

The collapse of the Second International

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# THE COLLAPSE OF THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL

BY  
ULYANOV-LENIN.

TRANSLATED BY A. SIRNIS.



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(ULYANOV-LENIN).

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## PUBLISHERS' FOREWORD.

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We gladly reproduce this little work of Lenin's as a valuable contribution to the literature of International Socialism, especially since discussion upon the causes which led to "the collapse of the second international" have taken place, particularly amongst the "extremists," ever since the war broke out and drove the various Socialist parties back to the confines of their national boundaries. Such a work as the following, coming as it does from the representative head of the proletarian dictatorship, which is extending its grip over Europe, will prove not only interesting because of the personality of the writer, but will provoke discussion upon the tactics as presently pursued by the various sections of International Socialism. It will also aid considerably towards an understanding as to why the second international collapsed.

Undoubtedly, the marvellous capacity of our Russian comrades, not only to maintain their social revolution at home, but to extend it in spite of the tremendous forces of bourgeois reaction and intrigue, will go down in history as one of the world's achievements.

That men and women going through the stress and strain of such a herculean task of social revolution should find time, besides attending to the actual machinery of administration, to make provision for the minutest detail in social life, will assuredly command the admiration and respect of all Socialists whether of the "Right" or "Left," and prove a source of inspiration to International Socialism generally.

To Lenin and Trotsky, as well as the vast numbers of the proletariat in Russia, the Socialist movement is not a mere playground for intellectual dilettantes nor an avenue for unscrupulous place-hunters to achieve a political career. On the contrary, it represents the systematic opposition to all forms of bourgeois institutions and ought to assume the responsibility for social revolution as offered by opportunity.

*"Socialist parties are not mere glorified debating clubs, but are fighting organisations of the proletariat,"* says Lenin, and on this ground his criticism of the leaders of the "Second International" in general and the German S.D.P. in particular is perfectly justified. Every crisis, he maintains, whether of a political or economic character, provides a "revolutionary situation" and should be the signal for energetic action on the part of the Socialist parties to damage or bring about the downfall of their respective bourgeois Governments.

Consequently the great betrayal of the "second international" is seen to consist in a positive failure to take such "energetic action," likewise a failure to adhere to the actual terms of the Basle resolution of 1912 and use the war situation for purposes of proletarian conquest. This failure was a clear indication that the several parties had not yet shed themselves of that "opportunism born of a belief in the bourgeois parliamentarism."

Even yet, particularly here in Great Britain, there is a hesitation to throw off this faith in parliamentarism or "national assemblies." This was conspicuous in the recent attempt made by the S.L.P. to bring about unity between the three parties (S.L.P., B.S.P. and I.L.P.) on the basis of revolutionary mass action.



The decision of the I.L.P. representatives to adhere to parliamentary constitutionalism and moribund craft organisation on the industrial field proves that party to be still wrapped up in the bourgeois opportunist policy which has been characteristic of the I.L.P. since its inception—a policy which has been largely responsible for the creation of the reactionary Labour Party and providing one of the strongest bulwarks in this country against revolutionary Socialism.

Such a policy of "Evolutionary Socialism" is easily understood, especially where no effort is made to encourage Bolshevism, either at home or abroad. But what reason, we ask, is there for the continued existence of an entity like the B.S.P., whose policy, as stated at the Unity Conference, notwithstanding its pose as being Bolshevistic, is identical with the Independent Labour Party?

The Socialist Labour Party has perceived for some time now that "Socialism in Europe has entered the stage of revolutionary action; and that it is high time that complete rupture with opportunism be effected and the latter turned out of the workers' parties."

Such indeed was the spirit in which we entered the discussion upon unity. We have found both the I.L.P. and the B.S.P. are still in "bondage" to bourgeois opportunism and wallowing in the slough of ministerial parliamentarism. We had hoped to create a movement which would be capable of releasing the forces of revolution in this country while building up the machinery of fulfilment. We now know that so far as the "leaders" of these parties are concerned that that time is not yet.

Nevertheless we have faith in the disturbing periods which lie before us that the very intensity of the

struggle will submerge or sweep aside all the forces or parties which cross the path of the oncoming militant proletariat and will create a "situation" favourable to social revolution.

Meanwhile the S.L.P. will help forward the growth of revolutionary mass action, and by combating the "bourgeois Labour opportunism" outside its ranks will seek to bring into line and harness the elements of revolution here in Great Britain towards the triumph of International Socialism.

In conclusion we have to acknowledge our indebtedness to our late comrade, Alexander Sirnis, for this translation, which was somewhat interrupted by his unexpected decease.

S.L. PRESS.

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## CHAPTER I.

### INTRODUCTORY.

By the collapse of the International is sometimes meant the interruption of the intercourse between the Socialist parties of the warring countries, the suspension of the meetings of the International Socialist bureau, International Congresses, and so forth. This is the viewpoint of some Socialists, perhaps of the majority of the official parties and especially of the opportunists and their supporters.

In the Russian press (vide : *The Information Leaflet of the " Bund "*)\* Kossovsky takes up the defence of this view with a frankness that deserves our heartfelt gratitude. Nevertheless, the editors fail to indicate their disagreement with the author's viewpoint. Kossovsky went so far as to justify the German Social-Democrats who voted the war-credits. Let us hope that his defence of Nationalism will open the eyes of many workmen as to the capitalist-nationalist outlook of the " Bund."

To class-conscious workers, Socialism is a serious conviction and is not a cloak to cover up conciliatory middle-class aspirations or opposition to the Government along Nationalist lines. By the collapse of the International, these workers mean the scandalous betrayal by a majority of the official Social-Democratic parties of their convictions and solemn declarations made at the International Socialist Congresses of Stuttgart and Basle, and embodied in resolutions passed at these congresses. Only those fail to see this treason who do not *wish* to see it. Only those refuse to observe this betrayal whose interests are bound up in not recognising it.

\* A Jewish Social-Democratic organisation in Russia and Poland.—  
Translator.

















































































































































