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The International
Importance of Stalin's
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I.

Three Bolshevik works have exercised an *immediate, a decisive* influence in shaping the ideology, the policy and the organisation of the Communist Parties in the capitalist countries. The first is *Lenin's* work, *The State and revolution*; the second work, also by Lenin, is *Left-Wing Communism*, the third is Stalin's *Foundations of Leninism*, the first foreign edition of which appeared nearly ten years ago in German.

There are other Bolshevik works — before all by Lenin and Stalin — which have had a great political effect on the members and the leading cadres of the Communist Parties. The influence of the two above-mentioned works of Lenin and of Stalin's *Foundations of Leninism* was, however, of a special kind. Regarded from the standpoint of the ideological, political and organisational development of the Communist Parties, their effect has not only been exceedingly broad, but it has also been most *extraordinary* in regard to quality.

In the first historical period of the Communist International, before and immediately after the founding of the World Party of Communism, Lenin's work, *The State and Revolution*, became the chief weapon in winning *the Communist advance-guard*. The chief works written by Lenin at the time of the imperialist war remained almost entirely unknown in the European workers' movement. His works written before and during the war against the rotting and rotten social democracy — especially his book on imperialism — only *later* became the common property of the Communist Parties and even of their leading cadres. This circumstance was one, and not the least, of the reasons why the rebellion of the "Let" radical elements in the social-democratic parties of the western countries, and in fact even the effects of the great October Revolution on the workers' movement outside of Russia, did not by a long way lead to a thorough enlightenment of the views of these groups in regard to the fundamental questions of the workers' movement and of the proletarian revolution. Lenin's *State and Revolution* brought for the first time an element making for theoretical order and clarity in the chaotic confusion existing in the minds of the rebelling oppositional workers. Many of them at first welcomed this work only as restoration of Marxism, which had been falsified and desecrated by social democracy. Very few of them at that time recognised that this book constituted a further development of Marxist teachings on a new stage of social development based on the experiences of two revolutions. Nevertheless, the *State and Revolution* fulfilled its mission among oppositional masses in

the social-democratic parties. It became the theoretical platform of all those elements which, before and soon after the founding of the Communist International, formed the first ranks of the Communist advance-guard. The *political-organisational role* of this work, its *decisive* influence, consisted precisely in the fact that it brought about the final division between centrism and revolutionary Communism on the basis of the relationship to the bourgeois and the proletarian State, to bourgeois and proletarian democracy. None of the leading centrists took up a position based on the views set forth in the *State and Revolution*. Not only Kautsky, but all the theoretical and political leaders of Centrism, who demagogically proclaimed that the “workers’ councils should be embodied in the Constitution” of the bourgeois democratic republic, rejected the *State and Revolution*.

The whole content of this work, the teachings laid down in it, formed the subject of political discussions not only in small circles, not only among “educated” people. After its publication abroad this book was heatedly discussed at public meetings. The political discussions and organisational quarrels between the supporters of the revolutionary tendency in the workers’ movement of the one hand, and the various shades of the opportunist tendency on the other, were for the most part fought out with this book in the hand. There was no other work which, in the first fierce fights for the formation of the Communist advance-guard, for the founding of the Communist Parties and the Communist International, played

such a big role in winning for the advance-guard the elements which were seeking, mostly spontaneously, the revolutionary way and the revolutionary means.

Lenin's other work, *Left-wing Communism*, accompanied and guided the next historical step in the organising of the Communist advance-guard and rendering it capable of performing its historical role. After the first gathering together of the forces of the Communist advance-guard in the capitalist countries, a great quantity of theoretical and practical slag of every kind of petty bourgeois revolutionary — social democratic and anarcho-syndicalist — tendency remained clinging to the young Communist Parties. The petty bourgeois revolutionary theories, the pseudo-Left views which arose in nearly every country as an elementary reaction to the petty bourgeois opportunism of the Second International, attempted to continue their sectarian existence within the Communist International and to give their sectarian stamp to the Communist World Party. The boycott of the reformist trade unions and of parliament, the denial of the role of the Communist Parties in the revolution, the failure to understand the relations between party and class, between leader, party and the masses, between party and soviet, and a whole number of other sectarian ideas threatened the newly-founded Communist Parties in the fulfilment of their historical task of creating the preconditions for the victory of the proletarian revolution, in the winning of the majority of the working class and of the toilers in town and country. There were many

