

working class cannot be victorious unless it has the support of the rural proletariat and at least a part of the poorest peasants . . .

6 Every party that wishes to belong to the Communist International is duty-bound to expose not only overt social patriotism but also the duplicity and hypocrisy of social pacifism . . .

7 Parties wishing to belong to the Communist International are duty-bound to recognize the need for a complete break with reformism and the policies of the Centre and must conduct propaganda for this among the broadest layers of the party membership. Without this, no consistent communist policy is possible.

8 The Communist International demands unconditionally and as an ultimatum that this break be carried out at the earliest possible date. The Communist International cannot accept that notorious opportunists as, for example, Turati, Modigliani, Kautsky . . . and MacDonald should have the right to consider themselves members of the Communist International . . .

9 Every party wishing to belong to the Communist International must carry out systematic and persistent activity in the trade unions . . . and other mass workers' organizations. In these organizations it is necessary to organize communist cells that win the unions . . . to the cause of communism through persistent and unremitting work . . .

10 Every party that belongs to the Communist International has the obligation to wage a tenacious struggle against the Amsterdam 'International' of Yellow trade unions [the successor to the Second International]. It must conduct forceful propaganda among workers organized in unions on the need to break with the Yellow Amsterdam International . . .

12 Parties belonging to the Communist International must be organized on the basis of the principle of democratic centralism. In the present epoch of intensified civil war, the Communist Party will be able to fulfil its duty only if it is organized in the most centralized way possible and governed by iron discipline, and if its central leadership, sustained by the confidence of the party membership, is strong, authoritative, and endowed with the fullest powers.

13 Communist parties of those countries in which the Communists pursue their work legally must from time to time carry out purges (re-registrations) of the party membership in order to systematically cleanse the party of the petty-bourgeois elements that worm their way into it.

14 Every party that wishes to belong to the Communist International is obligated to render unconditional assistance to every soviet republic struggling against the forces of counterrevolution . . .

16 All decisions by congresses of the Communist International as well as decisions by its Executive Committee are binding on all parties . . . The Communist International, working under conditions of most acute civil war, must be organized in a far more centralized way than was the Second International. At the same time, of course, in all their activity the Communist

International and its Executive Committee must take into account the diverse conditions under which each party has to struggle and work, adopting universally binding decisions only on questions in which such decisions are possible.

17 Taking all this into consideration, all parties that wish to belong to the Communist International must change their name. . . . [to] Communist Party of such and such country (Section of the Communist International) . . .

21 Party members who reject on principle the conditions and theses laid down by the Communist International must be expelled from the party . . .

*Source: 'Theses on the Conditions for Admission to the Communist International', adopted by the Second Congress, 6 August 1920, in Kevin McDermott and Jeremy Agnew, The Comintern: A History of International Communism from Lenin to Stalin (Basingstoke and London, Macmillan, 1996), pp. 226-8.*

### From Reform to Kronstadt

War Communism represented the attempt to concentrate the whole economic life of the country in the hands of the state economic apparatus. At a time of war, grain was expropriated from the peasants without their being granted anything in return, and guards were placed at the entrances to cities to prevent 'bagmen' (*meshochniki*) bringing in food to be sold in the markets. The markets themselves were frequently raided and by the end of 1920 mostly closed down. Unrest among what remained of the industrial labour force in the cities was accompanied by the full-scale peasant uprisings in the countryside, in particular the revolt led by Antonov in the Tambov region.

In the last months of 1920 and into early 1921, the final period of War Communism, Bolshevik rule faced its sternest test. Within the party, reformers hoped to modify the extremes of hierarchical centralisation that had taken hold during the Civil War. In the cities the Bolsheviks' own base, the working class, was increasingly alienated, while in the countryside the policy of grain requisitions (confiscation) provoked an increasingly desperate (and hungry) peasantry to revolt. This period culminated in the revolt of the sailors and workers in Kronstadt, the naval base at the mouth of the Gulf of Finland that had once been a symbol of Bolshevik revolutionism. In response to Kronstadt's calls for 'soviets without Bolsheviks', the party launched ferocious repression, a policy that had decisive effects on the Communist Party itself.

