of the class struggle of the exploited *masses* against the exploiters.

This proposition may not be understood (or at least not immediately understood) by one who has not pondered over the principles of dialectical materialism, ie, the philosophy of Marx and Engels. How is that? – he will say. Is ideological propaganda, the preaching of definite ideas, the struggle against that enemy of culture and progress which has persisted for thousands of years (ie, religion) to be subordinated to the class struggle, ie, the struggle for definite practical aims in the economic and political field?

This is one of those current objections to Marxism which testify to a complete misunderstanding of Marxian dialectics. The contradiction which perplexes these objectors is a real contradiction in real life, ie, a dialectical contradiction, and not a verbal or invented

one.

To draw a hard-and-fast line between the theoretical propaganda of atheism, ie, the destruction of religious beliefs among certain sections of the proletariat, and the success, the progress and the conditions of the class struggle of these sections, is to reason undialectically, to transform a shifting and relative boundary into an absolute boundary; it is forcibly to disconnect what is indissolubly connected in real life. Let us take an example. The proletariat in a particular region and in a particular industry is divided, let us assume, into an advanced section of fairly class-conscious Social-Democrats, who are of course atheists, and rather backward workers who are still connected with the countryside and with the peasantry, and who believe in God, go to church, or are even under the direct influence of the local priest – who, let us suppose, is organising a Christian labour union. Let us assume furthermore that the economic struggle in this locality has resulted in a strike. It is the duty of a Marxist to place the success of the strike movement above everything else, vigorously to counteract the division of the workers in this struggle into atheists and Christians, vigorously to oppose any such division.

Atheist propaganda in such circumstances may be both unnecessary and harmful – not from the philistine fear of scaring away the backward sections, of losing a seat in the elections, and so on, but out of consideration for the real progress of the class struggle, which in the conditions of modern capitalist society will convert Christian workers to Social-Democracy and to atheism a hundred times better than bald atheist propaganda. To preach atheism at such a moment and in such circumstances would only be playing *into the hands* of the Church and the priests, who desire nothing better than that the division of the workers according to their participation in the strike movement should be replaced by their division according to their belief in God.

An anarchist who preached war against God at all costs would in

effect be helping the priests and the bourgeoisie (as the anarchists always do help the bourgeoisie *in practice*). A Marxist must be a materialist, ie, an enemy of religion, but a *dialectical* materialist, ie, one who treats the struggle against religion not in an abstract way, not on the basis of remote, purely theoretical, never varying preaching, but in a concrete way, on the basis of the class struggle which is going on *in practice* and is educating the masses more and better than anything else could. A Marxist must be able to view the concrete situation as a whole, he must always be able to find the boundary between anarchism and opportunism (this boundary is relative, shifting and changeable, but it exists). And he must not succumb either to the abstract, verbal, but in reality empty "revolutionism" of the anarchist, or to the philistinism and opportunism of the petty bourgeois or liberal intellectual, who boggles at the struggle against religion, forgets that this is his duty, reconciles himself to belief in God, and is guided not by the interests of the class struggle but by the petty and mean consideration of offending nobody, repelling nobody and scaring nobody – by the sage rule: "live and let live", etc, etc.

It is from this angle that all side issues bearing on the attitude of Social-Democrats to religion should be dealt with. For example, the question is often brought up whether a priest can be a member of the Social-Democratic Party or not, and this question is usually answered in an unqualified affirmative, the experience of the European Social-Democratic parties being cited as evidence. But this experience was the result, not only of the application of the Marxist doctrine to the workers' movement, but also of the special historical conditions in Western Europe which are absent in Russia (we will say more about these conditions later), so that an unqualified affirmative answer in this case is incorrect. It cannot be asserted once and for all that priests cannot be members of the Social-Democratic Party; but neither can the reverse rule be laid down.



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If a priest comes to us to take part in our common political work and conscientiously performs Party duties, without opposing the programme of the Party, he may be allowed to join the ranks of the Social-Democrats; for the contradiction between the spirit and principles of our programme and the religious convictions of the priest would in such circumstances be something that concerned him alone, his own private contradiction; and a political organisation cannot put its members through an examination to see if there is no contradiction between their views and the Party programme. But, of course, such a case might be a rare exception even in Western Europe, while in Russia it is altogether improbable. And if, for example, a priest joined the Social-Democratic Party and made it his chief and almost sole work actively to propagate religious views in the Party, it would unquestionably have to expel him from its ranks.

We must not only admit workers who preserve their belief in God into the Social-Democratic Party, but must deliberately set out to recruit them; we are absolutely opposed to giving the slightest offence to their religious convictions, but we recruit them in order to educate them in the spirit of our programme, and not in order to permit an active struggle against it. We allow freedom of opinion *within* the Party, but to certain limits, determined by freedom of grouping;<sup>12</sup> we are not obliged to go hand in hand with active preachers of views that are repudiated by the majority of the Party.

Another example. Should members of the Social-Democratic Party be censured all alike under all circumstances for declaring "socialism is my religion", and for advocating views in keeping with this declaration? No! The deviation from Marxism (and consequently from socialism) is here indisputable; but the significance of the deviation, its relative importance, so to speak, may vary with circumstances. It is one thing when an agitator or a person addressing the workers speaks in this way in order to make him-

self better understood, as an introduction to his subject, in order to present his views more vividly in terms to which the backward masses are most accustomed. It is another thing when a writer begins to preach "god-building", or god-building socialism (in the spirit, for example, of our Lunacharsky and Co.). While in the first case censure would be mere carping, or even inappropriate restriction of the freedom of the agitator, of his freedom in choosing "pedagogical" methods, in the second case party censure is necessary and essential. For some the statement "socialism is a religion" is a form of transition from religion to socialism; for others, it is a form of transition *from* socialism to religion.

Let us now pass to the conditions which in the West gave rise to the opportunist interpretation of the thesis: "religion is a private matter". Of course, a contributing influence are those general factors which give rise to opportunism as a whole, like sacrificing the fundamental interests of the working-class movement for the sake of momentary advantages. The party of the proletariat demands that *the state* should declare religion a private matter, but does not regard the fight against the opium of the people, the fight against religious superstitions, etc, as a "private matter". The opportunists distort the question to mean that the Social-Democratic *Party* regards religion as a private matter!

But in addition to the usual opportunist distortion (which was not made clear at all in the discussion within our Duma group when it was considering the speech on religion), there are special historical conditions which have given rise to the present-day, and, if one may so express it, excessive, indifference on the part of the European Social-Democrats to the question of religion. These conditions are of a twofold nature.

First, the task of combating religion is historically the task of the revolutionary bourgeoisie, and in the West this task was to a large extent performed (or tackled) by bourgeois democracy, in the epoch of *its* revolutions or its assaults upon feudalism and

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medievalism. Both in France and in Germany there is a tradition of bourgeois war on religion, and it began long before socialism (the Encyclopaedists, Feuerbach). In Russia, because of the conditions of our bourgeois-democratic revolution, this task too falls almost entirely on the shoulders of the working class. Petty-bourgeois (Narodnik) democracy in our country has not done too much in this respect (as the new-fledged Black-Hundred Cadets, or Cadet Black Hundreds, of *Vekh*<sup>13</sup> think), but rather *too little*, in comparison with what has been done in Europe.

On the other hand, the tradition of bourgeois war on religion has given rise in Europe to a specifically bourgeois *distortion* of this war by anarchism – which, as the Marxists have long explained time and again, takes its stand on the bourgeois world-outlook, in spite of all the “fury” of its attacks on the bourgeoisie. The anarchists and Blanquists in the Latin countries, Most (who, incidentally, was a pupil of Dühring) and his ilk in Germany, the anarchists in Austria in the eighties, all carried revolutionary phrase-mongering in the struggle against religion to a *ne plus ultra*. It is not surprising that, compared with the anarchists, the European Social-Democrats now go to the other extreme. This is quite understandable and to a certain extent legitimate, but it would be wrong for us Russian Social-Democrats to forget the special historical conditions of the West.

Secondly, in the West, *after* the national bourgeois revolutions were over, *after* more or less complete religious liberty had been introduced, the problem of the democratic struggle against religion had been pushed, historically, so far into the background by the struggle of bourgeois democracy against socialism that the bourgeois governments *deliberately* tried to draw the attention of the masses away from socialism by organising a quasi-liberal “offensive” against clericalism. Such was the character of the *Kulturkampf* in Germany and of the struggle of the bourgeois republicans against clericalism in France. Bourgeois anti-clericalism,

as a means of drawing the attention of the working-class masses away from socialism – this is what preceded the spread of the modern spirit of “indifference” to the struggle against religion among the Social-Democrats in the West.

And this again is quite understandable and legitimate, because Social-Democrats had to counteract bourgeois and Bismarckian anti-clericalism by *subordinating* the struggle against religion to the struggle for socialism.

In Russia conditions are quite different. The proletariat is the leader of our bourgeois-democratic revolution. Its party must be the ideological leader in the struggle against all attributes of medi-evilism, including the old official religion and every attempt to refurbish it or make out a new or different case for it, etc. Therefore, while Engels was comparatively mild in correcting the opportunism of the German Social-Democrats who were substituting, for the *demand* of the workers’ party that the *state* should declare religion a private matter, the *declaration* that religion is a private matter for the Social-Democrats themselves, and for the Social-Democratic Party, it is clear that the importation of this German distortion by the Russian opportunists would have merited a rebuke a *hundred times more severe* by Engels.

By declaring from the Duma<sup>14</sup> rostrum that religion is the opium of the people, our Duma group acted quite correctly, and thus created a precedent which should serve as a basis for all utterances by Russian Social-Democrats on the question of religion. Should they have gone further and developed the atheist argument in greater detail? We think not. This might have brought the risk of the political party of the proletariat exaggerating the struggle against religion; it might have resulted in obliterating the distinction between the bourgeois and the socialist struggle against religion. The first duty of the Social-Democratic group in the Black-Hundred Duma has been discharged with honour.

The second duty – and perhaps the most important for Social-

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Democrats – namely, to explain the class role of the church and the clergy in supporting the Black-Hundred government and the bourgeoisie in its fight against the working class, has also been discharged with honour.

Of course, very much more might be said on this subject, and the Social-Democrats in their future utterances will know how to amplify Comrade Surkov's speech; but still his speech was excellent, and its circulation by all Party organisations is the direct duty of our Party.

The third duty was to explain in full detail the *correct* meaning of the proposition, so often distorted by the German opportunists, that "religion is a private matter". This, unfortunately, Comrade Surkov did not do. It is all the more regrettable because in the earlier activity of the Duma group a mistake had been committed on this question by Comrade Belousov, and was pointed out at the time by *Proletary*.

The discussion in the Duma group shows that the dispute about atheism has screened from it the question of the proper interpretation of the celebrated demand that religion should be proclaimed a private matter. We shall not blame Comrade Surkov alone for this error of the entire Duma group. More, we shall frankly admit that the whole Party is at fault here, for not having sufficiently elucidated this question and not having sufficiently prepared the minds of Social-Democrats to understand Engels's remark levelled against the German opportunists. The discussion in the Duma group proves that there was in fact a confused understanding of the question, and not at all any desire to ignore the teachings of Marx; and we are sure that the error will be corrected in future utterances of the group.

We repeat that on the whole Comrade Surkov's speech was excellent, and should be circulated by all the organisations. In its discussion of this speech the Duma group demonstrated that it is fulfilling its Social-Democratic duty conscientiously.

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It remains to express the wish that reports on discussions within the Duma group should appear more often in the Party press so as to bring the group and the Party closer together, to acquaint the Party with the difficult work being done within the group, and to establish ideological unity in the work of the Party and the Duma group.

## **Classes and parties in their attitude to religion and the Church<sup>15</sup>**

The debates in the Duma on the Synod<sup>16</sup> estimates, then on the restoration of rights to persons who have left holy orders and, finally, on the Old-Believer<sup>17</sup> communities, have provided very instructive material characterising the attitude of the Russian political parties towards religion and the Church. Let us make a general survey of this material, dwelling mainly on the debates on the Synod estimates (we have not yet received the verbatim reports of the debates on the other questions mentioned above).

The first and most obvious conclusion that emerges from the Duma debates is that militant clericalism in Russia not only exists, but is clearly gaining ground and becoming more organised. On 29 April, Bishop Metrophanes stated:

The first steps in our Duma activities pursued the explicit end that we who have been honoured by the votes of the people, should here in the Duma stand above party divisions, and form a single group of the clergy, which should throw light on all sides from its ethical point of view . . . What is the reason why we have failed to

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achieve this ideal situation? . . . The fault for this lies with those who are sharing these benches with you [ie, with the Cadets<sup>18</sup> and the "Left"], namely, those clerical deputies who belong to the opposition. They were the first to lift their voice and say that this was neither more nor less than the emergence of a clerical party, and that this was extremely undesirable. Of course, there is no such thing as clericalism among the Russian Orthodox clergy – we never had a tendency of that kind, and in seeking to form a separate group we were pursuing purely ethical and moral ends. But now, gentlemen, when, as a result of this discord introduced in our brotherly midst by the Left deputies, there followed disunity and division, now you [ie, the Cadets] blame it on us."

Bishop Metrophanes in his illiterate speech let the cat out of the bag: the Left, don't you see, are guilty of having dissuaded some of the Duma priests from forming a special "moral" (this term is obviously more suitable for hoodwinking the people than the word "clerical") group!

Almost a month later, on 26 May, Bishop Eulogius read in the Duma "the resolution of the Duma clergy": "The overwhelming majority of the Duma Orthodox clergy considers" . . . that in the interests of the "leading and dominant position of the Orthodox Church" neither freedom of preaching for the Old-Believers, nor the unauthorised functioning of Old-Believer communities, nor the using of the title of priest by Old-Believer clergymen, are permissible. "The purely moral point of view" of the Russian priests stands fully revealed as clericalism pure and simple.