leading and influential elements in the Communist Parties which regarded Bolshevism only as a “Maximalism”, which differed from “other fractions of Socialism” (Serrati) in that it did not recognise any minimum programme as being justified in the given period and was concerned only about “the realisation of the maximum programme of the social democracy”. The members and the leading cadres of the Communist Parties found in Lenin’s *Left-Wing Communism* the first comprehensive treatise on the nature and development of Bolshevik Russia and the methods of applying Bolshevik policy in the capitalist countries, and there with the weapon against “Left” and right sectarianism.

The effect of this book was in no way restricted to the sphere of propaganda and theory. This work of Lenin on Bolshevism was based not only on the exceedingly important experiences in the development of Bolshevism in Russia; it generalized for the first time in a connected manner all the experiences of the Communist Parties and movements west of soviet Russia, and thus laid down the basis of the strategy, tactics and organisation of Communism under the new conditions of the general crisis of capitalism.

Stalin’s *Foundations of Leninism* reached the Communist Parties of the capitalist countries at a time when the relative stabilisation of capitalism opened up to them a new, special period of the light against capitalism, against social democracy and for winning the masses. This new period at the same time brought with it a whole number of vacillations

within the various Communist Parties. Stalin's work determined the policy of the Communist Party in the period of stabilisation and the shaking of this stabilisation. The historical function of this work for the Communist Parties in the capitalist countries was of a threefold nature.

Firstly, Stalin's work clearly and precisely expounded the international character of Leninism against the tendencies which attempted to push it bank or limit it to Russia.

Secondly, it determined the position of Leninism in the development of the theory and practice of Marxism and of the international labour movement. It did this, on the one hand, by showing — against the social-democratic calumnies which sought to characterise Leninism as a turning away from Marxism — its character as a *restoration of Marxism*, and on the other hand by demonstrating against the opportunist tendencies within the Communist International — the *justification for the existence* of Leninism in general, its independent position on the theory and practice of the workers' movement, and its character as a further development of Marxism in the epoch of imperialism and proletarian revolutions.

Thirdly and finally, the historic function of Stalin's book in the development of the Communist International was the working out of the revolutionary perspective in a period of the development of the international revolution and of the Communist Parties, when a number of

vacillations in the ideological and political field against the unity of the Communist International made their appearance, which if they had become stronger would have meant the danger of losing the revolutionary perspective and of the isolation of the Communist advance-guard from the masses of the working class and the toilers.

Thus the international importance of Stalin's *Foundations of Leninism* by no means lies solely in the fact that it systematises the teachings of Lenin, that it gives a clear and precise summary of Leninism in the fight against the tendencies which wished to falsify or refute Leninism. It has acquired international importance also, and much more, by reason of the fact that it represents a theoretical enrichment of Leninism, that it continues it further and thereby politically determines the further development of the Communist International after the death of Lenin, in the second and third period of post-war development. Stalin's book, the *Foundations of Leninism* was both theoretically and politically the preparation of the Leninist Programme of the Communist International.

Stalin's book, *The Foundations of Leninism*, appeared about the time of the beginning of the relative stabilisation of capitalism. The relative stabilisation of capitalism means not only that capital again took up the offensive against the working class, but also that the social-democratic parties went over to the offensive against the sections or the Communist International.

The leaders of the Second International, from Kautsky to Otto Bauer, hailed the stabilisation of capitalism as a “refutation of the theory and practice of Leninism”. They all solemnly announced: “the advance of Asiatic bolshevism to the west is at an end”. Only the “extreme Liberals” among them condescendingly admitted that Leninist tactics might be justified for a time in backward Russia (Otto Bauer).

The introduction of the word Leninism into the language of the international working class was received with an outburst of fury by the leaders of the Second International. The Social-democratic theoreticians maintained that the introduction of this word in the Communist International meant the recognition of the break with Marxism, and at the same time the imposition of a “purely Russian theory and Russian tactics” on the West-European workers’ movement. They prophesied the end of the Communist International, which stood or fell with Leninism, which was not at all suitable for European conditions.