### Document 3.22 Attempts at Party Reform

Victory in the Civil War was accompanied by demands in the party for an end to the hyper-centralisation and stifling of criticism that had become prevalent in the organisation. This movement for party reform peaked at the Ninth



Party Conference in September 1920, when the depth of the problem was acknowledged by the leadership. The resolution adopted by the conference represented the most serious attempt to 'democratise' the party, above all by reducing the powers of appointment from above and allowing more autonomy for lower party bodies. The reforms, however, lacked focus, with the 'Makhaevist' attack on *spetsy* continuing, and were distorted by the belief that workerisation on its own would in some unspecified way solve the ills of bureaucratisation. Quite apart from the inadequacies of the reforms themselves, the implementation of party democracy was derailed by the onset of the trade union debate.

It is essential to realise in the internal life of the party broader criticism of the central as well as local institutions of the party; to commission the Central Committee to point out by circulars the means for broadening intra-party criticism at general meetings; to create publications which are capable of realising broader and more systematic criticism of the mistakes of the party and general criticism within the party (discussion sheets, etc.) . . .

Recognising in principle the necessity of appointment to responsible offices in exceptional cases, it is necessary to propose to the Central Committee that in the assignment of functionaries in general it replace appointment with recommendation.

[It is necessary] to point out that in the mobilisation of comrades it is not permissible for party organs and individual comrades to be guided by any considerations except business ones. Any repression whatsoever against comrades because they dissent about some question or another decided by the party is not permissible. . . .

[It is necessary] to work out fully effective practical measures to eliminate inequality (in conditions of life, the wage scale, etc.) between the *spetsy* and the responsible functionaries on the one hand and the toiling masses on the other . . . This inequality violates democratism and is the source of disruption in the party and of reduction in the authority of communists . . .

Sources: 'On the Coming Tasks of Building the Party', IX konferentsiya RKP(b), sentyabr' 1920g: protokoly (Moscow, 1972), pp. 278-82; KPSS v rezolyutsiyakh i resheniyakh, vol. I, pp. 507, 509, 511-12.

Instead of focusing on party reform, the political elite was engulfed by a debate over the role of trade unions in economic management and their relationship to the political authorities. Provoked by Trotsky's plans to militarise industrial life and to 'governmentalise' the unions, the Workers' Opposition (yet another successor organisation to the Left Communists) demanded the opposite, the transfer of the entire management of the economy into the hands of the trade unions. The most eloquent exponent of these ideas was Alexandra Kollontai.

### Document 3.23 Kollontai's *The Workers' Opposition*

Distributed to delegates at the Tenth Party Congress in March 1921, the work analysed the bureaucratic degeneration of the Soviet state. The analysis was mistaken, blaming the influence of bourgeois specialists (the so-called *spetsy*) for stifling the initiative of workers and reducing them to apathy when in fact the party apparatus was to blame. Kollontai called for a return to the principle of election and hoped to eliminate bureaucracy by making officials responsible to the public. She advocated greater openness within the party, freedom of speech and greater democracy. She also called on the party to purge itself of non-proletarian elements and to make itself a genuine workers' party, recalling Marx's dictum that 'the liberation of the working class was the task of the working class itself', a principle which contradicted Lenin's views on the vanguard role of the party. The attempt to find a social explanation for what was essentially a political problem only muddled the issue and inhibited the development of an adequate response. A gulf opened up between the aspiration and the prescription.

1 The Workers' Opposition sprang from the depths of the industrial proletariat of Russia. It is an outgrowth not only of the unbearable conditions of life and labour in which seven million industrial workers find themselves, but it is also a product of vacillation, inconsistencies, and outright deviations of our Soviet policy from the early expressed class consistent principles of the communist programme. 2 The Opposition did not originate in some particular centre, was not a fruit of personal strife and controversy, but, on the contrary, covers the whole extent of Soviet Russia and meets with a resonant response . . .

[W]ho shall develop the creative powers in the sphere of economic reconstruction? Shall it be purely class organs, directly connected by vital ties with the industries - that is, shall industrial trade unions undertake the work of reconstruction - or shall it be left to the Soviet machine which is separated from direct vital industrial activity and is mixed in its composition? This is the root of the break . . .

And the more our industrial establishments and unions are drained of their best elements by the party (which sends them either to the front or to Soviet institutions), the weaker becomes the direct connection between the rank-and-file workers and the directing party centres. A chasm is growing. At present, this division manifests itself even in the ranks of the party itself. The workers, through their Workers' Opposition, ask: Who are we? Are we really the prop of the class dictatorship? Or are we just an obedient flock that serves as a support for those who, having severed all ties with the masses, carry out their own policy and build up industry without any regard to our opinions and creative abilities under the reliable cover of the party label? . . .