"The overwhelming majority" of the Duma clergy, in whose name Bishop Eulogius spoke, probably consisted of 29 Right and moderately Right priests in the Third Duma, and possibly also included eight priests belonging to the Octobrists. The opposition had probably been joined by four priests belonging to the Progressist and Peaceful Renovation groups and one belonging to the Polish-



Lithuanian group.

What is then the “purely moral and ethical point of view of the overwhelming majority of the clergy in the Duma” (the Third, June, Duma, one should add)? Here are a few excerpts from the speeches: “All I say is that the initiative for these [ie, Church] reforms must come from within the Church, not from without, not from the state and, of course, not from the Budget Commission. After all, the Church is a divine and eternal institution, its laws are immutable, whereas the ideals of state life, as we know, are subject to constant modifications”.\* The orator recalled “a disturbing historical parallel”: the secularisation of Church property under Catherine II. “Who can vouch that the Budget Commission, which this year expressed the desire to put them [the Church funds] under state control, will not express next year the desire to deposit them in the State Treasury, and then fully to transfer their management from the Church authorities to the civil or state authorities? . . . The Church statutes say that since a bishop is entrusted with Christian souls, then all the more should Church property be entrusted to him . . . Today before you [deputies of the Duma] stands your spiritual mother, the holy Orthodox Church, not merely as before representatives of the people, but also as before its spiritual children”.\*

This is pure clericalism. The Church is above the state as the eternal and divine is above the temporal and earthly. The Church cannot forgive the state for secularising Church property. The Church demands a leading and dominant position. In its eyes the Duma deputies are not only – or rather not so much – representatives of the people as “spiritual children”.

These are not officials in cassocks, as the Social-Democrat Surkov called them, but *feudalists* in cassocks. Defence of the Church’s feudal privileges, outspoken support of medievalism –

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\* Bishop Eulogius, 27 April.

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that is the essence of the policy pursued by the majority of the Third Duma clergy. Bishop Eulogius is by no means an exception. Gepetsky also vociferates against "secularisation" which he calls an intolerable "wrong".\* The priest Mashkevich fulminates against the *Octobrist*<sup>19</sup> report for seeking

to undermine the historic and canonical foundations on which our Church life has rested and must rest . . . to push the life and activities of the Russian Orthodox Church off the canonical path on to the path where . . . the true princes of the Church – the bishops – will be obliged to give up almost all their rights, inherited from the apostles, to secular princes . . . This is nothing but . . . an encroachment on somebody else's property and on the rights and possessions of the Church . . . The speaker is leading us towards the destruction of the canonical order of Church life; he seeks to subordinate the Orthodox Church and all its economic functions to the Duma, an institution composed of the most diverse elements in our country, of religious creeds both tolerated and not tolerated.†

The Russian Narodniks and liberals have long been comforting themselves, or rather deceiving themselves, with the "theory" that in Russia there is no basis for militant clericalism, for a struggle of "the princes of the Church" with the temporal power, and so forth. Our revolution<sup>20</sup> has dispelled this illusion, as it did a number of other Narodnik and liberal illusions. Clericalism existed in a hidden form, so long as autocracy existed intact and inviolate. The all-powerful police and bureaucracy concealed from the gaze of "society" and the people the class struggle in general, and the struggle waged by the "feudalists in cassocks" against the "base

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\* 14 April.

† 27 April.

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rabble" in particular. But the first breach which the revolutionary proletariat and peasantry made in the feudal autocratic regime laid bare what had been hidden. As soon as the proletariat and the advanced elements of the democratic bourgeoisie began to make use of the political liberty, the freedom to organise the masses, which they had won at the end of 1905, the reactionary classes, too, reached out for independent and open organisations. Under absolute autocracy they did not organise, and did not come out too much in the open, not because they were weak, but because they were strong; not because they were incapable of organisation and political struggle, but because at that time they did not yet feel any real need for independent class organisation. They did not believe in the possibility of a mass movement against the autocracy and the feudalists in Russia. They fully relied on the knout being sufficient to keep the rabble down. But the first wounds inflicted on autocracy compelled the social elements which supported it and needed it to come out into the open. It was no longer possible to use only the old knout in fighting masses that had been capable of causing the events of 9 January, the strike movement in 1905, and the October-December revolution. It became necessary to build up independent political organisations; it became necessary for the Council of the United Nobility to organise Black Hundreds and engage in the most irresponsible demagoguery; it became necessary for "the princes of the Church – the bishops" – to organise the reactionary clergy into an independent force.

A typical feature of the Third Duma, and of the Third Duma period of the Russian counter-revolution is, indeed, that this organisation of the reactionary forces has come out into the open, has begun to develop on a nation-wide scale, and has demanded a special Black-Hundred bourgeois "parliament". Militant clericalism has shown its true colours; and from now on Russian Social-Democracy will have to act again and again as an observer of, and participant in, the clashes between the clerical and the anti-

clerical bourgeoisie. If our general task is to assist the proletariat to unite into a special class, capable of separating from bourgeois democracy, one component of this task is the use of every means of propaganda and agitation, including the rostrum of the Duma, to explain to the masses the distinctions between socialist and bourgeois anti-clericalism.

The Octobrists and Cadets who have come out in the Third Duma against the extreme Right, the clericals, and the government, have eased this task for us immensely by providing an object-lesson of the attitude of the bourgeoisie to wards the Church and religion. The legal press of the Cadets and the so-called Progressists is at present devoting special attention to the question of the Old-Believers, to the fact that the Octobrists as well as the Cadets have taken a stand against the government, and to the fact that they have, albeit in a small way, "adopted the course of reform" promised on 17 October. What interests us most is the principle involved in this question, ie, the attitude of the bourgeoisie in general, including the elements who claim the title of Democratic Cadets, towards religion and the Church. We must not allow a relatively minor question – the Old-Believers' conflict with the dominant Church, and the conduct of the Octobrists who are tied up with the Old-Believers, and are partly even dependent on them financially (*Golos Moskvy*<sup>21</sup> is said to be financed by the Old-Believers) – make us lose sight of the root question, that of the interests and policy of the bourgeoisie as a class.

Take a look at the speech delivered by Count Uvarov, an Octobrist in his general views, but who has left the Octobrist group. Speaking after the Social-Democrat Surkov, he started by refusing to deal with this question from the standpoint of principle, as the workers' deputy had done. Uvarov merely attacks the Synod and the Procurator-General for their unwillingness to give the Duma any information on certain Church revenues and on the expenditure of parish funds. Kamensky, the official spokesman of the Octobrists,

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approaches the question' from the same standpoint,\* and demands that parishes should be revived "for the purpose of strengthening the Orthodox faith". Kapustin, the so-called "Left-wing Octobrist", elaborates on this idea.

If we turn to the life of the people – he exclaims – to the life of the rural population, we observe today, here and now, a sad fact: religious life is tottering, the greatest and sole foundation of the people's moral principles is tottering . . . What can replace the concept of sin, what can replace the dictates of conscience? Surely, they cannot be replaced by the concept of class struggle and the rights of this or that class. That is a tragic concept which has taken root in our everyday life. Therefore, if religion is to survive as a foundation of morality, if it is to be within reach of the whole population, it is necessary that the bearers of this religion should enjoy the proper authority . . ."

The spokesman of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie wishes to strengthen religion, he wishes to enhance the influence of religion on the masses, realising that it is inadequate and out of date, realising even the harm caused to the ruling classes by "officials in cassocks", who are *lowering* the authority of the Church. The Octobrist is fighting against the excesses of clericalism and of police tutelage *in order to strengthen* the influence of the Church on the masses, in order to replace at least some means of addling the wits of the people, which are too crude, too out of date, too threadbare to achieve their object, by more refined and improved means. Police religion is no longer adequate for befuddling the masses: give us a more cultured, more up-to-date, more skilful religion, one that will be effective in a self-governing parish – that is what capital is demanding of the autocracy.

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\* 29 April.

And the Cadet Karaulov *fully* subscribes to this same point of view. This "liberal" renegade (who gradually "evolved" from the Narodnaya Volya<sup>22</sup> to the Right-wing Cadets) screams his protest against the "denationalisation of the Church, understanding this to mean the exclusion of the masses of the people, of the laity, from the building of the Church". He finds it "*shocking*" (literally so!) that the masses are "losing faith". He raises an outcry, quite in the style of Menshikov,<sup>23</sup> because the "immense intrinsic value of the Church is being depreciated . . . to the great detriment not only of the cause of the Church, but of that of the state as well". He qualifies as "words of gold" the loathsome hypocrisy of the zealot Eulogius on the theme that "the task of the Church is eternal, immutable, hence, it is not possible to link up the Church with politics". He protests against the alliance of the Church with the Black Hundreds *for the sole reason* that the Church may, "with greater might and glory than today, fulfil its grand and holy mission in a Christian spirit of love and freedom".

Comrade Belousov did well to have a good laugh at these "lyrical words" of Karaulov's from the Duma rostrum. However, such ridicule is very far from being adequate. It had to be made clear – and at the first convenient opportunity this should be done from the Duma rostrum – that the stand point of the Cadets is absolutely identical with that of the Octobrists, and merely expresses the efforts of "cultured" capital to bamboozle the people with religious narcotics by more refined methods of Church deception than the ones now practised by the rank-and-file Russian priests who are still living in the past.

To keep the people in spiritual bondage, there must be the closest possible alliance of the Church and the Black Hundreds, said the "wild landlord" and the old Derzhimorda<sup>24</sup> through their spokesman Purishkevich. You are wrong, gentlemen, retorts the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie through their spokesman Karaulov: with such methods you will only make the people turn away from reli-

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gion for good. Now let us go about it in a more clever, more artful, more ingenious way: let us remove the too stupid and crude agent of the Black Hundreds, declare war on "denationalisation of the Church", and inscribe on our banner Bishop Eulogius's "words of gold" to the effect that the Church is above politics. Only in this way shall we be able to fool at least some of the backward workers, and especially of the petty bourgeoisie and the peasantry, and be able to help the renovated Church to fulfil its "grand and holy mission" of retaining the masses of the people in spiritual bondage.

Our liberal press, not excluding the newspaper *Rech*,<sup>25</sup> has concentrated of late on censuring Struve and Co. for their authorship of the symposium *Vekhi*. But Karaulov, the official spokesman of the Cadets in the Duma, has done a superlative job of exposing all the vile hypocrisy of these remonstrances, and these repudiations of Struve and Co. What Karaulov and Milyukov conceal, Struve reveals. The liberals blame Struve *only* for having imprudently blurted out the truth, for showing his hand too openly. The liberals, who censure *Vekhi* and go on supporting the Cadet Party, are most shamelessly deceiving the people – condemning imprudently outspoken *words*, and going on *doing* the very *things* that go with those words.

There is little to say about the conduct of the Trudoviks<sup>26</sup> in the Duma during the debate on the questions under review. As always, a noticeable difference was revealed between the peasant Trudoviks and the intellectual Trudoviks to the disadvantage of the latter, because of their excessive readiness to follow the Cadets. True, Rozhkov, a peasant, revealed in his speech his complete lack of political consciousness; he, too, repeated the Cadet platitudes about the Union of the Russian People<sup>27</sup> helping not to reinforce but to destroy faith. He was unable to suggest any programme. On the other hand, when he began in his artless manner to tell the naked, unvarnished truth about the levies collected by

the clergy, about the extortions of the priests, about how, in addition to charging money for conducting a marriage ceremony, they demand "a bottle of vodka, snacks, and a pound of tea, *and sometimes things that I am even afraid to talk about from this rostrum*"\* – this was more than the Black-Hundred Duma could stand. A wild howl arose from the benches of the right. "This is scandalous, this is outrageous!" shouted the Black Hundreds, realising that this simple peasant's speech about extortions, listing the scale of "fees" charged for religious rites, was more likely to revolutionise the masses than any amount of theoretical or tactical anti-religious and anti-Church declarations. Thereupon the band of diehard defenders of autocracy in the Third Duma intimidated their flunkey – the Duma Chairman Meyendorff – and compelled him to rule that Rozhkov must sit down (the Social-Democrats, joined by some Trudoviks, Cadets and others, handed in a protest against this action of the Chairman).

Although the speech delivered by the peasant Trudovik Rozhkov was extremely unsophisticated, it provided an excellent demonstration of the abyss dividing the hypocritical, deliberately reactionary defence of religion by the Cadets, and the primitive, unconscious, matter-of-fact religiousness of the peasant, whose living conditions give rise – against his will and unconsciously – to a truly revolutionary resentment against extortions, and to readiness for a resolute fight against medievalism. The Cadets are the representatives of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie, which is intent on renovating and strengthening religion against the people. The Rozhkovs are the representatives of revolutionary bourgeois democracy, a democracy that is undeveloped, lacking political consciousness, downtrodden, lacking independence, disunited – yet fraught with an all but inexhaustible reservoir of revolutionary energy in the fight against the landlords, the priests,

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\* Verbatim report, 29 April, p. 2,259.



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and the autocracy.

Rozanov, a Trudovik intellectual, came close to the Cadets far less unconsciously than Rozhkov. Rozanov could mention disestablishment of the Church as a demand of the "Left", but could not refrain from reactionary, petty-bourgeois phrases about "amending the electoral law in the sense that the clergy should be excluded from participation in the political struggle". The revolutionary spirit, which finds a spontaneous outlet in a typical, average peasant when he begins to tell the truth about how he lives, vanishes in the case of a Trudovik intellectual, to be replaced by hazy and sometimes actually vile phrases. For the hundredth and thousandth time we see the truth confirmed that only if they follow the proletariat's lead will the Russian peasant masses be able to overthrow the oppressive and killing yoke of the feudal-minded landlords, the feudalists in cassocks, the feudal-minded supporters of the autocracy.