The social-democratic leaders were really right in their assertion that the Communist International stands or falls with Leninism. The attacks of the leaders of the Second International on Leninism would not in themselves have constituted any danger to the Communist International. But there was the serious danger of these social-democratic views having an ideological and political effect on some “leaders and theoreticians” within the Communist International and its Sections.

Even in the oldest and most steeled Party of the communist International, the CPSU, there were some persons and groups not unaffected by these assertions of the social democracy. *Rjсанov* even condemned the word Leninism and characterised its introduction as an emanation of “the careerism of a red professor”. *Trotsky* and his consorts repeated their attempts to revise the legend that Bolshevism had been Europeanised by the fact that Trotsky had joined the Bolshevik. The theory of Comrade Zinoviev, according to which the main question of Leninism was the peasant question, was an attempt to convert Lenin into a Russian peasant philosopher, and was nothing else but the counterpart of the theories of Otto Bauer and Co., which “recognised” Leninism as a product of the special Russian conditions.

At the same time there appeared in a number of sections of the Communist International, in the capitalist countries, tendencies which attempted, contrary to Leninism and Bolshevism, to found a sort of “West-European Communism”. The “Left” *Bordiga*, who at that time was the leader of the Communist Party of Italy, openly declared at the Enlarged Executive of the ECCI that Leninism was not applicable to European conditions, and that in Europe Marxism must be applied in its Bordigian “originality”. The Right *Thalheimer*, who was at that time the leading theoretician of the CPG, attempted in “Wet-Europeanise” Leninism by recommending, as the theoretical basis of the strategy and tactics of the Communist International to be laid down in the

Programme of the Communist International, the teachings of Rosa Luxemburg on imperialism”, *Georg Lucas*, reconciled the “Left” Bordiga with the Right Thalheimer by declaring in his work on Lenin, that the theory of Rosa Luxemburg constituted the theoretical basis of Leninist practice. The “Left” *Maslow* and *Ruth Fischer*, no less than the Right Thalheimer, were the advocates “European tactic” for the Communist Parties west of the Soviet Union; and the essence of this “European tactic” was the rejection of the Leninist strategy with regard to the winning of the majority of the working class.

In all these “theories” there was rejected in various degrees and forms the influence of the social democracy and of the stabilisation period on the ranks or the Communist Party. All these views, which denied the nature of Leninism as the continuation and further development or Marxism, or limited Leninism to Russia, wished to “Europeanise” Communism and attempted to nurture a West-European Communism, constituted a denial of revolutionary tactics. All these products of capitalist stabilisation — the “Left” as well as the Right — finally united in the opportunist swamp of a partly or wholly social-democratic policy, and many of them, like Trotsky and his consorts, landed in the camp of counter-revolution. To wish to “Europeanise” Bolshevism, which right from its commencement was the “last word of Marxism”, the “last word of modern Socialism”, means nothing else but to recognise openly or covertly, the thesis of Kautsky on “Asiatic Bolshevism”. Stalin’s book, *The Foundations*

of Leninism, and his other work, *Problems of Leninism*, not only declared war on all these tendencies and other vacillations, but smashed them.

One of the most important theoretical achievements of Stalin's work, *The Foundations of Leninism*, was at the same time its practical political importance for the whole of the international labour movement. It consisted before all in the fact that in this book Leninism was traced back to the objective basis of its rise and development — to *imperialism as a world phenomenon*. From this there resulted the *international validity of Leninism*, of “the theory and tactics of the proletarian revolution in general, of the theory and tactics of the dictatorship of the proletariat in particular”. (Stalin).

The plain and simple sentence in which Stalin defines the objective circumstances of the rise and development of Leninism and its special position in the development of Marxism: “Leninism is Marxism of the era of imperialism and the proletarian revolution”, was and is the weapon which, in the fight on two fronts, defeated all vacillations and all deviations from Leninism, the guiding star which has helped the Communist International and its Sections to march forward on the correct Leninist path.