The whole controversy boils down to one basic question: who shall build the communist economy, and how shall it be built? . . . *The Workers'*



*Opposition sees in the unions the managers and creators of the communist economy, whereas Bukharin, together with Lenin and Trotsky, leave them only the role of 'schools of communism' and no more . . . Only workers can generate in their minds new methods of organising labour as well as running industry . . .* The Workers' Opposition asserts that administration of the people's economy is the trade unions' job and, therefore, that the Opposition is more Marxist in thought than the theoretically trained leaders . . . This consideration, which should be very simple and clear to every practical man, is lost sight of by our party leaders: *it is impossible to decree communism*. It can be treated only in the process of practical research, through mistakes, perhaps, but only by the creative powers of the working class itself . . .

The task is clear: it is to arouse initiative and self-activity in the masses. But what is being done to encourage and develop that initiative? Nothing at all. Quite the contrary . . . Every comrade can easily recall scores of instances when workers themselves attempted to organise dining-rooms, day nurseries for children, transportation of wood, etc. Each time a lively, immediate interest in the undertaking died from the red tape, interminable negotiations with the various institutions that brought no results, or resulted in refusals, new requisitions, etc. Whenever there was an opportunity under the impetus of the masses themselves – for the masses using their own efforts – to equip a dining-room, to store a supply of wood, or to organise a nursery, refusal always followed refusal from the central institutions . . . How much bitterness is generated among working men and women when they see and know that if they had been given the right, and an opportunity to act, they could themselves have seen the project through . . . As a result there is generated a most harmful division: *we* are the toiling people, *they* are the Soviet officials, on whom everything depends. This is the whole trouble . . .

Restrictions on initiative are imposed, not only in regard to the activity of the non-party masses (this would only be a logical and reasonable condition, in the atmosphere of the civil war). The initiative of party members themselves is restricted. Every independent attempt, every new thought that passes through the censorship of our centre, is considered as 'heresy', as a violation of party discipline, as an attempt to infringe on the prerogatives of the centre, which must 'foresee' everything and 'decree' everything and anything. If anything is not decreed one must wait, for the time will come when the centre at its leisure will decree. Only then, and within sharply restricted limits, will one be allowed to express one's 'initiative'. What would happen if some of the members of the Russian Communist Party – those, for instance, who are fond of birds – decided to form a society for the preservation of birds? The idea itself seems useful. It does not in any way undermine any 'state project'. But it only seems this way. All of a sudden there would appear some bureaucratic institution which would claim the right to manage this particular undertaking . . .

Fear of criticism and of freedom of thought, by combining together with

bureaucracy, often produce ridiculous results. There can be no self-activity without freedom of thought and opinion, for self-activity manifests itself not only in initiative, action, and work, but in independent thought as well. We give no freedom to class activity, we are afraid of criticism, we have ceased to rely on the masses: hence we have bureaucracy with us. That is why the Workers' Opposition considers that bureaucracy is our enemy, our scourge, and the greatest danger to the future existence of the communist party itself.

In order to do away with the bureaucracy that is finding its shelter in the Soviet institutions, we must first of all get rid of all bureaucracy in the party itself . . .

In the name of party regeneration and the elimination of bureaucracy from the Soviet institutions, the Workers' Opposition, together with a group of responsible workers in Moscow, demand complete realisation of all democratic principles, not only for the present period of respite, but also for times of internal and external tension. This is the first and basic condition for the party's regeneration, for its return to the principles of its programme, from which it is more and more deviating in practice under the pressure of elements that are foreign to it.

The second condition, the vigorous fulfilment of which is insisted upon by the Workers' Opposition, is the expulsion from the party of all non-proletarian elements . . .

The third decisive step towards democratisation of the party is the elimination of all non-working-class elements from administrative positions. In other words, the central, provincial, and county committees of the party must be so composed that workers closely acquainted with the conditions of the working masses should have the preponderant majority therein . . .

The fourth basic demand of the Workers' Opposition is that the party must reverse its policy in relation to the elective principle.

Appointments are permissible only as exceptions. Lately they have begun to prevail as a rule. Appointments are very characteristic of bureaucracy, and yet at present they are a general, legalised and well-recognised daily occurrence. The procedure of appointments produces a very unhealthy atmosphere in the party. It disrupts the relationship of equality amongst the members by rewarding friends and punishing enemies, and by other no less harmful practices in party and Soviet life . . .