The Social-Democrat Surkov, representing the workers' party and the working class, was the only person in the Duma to raise the debates to the truly high level of principle, and said without beating about the bush what the attitude of the proletariat is towards the Church and religion, and what should be the attitude in this matter of all consistent and vigorous democrats. "Religion is the opium of the people . . . Not a farthing of the people's money to these murderous enemies of the people who are drugging the people's minds" – this straightforward, bold and outspoken battle-cry of a socialist resounded like a challenge to the Black- Hundred Duma, and met with the response of millions of proletarians, who will spread it among the masses and who will know how to translate it into revolutionary action when the time comes.

## V I L E N I N

## On the significance of militant materialism<sup>28</sup>

Comrade Trotsky has already said everything necessary, and said it very well, about the general purposes of *Pod Znamenem Marksizma*<sup>29</sup> in issue No. 1-2 of that journal. I should like to deal with certain questions that more closely define the content and programme of the work which its editors have set forth in the introductory statement in this issue.

This statement says that not all those gathered round the journal *Pod Znamenem Marksizma* are Communists but that they are all consistent materialists.<sup>30</sup> I think that this alliance of Communists and non-Communists is absolutely essential and correctly defines the purposes of the journal. One of the biggest and most dangerous mistakes made by Communists (as generally by revolutionaries who have successfully accomplished the beginning of a great revolution) is the idea that a revolution can be made by revolutionaries alone. On the contrary, to be successful, all serious revolutionary work requires that the idea that revolutionaries are capable of playing the part only of the vanguard of the truly virile and advanced class must be understood and translated into action. A vanguard performs its task as vanguard only when it is able to avoid being isolated from the mass of the people it leads and

is able really to lead the whole mass forward. Without an alliance with non-Communists in the most diverse spheres of activity there can be no question of any successful communist construction.

This also applies to the defence of materialism and Marxism, which has been undertaken *Pod Znamenem Marksizma*. Fortunately, the main trends of advanced social thinking in Russia have a solid materialist tradition. Apart from G. V. Plekhanov,<sup>31</sup> it will be enough to mention Chernyshevsky, from whom the modern Narodniks<sup>32</sup> (the Popular Socialists, Socialist-Revolutionaries, etc) have frequently retreated in quest of fashionable reactionary philosophical doctrines, captivated by the tinsel of the so-called last word in European science, and unable to discern beneath this tinsel some variety of servility to the bourgeoisie, to bourgeois prejudice and bourgeois reaction.

At any rate, in Russia we still have – and shall undoubtedly have for a fairly long time to come – materialists from the non-Communist camp, and it is our absolute duty to enlist all adherents of consistent and militant materialism in the joint work of combating philosophical reaction and the philosophical prejudices of so-called educated society. Dietzgen senior<sup>33</sup> – not to be confused with his writer son, who was as pretentious as he was unsuccessful – correctly, aptly and clearly expressed the fundamental Marxist view of the philosophical trends which prevail in bourgeois countries and enjoy the regard of their scientists and publicists, when he said that in effect the professors of philosophy in modern society are in the majority of cases nothing but “graduated flunkeys of clericalism”.

Our Russian intellectuals, who, like their brethren in all other countries, are fond of thinking themselves advanced, are very much averse to shifting the question to the level of the opinion expressed in Dietzgen’s words. But they are averse to it because they cannot look the truth in the face. One has only to give a little thought to the governmental and also the general economic, social

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and every other kind of dependence of modern educated people on the ruling bourgeoisie to realise that Dietzgen's scathing description was absolutely true. One has only to recall the vast majority of the fashionable philosophical trends that arise so frequently in European countries, beginning for example with those connected with the discovery of radium and ending with those which are now seeking to clutch at the skirts of Einstein,<sup>34</sup> to gain an idea of the connection between the class interests and the class position of the bourgeoisie and its support of all forms of religion on the one hand, and the ideological content of the fashionable philosophical trends on the other.

It will be seen from the above that a journal that sets out to be a militant materialist organ must be primarily a militant organ, in the sense of unflinchingly exposing and indicting all modern "graduated flunkeys of clericalism", irrespective of whether they act as representatives of official science or as free lances calling themselves "democratic Left or ideologically socialist" publicists.

In the second place, such a journal must be a militant atheist organ. We have departments, or at least state institutions, which are in charge of this work. But the work is being carried on with extreme apathy and very unsatisfactorily, and is apparently suffering from the general conditions of our truly Russian (even though Soviet) bureaucratic ways. It is therefore highly essential that in addition to the work of these state institutions, and in order to improve and infuse life into that work, a journal which sets out to propagandise militant materialism must carry on untiring atheist propaganda and an untiring atheist fight. The literature on the subject in all languages should be carefully followed and everything at all valuable in this sphere should be translated, or at least reviewed.

Engels long ago advised the contemporary leaders of the proletariat to translate the militant atheist literature of the late eighteenth century for mass distribution among the people. We have

not done this up to the present, to our shame be it said (this is one of the numerous proofs that it is much easier to seize power in a revolutionary epoch than to know how to use this power properly). Our apathy, inactivity and incompetence are sometimes excused on all sorts of "lofty" grounds, as, for example, that the old atheist literature of the eighteenth century is antiquated, unscientific, naive, etc There is nothing worse than such pseudo-scientific sophistry, which serves as a screen either for pedantry or for a complete misunderstanding of Marxism. There is, of course, much that is unscientific and naive in the atheist writings of the eighteenth-century revolutionaries. But nobody prevents the publishers of these writings from abridging them and providing them with brief postscripts pointing out the progress made by mankind in the scientific criticism of religions since the end of the eighteenth century, mentioning the latest writings on the subject, and so forth. It would be the biggest and most grievous mistake a Marxist could make to think that the millions of the people (especially the peasants and artisans), who have been condemned by all modern society to darkness, ignorance and superstitions – can extricate themselves from this darkness only along the straight line of a purely Marxist education. These masses should be supplied with the most varied atheist propaganda material, they should be made familiar with facts from the most diverse spheres of life, they should be approached in every possible way, so as to interest them, rouse them from their religious torpor, stir them from the most varied angles and by the most varied methods, and so forth.

The keen, vivacious and talented writings of the old eighteenth-century atheists wittily and openly attacked the prevailing clericalism and will very often prove a thousand times more suitable for arousing people from their religious torpor than the dull and dry paraphrases of Marxism, almost completely unillustrated by skillfully selected facts, which predominate in our literature and which (it is no use hiding the fact) frequently distort Marxism. We have

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translations of all the major works of Marx and Engels. There are absolutely no grounds for fearing that the old atheism and old materialism will remain un-supplemented by the corrections introduced by Marx and Engels. The most important thing and it is this that is most frequently overlooked by those of our Communists who are supposedly Marxists, but who in fact mutilate Marxism – is to know how to awaken in the still undeveloped masses an intelligent attitude towards religious questions and an intelligent criticism of religions.

On the other hand, take a glance at modern scientific critics of religion. These educated bourgeois writers almost invariably “supplement” their own refutations of religious superstitions with arguments which immediately expose them as ideological slaves of the bourgeoisie, as “graduated flunkeys of clericalism”.

Two examples. Professor R. Y. Wipper published in 1918 a little book entitled *Vozniknovenie Khristianstva (The Origin of Christianity)*. In his account of the principal results of modern science, the author not only refrains from combating the superstitions and deception which are the weapons of the church as a political organisation, not only evades these questions, but makes the simply ridiculous and most reactionary claim that he is above both “extremes” – the idealist and the materialist. This is toadying to the ruling bourgeoisie, which all over the world devotes to the support of religion hundreds of millions of rubles from the profits squeezed out of the working people.

The well-known German scientist, Arthur Drews, while refuting religious superstitions and fables in his book, *Die Christusmythe (The Christ Myth)*, and while showing that Christ never existed, at the end of the book declares in favour of religion, albeit a renovated, purified and more subtle religion, one that would be capable of withstanding “the daily growing naturalist torrent”.\* Here we have

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\* Fourth German edition, 1910, p. 238.

an outspoken and deliberate reactionary, who is openly helping the exploiters to replace the old, decayed religious superstitions by new, more odious and vile superstitions.

This does not mean that Drews should not be translated. It means that while in a certain measure effecting an alliance with the progressive section of the bourgeoisie, Communists and all consistent materialists should unflinchingly expose that section when it is guilty of reaction. It means that to shun an alliance with the representatives of the bourgeoisie of the eighteenth century, ie, the period when it was revolutionary, would be to betray Marxism and materialism; for an "alliance" with the Drewses, in one form or another and in one degree or another, is essential for our struggle against the predominating religious obscurantists.

*Pod Znamenem Marksizma*, which sets out to be an organ of militant materialism, should devote much of its space to atheist propaganda, to reviews of the literature on the subject and to correcting the immense shortcomings of our governmental work in this field. It is particularly important to utilise books and pamphlets which contain many concrete facts and comparisons showing how the class interests and class organisations of the modern bourgeoisie are connected with the organisations of religious institutions and religious propaganda.

All material relating to the United States of America, where the official state connection between religion and capital is less manifest, is extremely important. But, on the other hand, it becomes all the clearer to us that so-called modern democracy (which the Mensheviks, the Socialist-Revolutionaries, partly also the anarchists, etc, so unreasonably worship) is nothing but the freedom to preach whatever is to the advantage of the bourgeoisie, to preach, namely, the most reactionary ideas, religion, obscurantism, defence of the exploiters, etc.

One would like to hope that a journal which sets out to be a militant materialist organ will provide our reading public with reviews



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of atheist literature, showing for which circle of readers any particular writing might be suitable and in what respect, and mentioning what literature has been published in our country (only decent translations should be given notice, and they are not so many), and what is still to be published.

In addition to the alliance with consistent materialists who do not belong to the Communist Party, of no less and perhaps even of more importance for the work which militant materialism should perform is an alliance with those modern natural scientists who incline towards materialism and are not afraid to defend and preach it as against the modish philosophical wanderings into idealism and scepticism which are prevalent in so-called educated society.

The article by A. Timiryazev on Einstein's theory of relativity published in *Pod Znamenem Marksizma* No. 1-2 permits us to hope that the journal will succeed in effecting this second alliance too. Greater attention should be paid to it. It should be remembered that the sharp upheaval which modern natural science is undergoing very often gives rise to reactionary philosophical schools and minor schools. trends and minor trends. Unless, therefore, the problems raised by the recent revolution in natural science are followed, and unless natural scientists are enlisted in the work of a philosophical journal, militant materialism can be neither militant nor materialism. Timiryazev was obliged to observe in the first issue of the journal that the theory of Einstein, who, according to Timiryazev, is himself not making any active attack on the foundations of materialism, has already been seized upon by a vast number of bourgeois intellectuals of all countries; it should be noted that this applies not only to Einstein, but to a number, if not to the majority, of the great reformers of natural science since the end of the nineteenth century.

For our attitude towards this phenomenon to be a politically conscious one, it must be realised that no natural science and no materialism can hold its own in the struggle against the onslaught of

bourgeois ideas and the restoration of the bourgeois world outlook unless it stands on solid philosophical ground. In order to hold his own in this struggle and carry it to a victorious finish, the natural scientist must be a modern materialist, a conscious adherent of the materialism represented by Marx, ie, he must be a dialectical materialist. In order to attain this aim, the contributors to *Pod Znamenem Marksizma* must arrange for the systematic study of Hegelian dialectics from a materialist standpoint, ie, the dialectics which Marx applied practically in his *Capital* and in his historical and political works, and applied so successfully that now every day of the awakening to life and struggle of new classes in the East (Japan, India, and China) – ie, the hundreds of millions of human beings who form the greater part of the world population and whose historical passivity and historical torpor have hitherto conditioned the stagnation and decay of many advanced European countries – every day of the awakening to life of new peoples and new classes serves as a fresh confirmation of Marxism.

Of course, this study, this interpretation, this propaganda of Hegelian dialectics is extremely difficult, and the first experiments in this direction will undoubtedly be accompanied by errors. But only he who never does anything never makes mistakes. Taking as our basis Marx's method of applying materialistically conceived Hegelian dialectics, we can and should elaborate this dialectics from all aspects, print in the journal excerpts from Hegel's principal works, interpret them materialistically and comment on them with the help of examples of the way Marx applied dialectics, as well as of examples of dialectics in the sphere of economic and political relations, which recent history, especially modern imperialist war and revolution, provides in unusual abundance. In my opinion, the editors and contributors of *Pod Znamenem Marksizma* should be a kind of "Society of Materialist Friends of Hegelian Dialectics". Modern natural scientists (if they know how to seek, and if we learn to help them) will find in the Hegelian dialectics, materialisti-

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cally interpreted, a series of answers to the philosophical problems which are being raised by the revolution in natural science and which make the intellectual admirers of bourgeois fashion "stumble" into reaction.

Unless it sets itself such a task and systematically fulfills it, materialism cannot be militant materialism. It will be not so much the fighter as the fought, to use an expression of Shchedrin's. Without this, eminent natural scientists will as often as hitherto be helpless in making their philosophical deductions and generalisations. For natural science is progressing so fast and is undergoing such a profound revolutionary upheaval in all spheres that it cannot possibly dispense with philosophical deductions.

In conclusion, I will cite an example which has nothing to do with philosophy, but does at any rate concern social questions, to which *Pod Znamenem Marksizma* also desires to devote attention.

It is an example of the way in which modern pseudo-science actually serves as a vehicle for the grossest and most infamous reactionary views.

I was recently sent a copy of *Ekonomist* No. 1 (1922), published by the Eleventh Department of the Russian Technical Society. The young Communist who sent me this journal (he probably had no time to read it) rashly expressed considerable agreement with it. In reality the journal is – I do not know to what extent deliberately – an organ of the modern feudalists, disguised of course under a cloak of science, democracy and so forth.

A certain Mr. P. A. Sorokin publishes in this journal an extensive, so-called "sociological", inquiry on "The Influence of the War". This learned article abounds in learned references to the "sociological" works of the author and his numerous teachers and colleagues abroad. Here is an example of his learning.