Stalin's book gave the correct compass to the leading cadres and the members of the Communist international. The clear and precise exposition of the international character of Leninism, its welding together into a whole, into a theory and tactics of the proletarian revolution applicable on a world scale,

was the most important weapon in repelling the social-democratic attacks on the Communist Parties in the period of the temporary stabilisation of capitalism. It was the lever which, at the time of the shaking and the end of the stabilisation of capitalism, raised the Communist International to the heights of the new and increasing revolutionary tasks.

Immediately after its appearance abroad, Stalin's *Foundations of Leninism* became the handbook for the Bolshevisation of the Communist International and its Sections. At the time of its publication the Communist International was confronted with the great historical task, which had been set it by Lenin, of converting the Communist Parties — which still retained parliamentary, political and also organisational traditions inherited from the social democracy — into *Parties of a new type*. The influence of social democracy on the Communist Parties and their cadres was still at work in the form of the old inherited traditions.

Stalin's book dealt effectively with all the social democratic traditions and set up a dam against the penetrating influence of petty-bourgeois social democracy into the ranks of the proletarian, Communist Party. In it Stalin gave us all and every communist, in a clear, comprehensible manner, the meaning and the preconditions of the Bolshevisation of the Communist Parties:

“Firstly, the *testing* of the theoretical dogmas of the Second International in the crucible of the revolutionary struggle of the masses, in the crucible

of living practice — that is to say, the restoration of the broken unity between theory and practice, the healing of the rift between them; for only in this way can a truly proletarian party armed with revolutionary theory be created.

“Secondly, the *testing* of the policy of the parties of the Second International, not by their slogans and resolutions (which cannot be trusted), but by their deeds, by their actions; for only in this way can the confidence of the proletarian masses be won and deserved.

“Thirdly, the *reorganisation* of all Party work on new revolutionary lines, with a view to training and preparing the masses for the revolutionary struggle; for only in this way can the masses be prepared for the proletarian revolution.

“Fourthly, *self-criticism* within the proletarian parties, their education and training on the basis of their own mistakes; for only in this way can genuine cadres and genuine leaders of the Party be trained.”

These sentences contain the programme and the guiding lines for the Bolshevisation of the Communist Parties in all countries.

The slogan of Bolshevisation was at first unclear, and in fact unintelligible, to many Communists. The Right elements (Thalheimer, Brandler, etc.), and also the “Lefts” (Bordiga), more or less offered resistance to Bolshevisation. They made use of the slogan of Bolshevisation in order to make out that a difference existed between Bolshevism and Communism. Many Communists understood by Bolshevisation only the

organisational readjustment of the Communist Parties on the basis of factory cells, and troubled very little, or not at all, about altering the political contents of Party work.

At this dangerous juncture, when the carrying out of Bolshevisation was threatened with failure, Stalin's book made its appearance. It gave the cadres of the Communist Parties a uniform picture of what constitutes a Bolshevist Party and what is the political content of Bolshevism Party work. It showed the prerequisites for the building up of the Party and the whole work of the Party, which rendered possible the carrying out of a Bolshevist policy among the working class. It showed the necessity for a complete reconstruction of the whole Party and its work in the sense of Leninism, from theory up to the new regulation of inner Party relationships, which excludes any fraction-mongering and demands the constant purging of the Parties from opportunist elements. The historical period in which the Communist Parties have to fulfil their historical mission "sets the proletariat new tasks". One of the first of these is to recognise the Party work, renewing it and revolutionising it in every way; to educate the workers in the revolutionary struggle for power: to rally the reserves and prepare them for the fight; to seek alliances with the proletariat of neighbouring lands; to create firm ties between the proletariat and the movements for independence in colonial and vassal countries; and so on and so forth".

From the historical tasks which determine the content of the Bolshevisation of the Communist

Parties there necessarily arises the concrete tasks of transforming the Communist Parties, for, says Stalin, there exists:

“Hence the necessity for a new party, a militant party, a revolutionary party, one bold enough to lead the proletarians in the struggle for power, sufficiently experienced to find its bearings amidst the complex conditions of a revolutionary situation, and sufficiently flexible to steer clear of all submerged rocks in the path to its goal.