On page 83, I read:

For every 10,000 marriages in Petrograd there are now 92.2 di-

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voces – a fantastic figure. Of every 100 annulled marriages, 51.1 had lasted less than one year, 11 percent less than one month, 22 percent less than two months, 41 percent less than three to six months and only 26 percent over six months. These figures show that modern legal marriage is a form which conceals what is in effect extra-marital sexual intercourse, enabling lovers of 'strawberries' to satisfy their appetites in a 'legal' way.

Both this gentleman and the Russian Technical Society, which publishes this journal and gives space to this kind of talk, no doubt regard themselves as adherents of democracy and would consider it a great insult to be called what they are in fact, namely, feudalists, reactionaries, "graduated flunkies of clericalism".

Even the slightest acquaintance with the legislation of bourgeois countries on marriage, divorce and illegitimate children, and with the actual state of affairs in this field, is enough to show anyone interested in the subject that modern bourgeois democracy, even in all the most democratic bourgeois republics, exhibits a truly feudal attitude in this respect towards women and towards children born out of wedlock.

This, of course, does not prevent the Mensheviks, the Socialist-Revolutionaries, a part of the anarchists and all the corresponding parties in the West from shouting about democracy and how it is being violated by the Bolsheviks. But as a matter of fact the Bolshevik revolution is the only consistently democratic revolution in respect to such questions as marriage, divorce and the position of children born out of wedlock. And this is a question which most directly affects the interests of more than half the population of any country. Although a large number of bourgeois revolutions preceded it and called themselves democratic, the Bolshevik revolution was the first and only revolution to wage a resolute struggle in this respect both against reaction and feudalism and against the usual hypocrisy of the ruling and propertied classes.

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If 92 divorces for every 10,000 marriages seem to Mr. Sorekin a fantastic figure, one can only suppose that either the author lived and was brought up in a monastery so entirely walled off from life that hardly anyone will believe such a monastery ever existed, or that he is distorting the truth in the interest of reaction and the bourgeoisie. Anybody in the least acquainted with social conditions in bourgeois countries knows that the real number of actual divorces (of course, not sanctioned by church and law) is everywhere immeasurably greater. The only difference between Russia and other countries in this respect is that our laws do not sanctify hypocrisy and the debasement of the woman and her child, but openly and in the name of the government declare systematic war on all hypocrisy and all debasement.

The Marxist journal will have to wage war also on these modern "educated" feudalists. Not a few of them, very likely, are in receipt of government money and are employed by our government to educate our youth, although they are no more fitted for this than notorious perverts are fitted for the post of superintendents of educational establishments for the young.

The working class of Russia proved able to win power; but it has not yet learned to utilise it, for otherwise it would have long ago very politely dispatched such teachers and members of learned societies to countries with a bourgeois "democracy". That is the proper place for such feudalists.

But it will learn, given the will to learn.

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## What is religion good for?<sup>35</sup>

The reader will remember the sensation that was created by the speech delivered by M. A. Stakhovich, Marshal of the Nobility of Orel Gubernia, at a missionary congress, in the course of which he urged that *freedom of conscience* be recognised by law. The conservative press, led by *Moskovskiye Vedomosti*, is conducting a furious campaign against Mr. Stakhovich. It cannot find names vile enough with which to call him and almost goes so far as to accuse the entire Orel nobility of high treason for having re-elected Mr. Stakhovich as Marshal. Now, this re-election is indeed very significant and to a certain degree it bears the character of a demonstration of the nobility against police tyranny and outrage.

Stakhovich, says *Moskovskiye Vedomosti*, "is not so much Marshal of the Nobility, as the oh, so gay Misha Stakhovich, the life and soul of the party, the clever conversationalist . . ." So much the worse for you, gentlemen, defenders of the bludgeon. If even our jovial landlords begin to talk about freedom of conscience, then the infamies of the priests and the police must verily be with-

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\* "Who Is Responsible for Mr. Stakhovich?" by A. P. G., *Moskovskiye Vedomosti* (*Moscow Gazette*), No. 348, 18 December 1901.

out number . . .

"What does our 'intellectual', frivolous crowd that instigates and applauds the Stakhoviches care for the affairs of our sacred orthodox faith and our time-honoured attitude towards it?" . . . Once again, so much the worse for you, gentlemen, champions of the autocracy, the orthodox faith, and the national essence. A fine system indeed our police ridden autocracy must be, if it has permeated even religion with the spirit of the prison-cell, so that the "Stakhoviches" (who have no firm convictions in matters of religion, but who are interested, as we shall see, in preserving a stable religion) become utterly indifferent (if not actually hostile) to this notorious "national" faith. ". . . They call our faith a delusion!! They mock at us because, thanks to this 'delusion', we fear and try to avoid sin and we carry out our obligations uncomplainingly, no matter how severe they may be; because we find the strength and courage to bear sorrow and privations and forbear pride in times of success and good fortune . . ." So! The orthodox faith is dear to them because it teaches people to bear misery "uncomplainingly". What a profitable faith it is indeed for the governing classes! In a society so organised that an insignificant minority enjoys wealth and power, while the masses constantly suffer "privations" and bear "severe obligations", it is quite natural for the exploiters to sympathise with a religion that teaches people to bear "uncomplainingly" the hell on earth for the sake of an alleged celestial paradise. But in its zeal *Moskovskiye Vedomosti* became too garrulous. So garrulous, in fact, that *unwittingly it spoke the truth*. We read on: ". . . They do not suspect that if they, the Stakhoviches, eat well, sleep peacefully, and live merrily, it is thanks to this 'delusion'."

The sacred truth! This is precisely the case. It is because religious "delusions" are so widespread among the masses that the Stakhoviches and the Oblomovs,<sup>36</sup> and all our capitalists who live by the labour of the masses, and even *Moskovskiye Vedomosti*



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itself, "sleep peacefully". And the more education spreads among the people, the more will religious prejudices give way to socialist consciousness, the nearer will be the day of victory for the proletariat – the victory that will emancipate all oppressed classes from the slavery they endure in modern society.

But having blurted out the truth on one point, *Moskovskiye Vedomosti* disposed, far too easily, of another interesting point. It is obviously mistaken in believing that the Stakhoviches "do not realise" the significance of religion, and that they demand liberal forms out of sheer "thoughtlessness". Such an interpretation of a hostile political trend is too childishly naïve. The fact that in this instance Mr. Stakhovich came forward as advocate of the entire liberal trend was proved best of all by *Moskovskiye Vedomosti* itself; otherwise, what need was there for waging such a campaign against a single speech? What need was there for speaking, not about Stakhovich, but about the Stakhoviches, about the "intellectual crowd"?

*Moskovskiye Vedomosti's* error was, of course, deliberate. That paper is more unwilling than it is unable to analyse the liberalism it bates from the class point of view. That it does not desire to do so goes without saying; but its inability to do so interests us very much more, because this is a complaint that even very many revolutionaries and socialists suffer from. Thus, the authors of the letter published in No. 12 of *Iskra*, who accuse us of departing from the "class point of view" for striving in our newspaper to follow all manifestations of liberal discontent and protest, suffer from this complaint, as do also the authors of *Proletarskaya Borba*<sup>37</sup> and of several pamphlets in "The Social-Democratic Library",<sup>38</sup> who imagine that our autocracy represents the absolutist rule of the bourgeoisie; likewise the Martynovs, who seek to persuade us to abandon the many-sided campaign of exposure (ie, the widest possible political agitation) against the autocracy and to concentrate our efforts mainly upon the struggle for economic re forms

(to give something "positive" to the working class, to put forward in its name "concrete demands" for legislative and administrative measures "which promise certain palpable results"); likewise, too, the Nadezhdins, who, on reading the correspondence in our paper on the statistical conflicts, ask in astonishment: "Good Lord, what is this – a Zemstvo paper?"

All these socialists forget that the interests of the autocracy coincide only with certain interests of the propertied classes, and only under certain circumstances; frequently it happens that its interests do not coincide with the interests of these classes, as a whole, but only with those of certain of their strata. The interests of other bourgeois strata and the more widely understood interests of the entire bourgeoisie, of the development of capitalism as a whole, necessarily give rise to a liberal opposition to the autocracy. For instance, the autocracy guarantees the bourgeoisie opportunities to employ the crudest forms of exploitation, but, on the other hand, places a thousand obstacles in the way of the extensive development of the productive forces and the spread of education; in this way it arouses against itself, not only the petty bourgeoisie, but at times even the big bourgeoisie.

The autocracy guarantees (?) the bourgeoisie protection against socialism, but since the people are deprived of rights, this protection is necessarily transformed into a system of police outrages that rouse the indignation of the entire people. What the result of these antagonistic tendencies is, what relative strength of conservative and liberal views, or trends, among the bourgeoisie obtains at the present moment, cannot be learned from a couple of general theses, for this depends on all the special features of the social and political situation at a given moment. To determine this, one must study the situation in detail and carefully watch all the conflicts with the government, no matter by what social stratum they are initiated. It is precisely the "class point of view" that makes it *impermissible* for a Social-Democrat to remain indifferent

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to the discontent and the protests of the "Stakhoviches".

The reasoning and activity of the above-mentioned socialists show that they are indifferent to liberalism and thus reveal their incomprehension of the basic theses of the *Communist Manifesto*, the "Gospel" of international Social-Democracy. Let us recall, for instance, the words that the bourgeoisie itself provides material for the political education of the proletariat by its struggle for power, by the conflicts of various strata and groups within it, etc.\* Only in politically free countries has the proletariat easy access to this material (and then only to part of it). In enslaved Russia, however, we Social-Democrats must work hard to obtain this "material" for the working class, ie, we must *ourselves undertake* the task of conducting general political agitation, of carrying on a public exposure campaign against the autocracy.

This task is particularly imperative in periods of political ferment. We must bear in mind that in one year of intensified political life the proletariat can obtain more revolutionary training than in several years of political calm. For this reason the tendency of the above-mentioned socialists consciously or unconsciously *to restrict* the scope and content of political agitation is particularly harmful.

Let us recall also the words that the Communists support *every* revolutionary movement against the existing system. Those words are often interpreted too narrowly, and are not taken to imply support for the liberal opposition. It must not be forgotten, however, that there are periods when every conflict with the government arising out of progressive social interests, however small, may under certain conditions (*of which our support is one*) flare up into a general conflagration. Suffice it to recall the great social movement which developed in Russia out of the struggle between the students and the government over academic demands,<sup>39</sup> or the conflict that

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\* See K. Marx and F. Engels, *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*, 1848, Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. I, pp. 21-65, Moscow, 1959.

arose in France between all the progressive elements and the militarists over a trial in which the verdict had been rendered on the basis of forged evidence.<sup>40</sup> Hence, it is our bounden duty to explain to the proletariat every liberal and democratic protest, to widen and support it, with the active participation of the workers, be it a conflict between the Zemstvo and the Ministry of the Interior, between the nobility and the police régime of the Orthodox Church, between statisticians and the bureaucrats, between peasants and the "Zemstvo" officials, between religious sects and the rural police, etc, etc. Those who contemptuously turn up their noses at the slight importance of some of these conflicts, or at the "hopelessness" of the attempts to fan them into a general conflagration, do not realise that all-sided political agitation is a focus in which the vital interests of political education of the proletariat coincide with the vital interests of social development as a whole, of the entire people, that is, of all its democratic elements. It is our direct duty to concern ourselves with every liberal question, to determine our Social-Democratic attitude towards it, to help the proletariat to take an active part in its solution and to accomplish the solution in its own, proletarian way. Those who refrain from concerning themselves in this way (whatever their intentions) in actuality leave the liberals in command, place in their hands the political education of the workers, and concede the hegemony in the political struggle to elements which, in the final analysis, are leaders of bourgeois democracy.

The class character of the Social-Democratic movement must not be expressed in the restriction of our tasks to the direct and immediate needs of the "labour movement pure and simple". It must be expressed in our leadership of every aspect and every manifestation of the great struggle for liberation that is being waged by the proletariat, the only truly revolutionary class in modern society. Social-Democracy must constantly and unswervingly spread the influence of the labour movement to all spheres of the social

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and political life of contemporary society. It must lead, not only the economic, but also the political, struggle of the proletariat. It must never for a moment lose sight of our ultimate goal, but always carry on propaganda for the proletarian ideology – the theory of scientific socialism, *viz*, Marxism – guard it against distortion, and develop it further. We must untiringly combat any and every bourgeois ideology, regardless of the fashionable and striking garb in which it may drape itself. The socialists we have mentioned above depart from the “class” point of view also because, and to the extent that, they remain indifferent to the task of combating the “criticism of Marxism”. Only the blind fail to see that this “criticism” has taken root more rapidly in Russia than in any other country, and has been more enthusiastically taken up by Russian liberal propaganda than by any other, precisely for the reason that it is one of the elements of the bourgeois (now consciously bourgeois) democracy now information in Russia.

It is particularly in regard to the political struggle that the “class point of view” demands that the proletariat *give an impetus* to every democratic movement. The political demands of working-class democracy do not differ in principle from those of bourgeois democracy, they differ only in degree. In the struggle for economic emancipation, for the socialist revolution, the proletariat stands on a basis different in principle and it stands alone (the small producer will come to its aid only to the extent that he enters, or is preparing to enter, its ranks). In the struggle for political liberation, however, we have many allies, towards whom we must not remain indifferent. But while our allies in the bourgeois-democratic camp, in struggling for liberal reforms, will always glance back and seek to adjust matters so that they will be able, as before, “to eat well, sleep peace fully, and live merrily” at other people’s expense, the proletariat will march forward to the end, without looking back. While the confreres of R. N. S. (author of the preface to Witte’s Memorandum) haggle with the government over the rights of the

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authoritative Zemstvo, or over a constitution, we will struggle for the democratic republic. We will not forget, however, that if we want to push someone forward, we must continuously keep our hands on that someone's shoulders. The party of the proletariat must learn to catch every liberal just at the moment when he is prepared to move forward an inch, and make him move forward a yard. If he is obdurate, we will go forward without him and over him.

## **Leo Tolstoy as the mirror of the Russian revolution<sup>41</sup>**

To identify the great artist with the revolution which he has obviously failed to understand, and from which he obviously stands aloof, may at first sight seem strange and artificial. A mirror which does not reflect things correctly could hardly be called a mirror. Our revolution, however, is an extremely complicated thing. Among the mass of those who are directly making and participating in it there are many social elements which have also obviously not understood what is taking place and which also stand aloof from the real historical tasks with which the course of events has confronted them. And if we have before us a really great artist, he must have reflected in his work at least some of the essential aspects of the revolution.

The legal Russian press, though its pages teem with articles, letters and comments on Tolstoy's eightieth birthday, is least of all interested in analysing his works from the standpoint of the character of the Russian revolution and its motive forces. The whole of this press is steeped to nausea in hypocrisy, hypocrisy of a double kind: official and liberal. The former is the crude hypocrisy of the

venal hack who was ordered yesterday to hound Leo Tolstoy, and today to show that Tolstoy is a patriot, and to try to observe the decencies before the eyes of Europe. That the hacks of this kind have been paid for their screeds is common knowledge and they cannot deceive anybody. Much more refined and, therefore, much more pernicious and dangerous is liberal hypocrisy. To listen to the Cadet Balalaikins<sup>42</sup> of *Rech*, one would think that their sympathy for Tolstoy is of the most complete and ardent kind. Actually, their calculated declamations and pompous phrases about the "great seeker after God" are false from beginning to end, for no Russian liberal believes in Tolstoy's God, or sympathises with Tolstoy's criticism of the existing social order. He associates himself with a popular name in order to increase his political capital, in order to pose as a leader of the nation-wide opposition; he seeks, with the din and thunder of claptrap, to *drown* the demand for a straight and clear answer to the question: what are the glaring contradictions of "Tolstoyism" due to, and what shortcomings and weaknesses of our revolution do they express?

The contradictions in Tolstoy's works, views, doctrines, in his school, are indeed glaring.

On the one hand, we have the great artist, the genius who has not only drawn incomparable pictures of Russian life but has made first-class contributions to world literature. On the other hand we have the landlord obsessed with Christ.

On the one hand, the remarkably powerful, forthright and sincere protest against social falsehood and hypocrisy; and on the other, the "Tolstoyan", ie, the jaded, hysterical sniveller called the Russian intellectual, who publicly beats his breast and wails: "I am a bad wicked man, but I am practising moral self-perfection; I don't eat meat any more, I now eat rice cutlets."

On the one hand, merciless criticism of capitalist exploitation, exposure of government outrages, the farcical courts and the state administration, and unmasking of the profound contradictions be-



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tween the growth of wealth and achievements of civilisation and the growth of poverty, degradation and misery among the working masses. On the other, the crackpot preaching of submission, "resist not evil" with violence.

On the one hand, the most sober realism, the tearing away of all and sundry masks; on the other, the preaching of one of the most odious things on earth, namely, religion, the striving to replace officially appointed priests by priests who will serve from moral conviction, ie, to cultivate the most refined and, therefore, particularly disgusting clericalism. Verily:

Thou art a pauper, yet thou art abundant,  
Thou art mighty, yet thou art impotent –  
– Mother Russia!\*

That Tolstoy, owing to these contradictions, could not possibly understand either the working-class movement and its role in the struggle for socialism, or the Russian revolution, goes without saying. But the contradictions in Tolstoy's views and doctrines are not accidental; they express the contradictory conditions of Russian life in the last third of the nineteenth century. The patriarchal countryside, only recently emancipated from serfdom, was literally given over to the capitalist and the tax-collector to be fleeced and plundered. The ancient foundations of peasant economy and peasant life, foundations that had really held for centuries, were broken up for scrap with extraordinary rapidity. And the contradictions in Tolstoy's views must be appraised not from the standpoint of the present-day working-class movement and present-day socialism (such an appraisal is, of course, needed, but it is not enough), but from the standpoint of protest against advancing capitalism, against the ruining of the masses, who are being dis-

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\* From the poem "Who Can Be Happy and Free in Russia" by N. A. Nekrasov.

possessed of their land – a protest which had to arise from the patriarchal Russian countryside. Tolstoy is absurd as a prophet who has discovered new nostrums for the salvation of mankind – and therefore the foreign and Russian “Tolstoyans” who have thought to convert the weakest side of his doctrine into a dogma, are not worth speaking of.

Tolstoy is great as the spokesman of the ideas and sentiments that emerged among the millions of Russian peasants at the time the bourgeois revolution was approaching in Russia. Tolstoy is original, because the sum total of his views, taken as a whole, happens to express the specific features of our revolution as a *peasant* bourgeois revolution. From this point of view, the contradictions in Tolstoy’s views are indeed a mirror of those contradictory conditions in which the peasantry had to play their historical part in our revolution. On the one hand, centuries of feudal oppression and decades of accelerated post-Reform<sup>43</sup> pauperisation piled up mountains of hate, resentment, and desperate determination. The striving to sweep away completely the official church, the landlords and the landlord government, to destroy all the old forms and ways of landownership, to clear the land, to replace the police-class state by a community of free and equal small peasants – this striving is the keynote of every historical step the peasantry has taken in our revolution; and, undoubtedly, the message of Tolstoy’s writings conforms to this peasant striving far more than it does to abstract “Christian Anarchism”, as his “system” of views is sometimes appraised.

On the other hand the peasantry, striving towards new ways of life, had a very crude, patriarchal, semi-religious idea of what kind of life this should be, by what struggle could liberty be won, what leaders it could have in this struggle, what was the attitude of the bourgeoisie and the bourgeois intelligentsia towards the interests of peasant revolution, why the forcible overthrow of tsarist rule was needed in order to abolish landlordism. The whole past life of

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the peasantry had taught it to hate the landowner and the official, but it did not, and could not, teach it where to seek an answer to all these questions. In our Revolution<sup>20</sup> a minor part of the peasantry really did fight, did organise to some extent for this purpose; and a very small part indeed rose up in arms to exterminate its enemies, to destroy the tsar's servants and protectors of the landlords. Most of the peasantry wept and prayed, moralised and dreamed, wrote petitions and sent "pleaders" – quite in the vein of Leo Tolstoy! And, as always happens in such cases, the effect of this Tolstoyan abstention from politics, this Tolstoyan renunciation of politics, this lack of interest in and understanding of politics, was that only a minority followed the lead of the class-conscious revolutionary proletariat, while the majority became the prey of those unprincipled, servile, bourgeois intellectuals who under the name of Cadets hastened from a meeting of Trudoviks to Stolypin's ante room, and begged, haggled, reconciled and promised to reconcile – until they were kicked out with a military jack-boot. Tolstoy's ideas are a mirror of the weakness, the short comings of our peasant revolt, a reflection of the flabbiness of the patriarchal countryside and of the hidebound cowardice of the "enterprising muzhik".

Take the soldiers' insurrections in 1905-06. In social composition these men who fought in our revolution were partly peasants and partly proletarians. The proletarians were in the minority; therefore the movement in the armed forces does not even approximately show the same nation-wide solidarity, the same party consciousness, as were displayed by the proletariat, which became Social-Democratic as if by the wave of a hand. Yet there is nothing more mistaken than the view that the insurrections in the armed forces failed because no officers had led them. On the contrary, the enormous progress the revolution had made since the time of the Narodnaya Volya<sup>6</sup> was shown precisely by the fact that the "grey herd" rose in arms against their superiors, and it was this self-dependency of theirs that so frightened the liberal landlords

and the liberal officers. The common soldier fully sympathised with the peasants' cause; his eyes lit up at the very mention of land. There was more than one case when authority in the armed forces passed to the mass of the rank and file, but determined use of this authority was hardly made at all; the soldiers wavered; after a couple of days, in some cases a few hours, after killing some hated officer, they released the others who had been arrested, parleyed with the authorities and then faced the firing squad, or bared their backs for the birch, or put on the yoke again – quite in the vein of Leo Tolstoy!

Tolstoy reflected the pent-up hatred, the ripened striving for a better lot, the desire to get rid of the past – and also the immature dreaming, the political inexperience, the revolutionary flabbiness. Historical and economic conditions explain both the inevitable beginning of the revolutionary struggle of the masses and their unpreparedness for the struggle, their Tolstoyan non-resistance to evil, which was a most serious cause of the defeat of the first revolutionary campaign.

It is said that beaten armies learn well. Of course, revolutionary classes can be compared with armies only in a very limited sense. The development of capitalism is hourly changing and intensifying the conditions which roused the millions of peasants – united by their hatred for the feudalist landlords and their government – for the revolutionary-democratic struggle. Among the peasantry themselves the growth of exchange, of the rule of the market and the power of money is steadily ousting old-fashioned patriarchalism and the patriarchal Tolstoyan ideology. But there is one gain from the first years of the revolution and the first reverses in mass revolutionary struggle about which there can be no doubt. It is the mortal blow struck at the former softness and flabbiness of the masses. The lines of demarcation have become more distinct. The cleavage of classes and parties has taken place. Under the hammer blows of the lessons taught by Stolypin,<sup>44</sup> and with undeviat-

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ing and consistent agitation by the revolutionary Social-Democrats not only the socialist proletariat but also the democratic masses of the peasantry will inevitably advance from their midst more and more steeled. fighters who will be less capable of falling into our historical sin of Tolstoyism!

## V I L E N I N

## Two letters to A M Gorky

### I

Dear Alexei Maximovich!<sup>45</sup>

Whatever are you doing? This is simply terrible, it really is!

Yesterday I read your reply in *Rech* to the “howling” over Dostoyevsky,<sup>46</sup> and was preparing to rejoice, but today the liquidators’ paper arrives, and *in it there is a paragraph of your article* which was not in *Rech*.

This paragraph runs as follows:

And ‘god-seeking’<sup>47</sup> should be *for the time being* [only for the time being?] put aside – it is a useless occupation: it’s no use seeking where there is nothing to be found. Unless you sow, you cannot reap. You have no God, you have not *yet* [yet!] created him. Gods are not sought – *they are created*; people do not invent life, they create it.

So it turns out that you are against “god-seeking” only “for the time being”!! It turns out that you are against god-seeking *only* in order to replace it by god-building!!

Well, isn't it horrible that such a thing should appear in *your* article?

God-seeking differs from god-building or god-creating or god-making, etc, no more than a yellow devil differs from a blue devil. To talk about god-seeking, not in order to declare against *all* devils and gods, against every ideological necrophily (all worship of a divinity is necrophily – be it the cleanest, most ideal, not sought-out but built-up divinity, it's all the same), but to prefer a blue devil to a yellow one is a hundred times worse than not saying anything about it at all.

In the freest countries, in countries where it is *quite* out of place to appeal "to democracy, to the people, to public opinion and science", in such countries (America, Switzerland and so forth) particular zeal is applied to render the people and the workers obtuse with just this very idea of a clean, spiritual, built-up god. Just because any religious idea, any idea of any god at all, any flirtation even with a god, is the most inexpressible foulness, particularly tolerantly (and often even favourably) accepted by the *democratic* bourgeoisie – for that very reason it is the most dangerous foulness, the most shameful "infection". A million *physical* sins, dirty tricks, acts of violence and infections are much more easily discovered by the crowd, and therefore are much less dangerous, than the *nubile*, spiritual idea of god, dressed up in the most attractive "ideological" costumes. The Catholic priest corrupting young girls (about whom I have just read by chance in a German newspaper) is *much less* dangerous, precisely to "democracy", than a priest without his robes, a priest without crude religion, an ideologically equipped and democratic priest preaching the creation and the invention of a god. For it is *easy* to expose, condemn and expel the first priest, while the second *cannot* be expelled so simply; to expose the latter is 1,000 times more difficult, and not a single "frail and pitifully wavering" philistine will agree to "condemn" him.

And you, knowing the "frailty and pitiful wavering" of the (Russian:



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why Russian? Is the Italian any better??) *philistine* soul, confuse that soul with the sweetest of poisons, most effectively disguised in lollipops and all kinds of gaily-coloured wrappings!!

Really, it is terrible.

Enough of self-humiliation, which is our substitute for self-criticism.

And isn't god-building the *worst* form of self-humiliation?? Everyone who sets about building up a *God*, or who even merely tolerates such activity, *humiliates* himself in the worst possible way, because instead of "deeds" he is *actually* engaged in self-contemplation, self-admiration and, moreover, such a man "contemplates" the dirtiest, most stupid, most slavish features or traits of his "ego", deified by god-building.

From the point of view, not of the individual, but of society, *all* god-building is precisely the *fond self-contemplation* of the thick-wilted philistine, the frail man in the street, the dreamy "self-humiliation" of I he vulgar petty bourgeois, "exhausted and in despair" (as you condescended to say very truly about the *soul*: only you should have said, not "the Russian", but the *petty-bourgeois*, for the Jewish, the Italian, the English varieties are all *one and the same devil*; stinking philistinism everywhere is equally disgusting – but "democratic philistinism", occupied in ideological necrophily, is particularly disgusting).

Reading your article over and over again, and *trying to discover* where this *slip* of your tongue could come from, I am at a loss. What does it mean? A relic of the "Confession", which *you yourself* did not approve?? Or its echo??

Or something different: for example, an unsuccessful attempt to *bend back* to the viewpoint of *democracy in general*, instead of the viewpoint of the *proletariat*? Perhaps it was in order to talk with "democracy in general" that you decided (excuse the expression)

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to indulge in baby-talk? Perhaps it was "for a popular exposition" to the *philistines* that you decided to accept for a moment *their*, the philistines', prejudices??

But then that is a *wrong* approach, in all senses and in all respects!