“Without such a party it is useless even to think of overthrowing imperialism, of achieving the dictatorship of the proletariat. This new party is the party of Leninism.”

These words of Stalin raised the slogan of Bolshevism in all Communist Parties from the position of a slogan, of a thesis, into the sphere of a practical realisation.

The international importance of Stalin's *Foundations of Leninism* consists, not only in the historical mission which was fulfilled in the Communist International and its Sections by giving the Communist Parties the best weapon in the fight against Right opportunism and pseudo “Left” Trotskyist and other deviations, the steel weapons with which the anti-Leninist groupings were defeated. This book will not lose its importance even in the future, although there exists already the Programme of the Communist International.

The two most Important questions of the strategy of the Communist Parties in the fight for power: the

capture or the majority of the working class and the winning of the allies of the working class, namely, the working peasants, the middle strata, the nationally oppressed peoples in the colonies and in the dependent countries — these important questions are clearly and plainly solved in this book. From this solution there results for the Communist Parties in the approaching struggles for the Soviet Power, in the period of a new cycle of revolutions and wars, the task of winning the workers organised in the social-democratic parties and in the reformist trade unions. The fight of the Communist Party against imperialist war, for the defence of the Soviet Union, and also for the dictatorship of the proletariat and the Soviet Power, demands the isolation of the parties of the Second International which form *the most important buttress of the policy of compromise*.

The interests of the international proletarian revolution, of which the Soviet Union is the advance-guard, demand the mobilisation of the main reserves, consisting of the forces of the national revolution in the colonial and dependent countries and, in the advanced capitalist States, in the semi-proletarian and small peasant masses in town and country. This book contains the most important instructions in regard to the teaching of the mobilization of the reserves of the proletarian revolution and in the peasant and national questions for the *united struggle* of the working class, for the establishment of the united front in the fight against fascism, under the leadership of the Communist Party. From the point of view of the actual struggle against fascism,

Stalin's article: *The October Revolution and the Question of the Middle Strata*, which was published shortly before the appearance of his book, contains important supplementary statements on this question. The leaders of the Second International and Otto Bauer in particular, declared after the February fights in Austria, that the middle strata, which support fascism, render impossible any successful struggle for Socialism. This statement is brilliantly refuted in this article. We shall quote only the following sentences from this article as a guiding line for the struggle of the communists in winning the middle strata:

“The October Revolution proved that the proletariat can seize power and retain it, if it succeeds in wresting the middle strata, primarily the peasantry, from the capitalist class, if it succeeds in converting these strata from reserves of capital into reserves of the proletariat. In brief: the October Revolution was the first of all the revolutions in the world to bring into the forefront the question of the middle strata, and primarily of the peasantry, and the first to solve it successfully, despite all the “theories” and lamentations of the heroes of the Second International.”

As the examples of Germany and Austria show, the petty-bourgeois policy of social democracy repulses the petty bourgeoisie from the proletariat, whilst the real proletarian class policy, as is taught by Stalin, draws them to the side of the proletariat.

Finally, the actual, political, international importance of Stalin's book lies in the fact that it gives the clearest conception and a complete picture of what constitutes the dictatorship of the proletariat, the Soviet Power, as the immediate, uniform organisation of the masses themselves, as the broadest democracy of the toilers and exploited.

At the time of a fresh cycle of revolutions and wars this book acquires international importance as a guiding line for all Communist Parties in their struggle for the Soviet Power.

The Foundations of Leninism have up to now been published in 26 languages. Together with Lenin's *State and Revolution*, *Left-Wing Communism*, and *Imperialism*, Stalin's book has the widest circulation and has met with the most enthusiastic reception of all the works of Bolshevist literature.

The ten years' international triumphal march of this book into the brains and the hearts of the proletariat in the imperialist and colonial countries will be crowned by the winning of the majority of the working class, their freeing from social-democratic influence, the shattering of fascism, the overthrow of the bourgeois State power and the establishment of the power of the Soviets — on the ruins of capitalism and the feudal remnants in the imperialist and colonial countries.