I wrote above that in *democratic* countries it would be *quite* out of place for a proletarian writer to appeal "to democracy, to the people, to public opinion and science". Well, but what about us in Russia?? Such an appeal is *not quite* appropriate, because it also in some ways flatters the prejudices of the philistines. A kind of general appeal, general to the point of vagueness – even Izgoyev of *Russkaya Mys*<sup>48</sup> will sign it with *both hands*. Why then select watchwords which *you* distinguish perfectly well from those of Izgoyev, but which the *reader* will not be able to distinguish?? Why throw a democratic veil over the question for the reader, instead of *clearly* distinguishing the *petty bourgeois* (frail, pitifully wavering, exhausted, despairing, self-contemplating, god-contemplating, god-building, god-indulging, self-humiliating, *uncomprehendingly-anarchistic* – wonderful word!! – et cetera, et cetera)

– from the *proletarians* (who know how to be of good cheer not only in words, and who are able to distinguish the "science and public opinion" of the *bourgeoisie* from their own, bourgeois democracy from proletarian democracy)?

Why do you do this?

It's damnably disappointing.

Yours,

V. I.

P.S. We sent you the novel by registered book post. Did you receive it?

P.P.S. Get as good medical treatment as you can, please, so that

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you can travel in the winter, without colds (it's dangerous in the winter).

Yours,  
*V. Ulyanov*

## II

. . .<sup>49</sup> On the question of god, the god-like and everything connected with it, there is a contradiction in your position – the same, I think, which I used to point out in our talks when we last met in Capri. You broke (or appeared to break) with the *Vperyod*<sup>50</sup> people, without having noticed the ideological basis of “Vperyodism”.

The same has happened now. You are “most vexed”, you “cannot understand how the words ‘for the time being’ crept in” – that is how you write – and yet at the same time you defend the idea of God and god-building.

“God is the complex of those ideas, worked out by the tribe, the nation, mankind, which awaken and organise social feelings, having as their object to link the individual, with society and to bridle zoological individualism.”

This theory is obviously connected with the theory or theories of Bogdanov and Lunacharsky.

And it is clearly wrong and clearly reactionary. Like the Christian socialists (the worst variety of “socialism”, and its worst distortion), you make use of a method which (despite your best intentions) repeats the hocus-pocus of the priests: you eliminate from

the idea of God everything about it that is *historical and drawn from real life* (tilth, prejudices, sanctified ignorance and degradation, on the one hand, serfdom and monarchy, on the other), and instead of the reality of history and life (here is substituted in the idea of God a gentle petty-bourgeois phrase (God = "ideas which awaken and organise social feelings").

Your wish in so doing is to say something "good and kind", to point out "truth and justice" and the like. But your good wish remains your personal affair, a subjective "innocent desire". Once you have written it down, it goes out among the *masses*, and its *significance* is determined not by your good wishes, but by the *relationship of social forces*, the objective relationship of classes. By virtue of that relationship *it turns out* (irrespective of your will and independently of your consciousness) that you have put a good colour and a sugary coating on the idea of the clericals, the Purishkeviches, Nicholas II and the Struves,<sup>27</sup> since in *practice* the idea of God helps *them* keep the people in slavery. By beautifying the idea of god, you have beautified the chains with which they fetter ignorant workers and peasants. There – the priests and Co. will say – what a good and profound idea this is (the idea of God), as even "your" leaders recognise, Messrs. democrats: and we (the priests and Co.) serve that idea.

It is untrue that god is the complex of ideas which awaken and organise social feelings. That is Bogdanov *idealism*, which suppresses the material origin of ideas. God is (in history and in real life) first of all the complex of ideas generated by the brutish subjection of man both by external nature and by the class yoke – ideas which *consolidate* that subjection, *lull to sleep* the class struggle. There was a time in history when, in spite of such an origin and such a real meaning of the idea of God, the struggle of democracy and of the proletariat went on in the form of a struggle of *one religious* idea against another.

But that time, too, is long past.

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Nowadays both in Europe and in Russia *any*, even the most refined and best-intentioned defence or justification of the idea of God is a justification of reaction.

Your entire definition is reactionary and bourgeois, through and through. God = the complex of ideas which "awaken and organise social feelings, having as their object to link the individual with society and to bridle zoological individualism.

Why is this reactionary? Because it falsely colours the idea of "bridling" zoology preached by priests and feudals. In reality, "zoological individualism" was bridled not by the idea of God, it was bridled both by the primitive herd and the primitive community. The idea of God *always* put to sleep and blunted the "social feelings", replacing the living by the dead, being *always* the idea of slavery (the worst, hopeless slavery). Never has the idea of God "linked the individual with society": it has always *tied* the oppressed *classes hand and foot* with faith in the *divinity* of the oppressors.

Your definition is bourgeois (and not scientific, not historical) because it operates with sweeping, general, "Robinson Crusoe" conceptions in general, not with definite *classes* in a definite historical epoch.

The idea of God among the Zyrian savages, etc (including semi-savages) is one thing. With Struve and Co. it is something quite different. In both cases class domination supports this idea (and this idea supports it). The "popular" conception of God and the divine is "popular" ignorance, degradation, darkness, just like the "popular conception" of the tsar, the devil and dragging wives by the hair. I completely fail to understand how you can call the "popular conception" of God "democratic".

It is untrue that philosophical idealism "always has in view only the interests of the individual". Did Descartes have the interests of the individual more in mind than Gassendi? Or Fichte and Hegel as compared with Feuerbach?

That "god-building is the process of the further development and

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accumulation of social elements in the individual and society" is simply terrible!! If there were freedom in Russia, the entire bourgeoisie would praise you to the skies for such things, for such sociology and theology of a purely bourgeois type and character.

Well, that's enough for the time being: this letter is too long as it is. Once again, I shake your hand and wish you good health.

Yours,  
*V. I.*

## **On communist and religious ethics<sup>52</sup>**

. . . I first of all shall deal here with the question of communist ethics.

You must train yourselves to be Communists. It is the task of the Youth League to organise its practical activities in such a way that, by learning, organising, uniting and fighting, its members shall train both themselves and all those who look to it for leadership; it should train Communists. The entire purpose of training, educating and teaching the youth of today should be to imbue them with communist ethics.

But is there such a thing as communist ethics? Is there such a thing as communist morality? Of course, there is. It is often suggested that we have no ethics of our own; very often the bourgeoisie accuse us Communists of rejecting all morality. This is a method of confusing the issue, of throwing dust in the eyes of the workers and peasants.

In what sense do we reject ethics, reject morality?

In the sense given to it by the bourgeoisie, who based ethics on God's commandments. On this point we, of course, say that we do not believe in God, and that we know perfectly well that the clergy, the landowners and the bourgeoisie invoked the name of God so

as to further their own interests as exploiters. Or, instead of basing ethics on the commandments of morality, on the commandments of God, they based it on idealist or semi-idealist phrases, which always amounted to something very similar to God's commandments.

We reject any morality based on extra-human and extra-class concepts. We say that this is deception, dupery, stultification of the workers and peasants in the interests of the landowners and capitalists.

We say that our morality is entirely subordinated to the interests of the proletariat's class struggle. Our morality stems from the interests of the class struggle of the proletariat.

The old society was based on the oppression of all the workers and peasants by the landowners and capitalists. We had to destroy all that, and overthrow them but to do that we had to create unity. That is something that God cannot create.

This unity could be provided only by the factories, only by a proletariat trained and roused from its long slumber. Only when that class was formed did a mass movement arise which has led to what we have now – the victory of the proletarian revolution in one of the weakest of countries, which for three years has been repelling the onslaught of the bourgeoisie of the whole world. We can see how the proletarian revolution is developing all over the world. On the basis of experience, we now say that only the proletariat could have created the solid force which the disunited and scattered peasantry are following and which has withstood all onslaughts by the exploiters. Only this class can help the working masses unite, rally their ranks and conclusively defend, conclusively consolidate and conclusively build up a communist society.

That is why we say that to us there is no such thing as a morality that stands outside human society; that is a fraud. To us morality is subordinated to the interests of the proletariat's class struggle

. . .







## NOTES

1. This introduction is reproduced from the Little Lenin Library, first published in New York in 1933.  
[scribd.com/doc/106121727/2/WHAT-IS-RELIGION-GOOD-FOR](https://www.scribd.com/doc/106121727/2/WHAT-IS-RELIGION-GOOD-FOR)

The translations of the articles that follow are not the same as those that appeared in that collection. Instead, we have used the translations given in the English *Collected Works* printed by Progress Publishers in Moscow.

Notes are taken from the Moscow edition except those indicated as originating in the Little Lenin Library. We have also included some useful organisation and biographical information from the *Encyclopedia of Marxism* at [marxists.org](http://marxists.org).

p. 5

2. The *Programme of the Communist International*, Workers' Library Publishers, New York, p. 53.

In the section entitled: "The Dynamic Laws of Capitalism and the Epoch of Industrial Capital", the programme analyses "the incapacity of the bourgeoisie, notwithstanding the enormous achievements of the natural sciences, to create a synthetically scientific philosophy, and the growth of ideological, mystical and religious superstition". (p. 11.) The introduction to the programme expressly declares: "Advocating and propagating the dialectical materialism of Marx and Engels and employing it as a revolutionary method of conceiving reality, with the view to the revolutionary transformation of this reality, the Communist International wages an active struggle against all forms of bourgeois philosophy . . ." (p. 8.)

p. 10

3. First published in *Novaya Zhizn*, 3 December 1905. Translation taken from V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 10, pp. 83-87, Progress Publishers, 1965, Moscow.  
[marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1905/dec/03.htm](http://marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1905/dec/03.htm)  

p. 11
4. This aphorism was employed by Marx in his criticism of Hegel's *Philosophy of Law*. After the October Revolution it was engraved on the walls of the former City Hall in Moscow, opposite the famous shrine of the Iberian Virgin Mother. This shrine has now been removed. – *LLL Ed.*  

p. 12
5. In tsarist Russia, the religion one professed was included in the particulars contained in official documents, passports, marriage certificates, etc. – *LLL Ed.*  

p. 13
6. *R.S.D.L.P.* – The original name of the party of which (after 1903) the Bolsheviks became the left wing. Ultimately the division became a complete split and the Bolsheviks went forward to become the Communist Party of the U.S.S.R. – *LLL Ed.*  

p. 14
7. *Black-Hundreds* – Members of the so-called League of the Russian People, organised by the tsarist police and patronised by "High Society". In the main the League consisted of hooligans and the dregs of society who were set loose by the police against revolutionaries, students, Jews and other national minorities. They perpetrated the savage pogroms on the Jews. – *LLL Ed.*  

p. 16
8. First published in *Proletary*, No. 45, 26 May 1909. Translation taken from V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 15, pp. 402-413, Progress Publishers, 1973, Moscow.  
[marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1909/may/13.htm](http://marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1909/may/13.htm)  

p. 17
9. *Ludwig Feuerbach* (1804-1872) – a German philosopher, who first was a follower of Hegel and later became a materialist. In his *Essence of Christianity* he sought to prove that the domination of religion over man had come to an end. Man's highest ideal, he argued, was inherent in himself and in life on earth. Outside of this, there is no other life. In his conception of god, man merely idealised his own being. – *LLL Ed.*  

p. 17
10. In his introduction to Marx's *Civil War in France*, Engels wrote that the Commune "decreed reforms which the Republican bourgeoisie had failed to

pass only out of cowardice, but which provided a necessary basis for the free activity of the working class – such as the adoption of the principle that *in relation to the state*, religion is a purely private affair . . .” (1891)

p. 20

11. The compilers of the great French *Encyclopaedia*, edited by Diderot and d’Alembert in 1751-72. This scientific work was written from the materialist point of view. – *LLL Ed.*

p. 21

12. At that time the Party permitted those holding different shades of opinion to form groups. – *LLL Ed.*

p. 25

13. *Vekhi (Landmarks)* – a Cadet (liberal bourgeois) collection of articles by N. Berdayev, S. Bulgakov, P. Struve, M. Herschensohn and other representatives of the counter-revolutionary liberal bourgeoisie, published in Moscow in 1909, which reflected the reactionary mystical views that were prevalent among the intellectuals in the period of reaction, following the Revolution of 1905. – *LLL Ed.*

In their articles on the Russian intelligentsia these writers tried to discredit the revolutionary-democratic traditions of the best representatives of the Russian people, including Belinsky and Chernyshevsky; they vilified the revolutionary movement of 1905 and thanked the tsarist government for having, “with its bayonets and jails”, saved the bourgeoisie from “the popular wrath”. The writers called upon the intelligentsia to serve the autocracy.

Lenin compared the programme of the *Vekhi* symposium in point of both philosophy and journalism with that of the Black-Hundred newspaper *Moskovskiy Vedomosti*, calling the symposium “an *encyclopaedia of liberal renegacy*”, “nothing but a flood of reactionary mud poured on democracy”.

p. 26

14. *Duma* – The Russian Parliament. As a result of the 1905 Revolution the tsar was compelled to establish a Parliament or Duma. The first Duma, which had restricted powers, was convened in 1906. Coming into conflict with the government it was dissolved. Another Duma was convened in 1907 which met with the same fate. A third Duma was convened in 1907 on a still more restricted franchise which secured an overwhelming majority for the landlords and capitalists. This Duma continued to exist until its term of office expired. The Fourth Duma which succeeded it was dispersed by the Revolution of 1917. – *LLL Ed.*

p. 28

15. First published in *Sotsial-Demokrat*, No. 6, 17 June 1909. Translation taken from V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 15, pp. 414-424, Progress Publishers, 1973.  
[marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1909/jun/04.htm](http://marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1909/jun/04.htm)  
 p. 31
16. *Holy Synod* – the Supreme Body of the Orthodox Church, the members of which were appointed by the tsar on the recommendation of the Procurator of the Holy Synod – the Minister in charge of the affairs of the church. – *LLL Ed.*  
 p. 31
17. *Old Believers* – a religious sect which clung to the old dogmas and ritual and which split off from the Orthodox Greek Church in the eighteenth century. It frequently came into conflict with the tsarist government and it took an active part in the rebellions of Stenka Razin and Pugachev. In later days it was constantly persecuted by the government and the church. – *LLL Ed.*  
 p. 31
18. *Cadet* – a contraction of the words Constitutional-Democrats, the designation of the bourgeois Liberal Party in the Duma. – *LLL Ed.*  
 p. 32
19. *Octobrists* – a counter-revolutionary party of the right wing of the liberal bourgeoisie (big industrialists and big landlords) who were content to accept the restricted reforms offered in the tsar's manifesto of October, 1905. – *LLL Ed.*  
 p. 34
20. Lenin refers here to the revolution of 1905-6. – *LLL Ed.*  
 p. 34, p. 67
21. *Golos Moskvyy (Voice of Moscow)* – a daily newspaper, organ of the Octobrists. Published in Moscow from 1905 to 1915.  
 p. 36
22. *Narodnaya Volya (People's Will)* – the secret political organisation of Narodnik-terrorists, formed in August 1879 following the split in the Narodnik organisation *Zemlya i Volya (Land and Freedom)* (see note 14).

*Narodnaya Volya* was headed by an Executive Committee which included A. I. Zhelyabov, A. A. Kvyatkovsky, A. D. Mikhailov, N. A. Morozov, Sophia Perovskaya, Vera Figner, M. F. Frolenko, and others. While still adhering to Narodnik utopian-socialist ideas, *Narodnaya Volya* took up the political struggle, regarding the overthrow of the autocracy and the achievement of political freedom as a major aim. Its programme envisaged a "permanent popular representative body" elected by universal suffrage, the proclamation of democratic liberties, the transfer of the land to the people, and measures to put the

factories in the hands of the workers. "The Narodnaya Volya members," wrote Lenin, "made a step forward when they took up the political struggle, but they failed to connect it with socialism"

Narodnaya Volya fought heroically against the tsarist autocracy; guided by their erroneous theory of "active" heroes and a "passive" mass, they planned to remould society without the participation of the people, by their own efforts, through individual terrorism that would intimidate and disorganise the government. After the assassination of Alexander II on 1 March 1881, the government was able, by savage reprisals, death sentences, anti acts of provocation, to crush it out of existence. Repeated attempts to revive the organisation during the eighties ended in failure. Thus, in 1886 a group in the Narodnaya Volya tradition was formed by A. I. Ulyanov (elder brother of Lenin) and P. Y. Shevyryov; but after an unsuccessful attempt to assassinate Alexander III in 1887, the group was uncovered and its active members executed.

While criticising Narodnaya Volya's erroneous utopian programme, Lenin expressed great respect for its members' selfless struggle against tsarism and valued highly the technique of its underground activities and strictly centralised organisation.

p. 38, p. 67

23. *M.O. Menshikov* (1859-1919) – a reactionary journalist, one of the editors of the Black-Hundred newspaper *Novoye Vremya* (*New Times*).

p. 38

24. *Derzhimorda* – the name of a policeman in Gogol's comedy *The Inspector-General* typifying an insolent, brutal bully and oppressor.

p. 38

25. *Rech* (*Speech*) – the organ of the Constitutional Democratic Party.

p. 39

26. *Trodoviks* – a parliamentary group composed primarily of peasant deputies under the influence of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party. – *LLL Ed.*

p. 39

27. *Union of the Russian People* – the official title of the organisation of the Black Hundreds. – *LLL Ed.*

p. 39

28. First published in *Pod Znamenem Marksizma*, No. 3, 12 March 1922. Translation taken from V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, pp. 227-236, Progress Publishers, 1972, Moscow.

[marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1922/mar/12.htm](http://marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1922/mar/12.htm)

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29. *Pod Znamenem Marksizma (Under the Banner of Marxism)* - a philosophic and socioeconomic journal published monthly in Moscow from January 1922 until June 1944, except for the period from 1933 to 1935, when it appeared every two months.

The article printed here defined the journal's aims and programme. Prominent Soviet scholars and party figures were members of the editorial board. The editors in chief were A. M. Deborin (1926–30), M B. Mitin (1931–44), and M. T. Iovchuk (1944). Attracting the most outstanding Soviet scholars, the journal did much toward fulfilling the tasks Lenin had set for it: promoting militant materialism and atheism, combating all forms of idealism, and elaborating problems of materialist dialectics and the history of science and culture. The successor to *Pod Znamenem Marksizma* was the journal *Voprosy Filosofii (Problems of Philosophy)*, which began publication in 1947.

[Note taken from *The Great Soviet Encyclopedia*, 3rd edition, 1979. [encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/Pod+Znamenem+Marksizma](http://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/Pod+Znamenem+Marksizma)]

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30. *Materialism* – Those philosophical trends which emphasise the material world (the world outside of consciousness) as the foundation and determinant of thinking, especially in relation to the question of the origin of knowledge. Compare with idealism. For materialism, thoughts are “reflections” of matter, outside of Mind, which existed before and independently of thought. According to Marx:

“The chief defect of all hitherto existing materialism – that of Feuerbach included – is that the thing, reality, sensuousness, is conceived only in the form of the object or of contemplation, but not as sensuous human activity, practice, not subjectively.” [*Theses on Feuerbach.*]

Further Reading: Marx's essay on 'French Materialism and Communism' in *The Holy Family* as well as the epoch-making outline in Chapter one of *The German Ideology*, 'Materialism and Idealism', and Lenin's concise explanation in 'The Three Sources and Three Component Parts of Marxism'.

[Note taken from the online *Encyclopedia of Marxism*. [marxists.org/glossary/terms/m/a.htm#materialism](http://marxists.org/glossary/terms/m/a.htm#materialism)]

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31. *Georgi Valentinovich Plekhanov (1856-1918)*

Born 29 November 1856; died 17 May 1918. One of the founders of the first Marxist organisation in Russia: the Emancipation of Labour group, Plekhanov had at one time been a member of the Peoples Will party. After the dissolution of the Emancipation of Labour group, Plekhanov later joined the Russian



Social-Democratic party, becoming a Menshevik after the split in the party.

Plekhanov studied in the St. Petersburg Konstantinovskoe Military school, but later transferred to the Mining Institute. While attending university Plekhanov became involved with Narodnaia Volia, the People's Will revolutionary party. After his second year in school, Plekhanov dropped out to devote himself entirely to revolutionary work. Despite the Narodnaia Volia's aim towards the emancipation of the peasantry, Plekhanov focused on organising the emerging Russian proletariat; Plekhanov understood, with the help of the writings of Marx and Engels, that only through the proletariat could Socialism be achieved.

The political differences between Plekhanov and the People's Will group, in addition to its adoption of terrorism after several failed attempts to rally the peasantry to revolution, caused Plekhanov to split off from the group and form a smaller group continuing the old methodology of going to the people and agitating. By 1880, hounded by the Tsarist Okhrana (political police), Plekhanov fled Russia, not returning until the General Amnesty granted by the Provisional Government, in 1917.

In 1882, while in exile, Plekhanov rendered a Russian translation of the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, with a preface written by Marx and Engels, replacing the first translation that had been made in 1869 by the anarchist Bakunin, which had translation flaws. In 1883 Plekhanov helped form the first Russian Marxist organisation: the Emancipation of Labour group. Plekhanov renewed his struggle against Narodism, pointing out flaws in revolutionary appeals to the Russian peasantry alone, and flaws in the tactics of terrorism, being the opposite of mass action; a requirement for Socialist revolution.

Throughout the 1890s the influence of the Emancipation of Labour group on Russia's proletariat, through smuggling pamphlets into the country, grew, and the organisation built up a revolutionary following within Russia, enabling the party to be engaged in labour and union struggles in Russia. This upsurge of labour union activity, guided by the principles of Marxism which had been translated and distributed into Russia by the Emancipation of Labour group, gave rise to the Russian Social-Democratic Party, in 1898. The unity of this party Plekhanov would spend the rest of his life defending, save for when the Soviet Government was established, when he disavowed the left half of the party: the Bolsheviks.

In the late 1800s, one of Plekhanov's most passionate supporters was Vladimir Lenin. Lenin admired Plekhanov as the founder of Russian Marxism and strove to master the revolutionary activity and party building Plekhanov had begun. In 1900, when Lenin founded *Iskra*, Plekhanov wrote for the paper, and together, they supported proletarian revolution backed by Marxist theory while attacking revisionists such as Eduard Bernstein.

By the time of the split in the R.S.D.L.P., Lenin and Plekhanov came head to head, never to theoretically meet again. Plekhanov wrote a book entitled, *What is Not To Be Done*, explaining that the party should not split, that, "rather than having a split, it is better to put a bullet in one's brain". Lenin, on the other hand, emphasised the importance of a split, in order to develop the different trends and opinions in the revolutionary movement. The party did split during the Second Congress, forming the Bolshevik and Menshevik parties; of which Plekhanov ultimately sided with the Mensheviks.

Plekhanov theoretical position was that Russia's proletariat should be sent to the battlefields against the Russian autocracy, and after having overthrown it, they should work to establish a bourgeois government. This would allow the proletariat to grow to a great size, while so too did the bourgeoisie, allowing a bigger proletariat class to overthrow the now more powerful bourgeoisie, believing that the proletariat would eventually overpower the bourgeois government. Plekhanov stressed that Russia must pass through genuine capitalist development, in order for the conditions and tools to be built to enable a Socialist revolution to occur.

During the Russian Revolution of 1905, Plekhanov's theories were shown to be incorrect in many respects, most prominently in his negligence towards the revolutionary strength of Russia's peasantry. Instead of revising his theories in accord with the new developments of history, Plekhanov stuck to them and defended them amidst a now much larger chorus of attackers: his theories were rapidly being discarded into the dustbin of history.

During the first world war, Plekhanov took what Lenin dubbed a social-chauvinist stance: that German victory would be disastrous for the world's proletariat, but an entente victory would be much better for the world's proletariat. Plekhanov supported the world war, while millions of Russians were dying and refusing to fight, up until the Soviet government signed the treaty of Brest-Litovsk, which horrified Plekhanov.

By the 1917 February Revolution, Plekhanov returned to Russia and gave his support to the Provisional government, claiming it to have established a truly bourgeois government. By the time of the October Revolution, Plekhanov was outraged, and fought to usurp the Soviet government, believing it premature.

[Biographical note taken from the online *Encyclopedia of Marxism*.  
[marxists.org/glossary/people/p/l.htm#plekhanov](http://marxists.org/glossary/people/p/l.htm#plekhanov)]

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32. *Narodniks* – Originally the name for Russian revolutionaries of the 1860s and 1870s, *narodniki* meaning "going to the people".

The Narodniks formed in response to the growing conflicts between the

peasantry and the kulaks (capitalist farmers). The groups did not establish a concrete organisation, but shared the common general aim of overthrowing the monarchy and kulaks, and distributing land among the peasantry. The Narodniks generally believed that capitalism was not a necessary result of industrial development, and that it was possible to skip capitalism all together, and enter straight into a kind of Socialism.

The Narodniks believed the peasantry was the revolutionary class that would overthrow the monarchy, regarding the village commune as the embryo of Socialism. The Narodniks, however, did not believe that the peasantry would be able to achieve revolution on their own accord, but instead that history could only be made by heroes, outstanding personalities, who would lead an otherwise passive peasantry to revolution.

In the spring of 1874, the conflict between the kulaks and peasantry brought turbulence to Russia's urban centres, and the Narodnik intelligentsia left the cities for the villages, going "among the people" (hence their name), attempting to teach the peasantry their moral imperative to revolt. They found almost no support.

The Tsarist police (Okhrana) responded to the attempt with steeled repression: revolutionaries and peasant sympathisers were beaten, imprisoned and exiled. In 1877, the Narodniks came to their height with thousands of revolutionaries and peasants in support. The movement was again, however, swiftly and brutally crushed.

Responding to repression of open, spontaneous forms of organisation there-to taken, Russia's first organised revolutionary party formed: People's Will (*Narodnaia Volia*), with a new revolutionary programme suited to the extremely repressive conditions: terrorism led by a secret society (see note 8).

Although the People's Will Party did not last for long, later, the Socialist-Revolutionaries, Popular Socialists, and Trudoviks all shared similar tactics, ideas and practices originally set down by the Narodniks.

[Note taken from the online *Encyclopedia of Marxism*.  
[marxists.org/glossary/orgs/n/a.htm#narodniks](http://marxists.org/glossary/orgs/n/a.htm#narodniks)]

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33. *Joseph Dietzgen* (1828-88) – An entirely self-educated worker (his primary skill was as a tanner) who independently created dialectical materialism shortly after Marx & Engels. When he discovered the voluminous works of Marx and Engels, he became one of their most steadfast supporters.

Dietzgen's main philosophical contributions to Marxism was the thorough an exposition of epistemology. He explained consciousness as an ideal product of

matter (which he saw as eternally existing and moving, calling it the “universe”). He explained that natural and social being is the content of consciousness. Cognition, he went on, proceeds in sensory and abstract forms as a process of motion, from relative to absolute truth. This cognition he saw was an image of the world verified by that person’s experiences.

Dietzgen lived and worked in Germany, Russia, and the United States. He was strongly influenced by Feuerbach early on and was a militant atheist.

[Biographical note taken from the online *Encyclopedia of Marxism*.  
[marxists.org/glossary/people/d/i.htm#dietzgen-joseph](http://marxists.org/glossary/people/d/i.htm#dietzgen-joseph)]

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34. *Albert Einstein* (1879-1955) – Physicist, one of the most creative intellects in history, advanced a series of theories that proposed entirely new ways of thinking about space, time, matter and gravitation and revolutionised science and philosophy. Einstein also possessed a “passionate sense of social justice and social responsibility”, though his endeavours in this field were not as successful.

Born to the family of a small-scale industrialist in Germany, Einstein left school at 15 with poor grades in the humanities and without any diploma. His family had moved in the meantime however to Milan and the young Einstein went to join them and resumed his education in Switzerland, graduating in 1900 in physics and mathematics at the renowned Federal Polytechnic Academy in Zürich.

After graduating, Einstein became a Swiss citizen, and went to work as an examiner at the Swiss patent office in Bern. After publishing his PhD thesis for the University of Zürich, *A New Determination of Molecular Dimensions* early in 1905, only nine years after his first lesson in Physics, Einstein published four papers that transformed natural science forever.

*On the Motion – Required by the Molecular Kinetic Theory of Heat – of Small Particles Suspended in a Stationary Liquid*, applied statistical methods to demonstrate that the observed “wandering” of particles suspended in a liquid (“Brownian Motion”) was exactly as would be caused by the random impact of the unseen molecules of the liquid. This was the first experimental proof of the existence of the molecules, which Ernst Mach had regarded as no more than theoretical constructs.

*On a Heuristic Viewpoint Concerning the Production and Transformation of Light*, drew on Max Planck’s observation that the spectrum of black-body radiation corresponded to the spectrum that would be expected if the emission of light resulted from discrete events, Einstein postulated that light is composed

of individual quanta, in addition to exhibiting wave-like behaviour – a revolutionary approach to resolution of the seemingly inexplicable contradiction between Planck's observation and the accumulated mass of theory explaining optical phenomena on the basis of wave propagation. In the light of subsequent history it is often forgotten that it was Einstein who made the quantum revolution, despite the fact that he would later maintain fundamental disagreements with the mainstream proponents of quantum mechanics.

*On the Electrodynamics of Moving Bodies* put forward what became known as the Special Theory of Relativity (special because it did not consider accelerated bodies, but only bodies in constant or "inertial" motion). Physics had been struggling with the contradictions arising from the Michelson-Morley experiment which demonstrated that the speed of light from the Sun measured on the surface of the Earth did not depend on the motion of the earth towards or away from the Sun, or through the "ether". Lorentz had worked out that if the length of a body increased or decreased by a certain ratio according to its speed through the ether, then the result could be explained, but there was absolutely no rationale for such a dilation. Einstein's approach was entirely novel. Rather than questioning the results of the experiment or postulating new properties for the ether to explain the result, or calling into question Maxwell's laws of electro-dynamics which were only a few decades old, or even Newton's laws which were 200 years old, he assumed that all these laws were true and in fact postulated that all the laws of physics were *invariant with respect to transformation between inertial frames of reference* – ie, the laws of physics were unaffected by movement through a so-called ether, and called into question Euclid's 2,000 year-old geometry. He subjected to painstaking, meticulous examination, the practice of measurement of time intervals and distances on which our conception of time and space are based. Through a series of "thought-experiments" he demonstrated that Lorentz's transformation was a simple, geometric result of the measurement process. The chief result was therefore to show that space and time had to be conceived in terms of the measurement processes they were associated with, rather than as entities which could be grasped by pure reason, something which everyone from Euclid to Kant and beyond had taken to be the case.

*Does the Inertia of a Body Depend Upon Its Energy Content?* was an addendum to the Special Relativity paper which observed that the famous  $E = mc^2$  followed from the theory. The equivalence between energy (E) and mass (m) knocked yet another fixture away from the physical conception of the world, and would of course later have the most profound effect on world politics with its application to the production of nuclear energy and the atom bomb.

These papers were quickly recognised by physicists around the world for the revolutionary achievements that they were. He left the patent office and by 1914 was at the University of Berlin, continuing research towards his general theory which would deal with accelerated motion and, what amounted to the

same thing in Einstein's theory, gravitation, with only occasional requirements to lecture. His wife and two sons were trapped in Switzerland by the outbreak of the war and divorce followed a few years later. Mileva Maric was also a physicist and being married to the greatest physicist of all time was not an easy thing. While continuing with his work, Einstein distributed some pacifist literature to sympathisers in Berlin.

Einstein published the highly readable *Relativity: The Special and General Theory* in 1916, written for the general public and without complex mathematics, and later published the *The Foundation of the General Theory of Relativity* in which the approach he had developed in dealing with uniform motion was applied to accelerated motion. If you were falling in a lift, under the influence of gravity, then the appearance would be "weightlessness", but you would be falling faster and faster, and despite the fact that you can see nothing other than the lift which is falling with you, you can *feel* the falling. In other words, not only are the laws of physics *variant* with respect to accelerated motion, but acceleration is interchangeable with a gravitational field. The mathematical tool which allowed Einstein to deal with the complexities of this analysis was Riemann's Tensor Calculus – a "solution waiting for a problem". This allowed Einstein to express the fundamental laws of physics in an entirely new way. The "forces" which had dominated 18th and 19th century physics were no longer present – only forms of movement expressed in equations of incredible simplicity, from which Maxwell's and Newton's laws could be derived as special cases. It was Minkowski who later showed that they also allowed for the conception of a "4-dimensional distance", in which time figures as a 4th dimension but only by combination with the square root of minus one! Thus arose the mind-bending conceptions of "curved space-time"

The idea of large masses causing space-time to be curved could be verified by observing the bending of light rays during a total eclipse and in November 1919, the British Royal Society announced that an expedition which had been launched while the war was still raging had observed a solar eclipse and verified Einstein's predictions.

Despite the deteriorating political situation in Germany, Einstein continued to attack nationalism and militarism and spoke out against anti-semitism. Einstein toured around the world lecturing on his theory while under constant attack by Nazis at home. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1921. During the 1920s, quantum mechanics continued to develop with Niels Bohr and Werner Heisenberg among those at the centre of this work. The formal character of the relativity theory and the quantum theory were very different and it was difficult to see how the two lines of development could be unified. Einstein continued to seek a resolution through a Unified Field Theory (the first attempt at which he published in 1929), and this kind of approach continues to this day though the terms have changed considerably. However, Einstein retained up to the time of his death reservations about the interpre-

tation of the Schrödinger Wave equation, which determines the *probability* of quantum events. Einstein never accepted that such an interpretation could be regarded as a complete description of a physical system, that events could be fundamentally without cause.

*Further Reading on this matter:* 'Discussions with Einstein on Epistemological Problems in Atomic Physics' by N. Bohr and 'Einstein's Reply to Criticisms' by A. Einstein.

As the world situation deteriorated, Einstein spent more and more effort in promoting pacifism including the establishment of a War Resisters' International Fund. In a famous exchange of letters with the Austrian psychiatrist Sigmund Freud, Einstein speculated on the psychological basis for the war and fascism he saw around him. In a discussion of epistemology with the Indian poet, Rabindranath Tagore, Einstein defended basic philosophical materialist positions and in particular indicated support for the Pantheism of Spinoza.

When Hitler came to power in 1933, Einstein renounced his German citizenship and emigrated to England, moving to the U.S. in 1935 for a position at Princeton where he lived for the remainder of his life. From this time, Einstein urged Europe to arm and prepare for the inevitable war with Hitler. Most Western nations at this time regarded Hitler as a good anti-communist and Einstein's advocacy of war was given as little heed as had his pacifism.

In 1939, Niels Bohr told Einstein of Lise Meitner's success in splitting the uranium atom, and speculated on the prospect for the creation of an atom bomb. Though Einstein was sceptical, he was persuaded to write to President Roosevelt to begin atomic-bomb research. He was not included in the team that worked at Los Alamos and did not learn that a nuclear bomb had been made until Hiroshima was razed in 1945. He then joined those scientists seeking ways to prevent any future use of the bomb, his particular and urgent plea being the establishment of a world government under a constitution drafted by the U.S., Britain, and Russia.

By 1937, after years of failure advocating peaceful attempts to change the world, Einstein became involved with Communism. For the remainder of his life he would be a member, sponsor, or affiliate of at least 34 Communist organisations; and chaired three Communist organisations. Einstein spoke out against capitalism, and its concentration of power into the hands of the few, and stressed the need for a revolutionary overthrow of capitalist governments. Such ideas did not go unnoticed: the FBI began documenting his activities and speeches, and filed claims against his "communist-anarchist" politics, amassing into a 1,427 page report by the time of his death. In 1949, Einstein's agitation gained wider attention when he wrote 'Why Socialism?', explaining that the only way for humanity to rid itself of the evils of capitalism is through the adoption of Socialism. Einstein did not fully approve of

Socialism in the USSR, arguing on several points in letters to Soviet scientists that 'freedom' is necessary for Socialism to work.

Einstein's prime obsession remained with physics, however. He published his new version of the unified field in 1950, a most meticulous mathematical essay that was immediately criticised by most physicists as untenable. Compared with his renown of a generation earlier, Einstein was virtually neglected and ostracised in his later years; he said that he felt almost like a stranger in the world. His health deteriorated to the extent that he could no longer play the violin or sail his boat. On 18 April 1955, Einstein died in his sleep at Princeton Hospital.

[Biographical note taken from the online *Encyclopedia of Marxism*.  
<http://www.marxists.org/glossary/people/e/i.htm>

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35. First published as "Political Agitation and 'The Class Point of View'" in *Iskra*, No. 16, 1 February 1902. Translation taken from V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 5, pp. 337-343, Progress Publishers, 1961, Moscow.  
[marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1902/feb/01.htm](http://marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1902/feb/01.htm)

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36. *Oblomov* – the central character in the novel of that name by I. Goncharov. Oblomov was the personification of routine, stagnation, and inertia.

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37. The collection *Proletarskaya Borba (Proletarian Struggle)*, No. 1, was published by the Ural Social-Democratic Group in 1899. The authors, who espoused "Economist" views, denied the necessity of establishing an independent working-class political party and believed that a political revolution could be accomplished by means of a general strike, without the preliminary organisation and preparation of the masses and without an armed uprising.

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38. *The Social-Democratic Workers' Library* – a series of pamphlets published illegally in Vilno and St. Petersburg in 1900-01.

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39. The reference is to the general strike of students organised in the winter of 1901-02. Some 30,000 students took part in the strike.

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40. Lenin refers to the case of Dreyfus, a French General Staff officer, a Jew, who, in 1894, was court-martialled and sentenced to life imprisonment on an obviously trumped-up charge of espionage and high treason. That provocative trial was organised by French reactionary circles. The general movement for



the defence of Dreyfus that developed in France exposed the corruption of the court and sharpened the struggle between republicans and royalists. In 1899 Dreyfus was pardoned and released. It was not until 1906, after a fresh examination of the case, that Dreyfus was rehabilitated.

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41. First published in *Proletary*, No. 35, 11 September 1908. Translation taken from V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 15, pp. 202-209, Progress Publishers, 1973, Moscow.  
[marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1908/sep/11.htm](http://marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1908/sep/11.htm)

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42. *Balalaikin* – a character in Saltykov-Shchedrin's *A Modern Idyll*; a liberal wind-bag, adventurer and liar.

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43. *Reform* – ie, the emancipation of the serfs, which really led to the ruin of the peasantry. – *LLL Ed.*

p. 66

44. *Pyotr Stolypin* - As prime minister under Nicholas II, he was instrumental in crushing the revolution of 1905-06 and drowning it in blood. – *LLL Ed.*

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45. Written on 13 or 14 November 1913. Sent from Cracow to Capri. First published in *Pravda*, No. 51, 2 March 1924. Translation taken from V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 35, pp. 121-124, Progress Publishers, 1976, Moscow.  
[marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1913/nov/00mg.htm](http://marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1913/nov/00mg.htm)

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46. Lenin's letter was prompted by the appearance in *Russkoye Slovo (Russian Word)* No. 219, 22 September 1913, of an article by Gorky "On the Karamazov Attitude", protesting against the Moscow Art Theatre's staging of Dostoyevsky's reactionary novel *The Possessed*. The bourgeois press came to the defence of the play and Gorky replied with another article "Once Again on the Karamazov Attitude", which was published in No. 248 of *Russkoye Slovo*, 27 October 1913.

Large sections of the article, but without the concluding paragraph, were reprinted on 28 October in *Rech* No. 295. The next day Gorky's article, including the final paragraph, which Lenin quotes in full in his letter, was reprinted in the liquidators' *Novaya Rabochaya Gazeta* No. 69.

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47. *God-seeking* - during the period of reaction a section of the Bolsheviks, prominent among whom were Lunacharsky and Gorky, gave way to religious moods

and developed a philosophy that was known as “god-seeking” or “god-creating.” - *LLL Ed.*

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48. *Russkaya Mysl (Russian Thought)* – literary-political magazine that was published monthly in Moscow from 1880 to 1918. After the 1905 revolution it became the organ of the Right wing of the Constitutional-Democratic (Cadet) Party, supporting the imperialist strivings of the big Russian capitalists. A. S. Izgoyev, a bourgeois journalist, was one of the ideologists of this party.

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49. Written in the second half of November 1913. Sent from Cracow to Capri. First published in *Lenin Miscellany I*, 1924. Translation taken from V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 35, pp. 127-129, Progress Publishers, 1976, Moscow. [marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1913/nov/00mg2.htm](http://marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1913/nov/00mg2.htm)

The beginning of the letter has never been found.

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50. *Vperyod (Forward)* – a journal issued by the so-called “left Bolsheviks,” Lunacharsky, Bogdanov, etc in 1908-17. Not to be confused with the *Vperyod* published by the Bolsheviks in 1904 after *Iskra*, which had been the official organ of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, passed into the hands of the Mensheviks. – *LLL Ed.*

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51. *V. M. Purishkevich (1870–1920)* – big landowner, monarchist, leader of the Black Hundreds, notorious for his anti-Semitic speeches in the Duma.

*P. B. Struve (1870–1944)* – bourgeois economist and publicist, a leader of the Constitutional-Democratic (Cadet) Party. In the nineties he was a prominent representative of “legal Marxism”, and tried to adapt Marxism and the working-class movement to the interests of the bourgeoisie.

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52. Taken from a speech delivered at the Third All-Russia Congress of the Russian Young Communist League, 2 October 1920. First published in *Pravda*, Nos. 221, 222 and 223, 5, 6 and 7 October 1920. Translation taken from V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, Progress Publishers, Moscow. [marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1920/oct/02.htm](http://marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1920/oct/02.htm)

The Third All-Russia Congress of the Russian Young Communist League took place in Moscow between 2 and 10 October, and was attended by some 600 delegates. Lenin addressed the Congress at the first session in the evening of 2 October.

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