Wide publicity, freedom of opinion and discussion, the right to criticise within the party and among the members of the trade unions – such are the decisive steps that can put an end to the prevailing system of bureaucracy. Freedom of criticism, right of different factions freely to present their views at party meetings, freedom of discussion – are no longer the demands of the Workers' Opposition alone. Under the growing pressure from the masses a whole series of measures that were demanded by the rank and file long before the [ninth] party conference are now recognised and officially promulgated . . . the building of communism can and must be the work of the toiling



masses themselves. The building of communism belongs to the workers.

*Source: Alexandra Kollontai, The Workers' Opposition in Russia (London, Dreadnought Publishers, 1923).*

In the event the 'centrist' position advanced by Lenin, Zinoviev, Stalin and others sought to remove the unions from economic administration altogether, insisting that they focus on educational and social support functions. This was the position adopted at the Tenth Party Congress in March 1921, which met against the background of urban and rural insurgency. Members of the Workers' Opposition actively participated in the bloody suppression of the Kronstadt revolt against the party bureaucracy.

### Document 3.24 Programme of the Kronstadt Insurgents: 'What We Are Fighting For'

Although Bolshevik propaganda claimed that the insurgents in the naval fortress of Kronstadt, in the Gulf of Finland, were counter-revolutionaries in the pay of the White emigration, in fact the Kronstadt sailors, formerly the shock troops of Bolshevism itself in 1917, remained loyal to a vision of a genuine participatory and non-bureaucratised form of popular power represented by the soviets. Their programme can be summed up as 'soviets without Bolsheviks'.

After carrying out the October revolution, the working class had hoped to achieve its emancipation. But the result was an even greater enslavement of the human personality. The power of the police and gendarme monarchy passed into the hands of the Communist usurpers, who, instead of giving the people freedom, instilled in them the constant fear of falling into the torture chambers of the Cheka, which in their horrors far exceed the gendarme administration of the tsarist regime. The bayonets, bullets, and gruff commands of the Cheka *oprichniki* [a reference to Ivan the Terrible's sixteenth-century personal police] – these are what the working man of Soviet Russia has gained after so much struggle and suffering. The glorious emblem of the workers' state – the sickle and hammer – has in fact been replaced by the Communist authorities with the bayonet and barred window, for the sake of maintaining the calm and carefree life of the new bureaucracy of Communist commissars and functionaries.

But most infamous and criminal of all is the moral servitude which the Communists have created: they have laid their hands also on the inner world of the toilers, forcing them to think in the Communist way. With the help of the bureaucratised trade unions, they bound the workers to their benches, so that labour has become not a joy but a new form of slavery. To the protests of the peasants, expressed in spontaneous uprisings, and those of the workers, whose living conditions have driven them out on strike, they answer with mass executions and bloodthirstiness, in which they have not been surpassed

even by the tsarist generals. Russia of the toilers, the first to raise the red banner of the liberation of labour, is drenched in the blood of those martyred for the glory of Communist domination. In this sea of blood the Communists are drowning all the great and glowing pledges and slogans of the workers' revolution. The picture has been drawn more and more sharply, and now it is clear that the Russian Communist Party is not the defender of the toilers that it pretends to be. The interests of the working people are alien to it. Having gained power, it is afraid only of losing it, and therefore deems every means permissible: slander, violence, deceit, murder, vengeance upon the families of rebels.

The long-suffering patience of the toilers is at an end. Here and there the land is lit up by the fires of insurrection in a struggle against oppression and violence. Strikes by the workers have flared up, but the Bolshevik *okhrana* agents have not been asleep and have taken every measure to forestall and suppress the unavoidable third revolution. But it has come nevertheless, and it is being made by the hands of the toilers themselves. The generals of Communism see clearly that it is the people who have risen, convinced that the ideas of socialism have been betrayed. Yet, trembling for their skins and aware that there is no escape from the wrath of the workers, they still try, with the help of their *oprichniki*, to terrorise the rebels with prison, firing squads, and other atrocities. But life under the yoke of the Communist dictatorship has become more terrible than death . . .

There can be no middle ground. Victory or death! The example is being set by Red Kronstadt, threatening the counter-revolutionaries of the right and of the left. The new revolutionary upheaval has been launched here. Here is raised the banner of rebellion against the three-year-old violence and oppression of Communist rule, which has overshadowed the three hundred-year yoke of monarchism. Here at Kronstadt the first stone of the third revolution has been laid, striking the last fetters from the toiling masses and opening a broad new road for socialist creativity.

This new revolution will rouse the toiling masses of the East and of the West, by serving as an example of the new socialist construction as opposed to the Communists' barrack-room 'creativity'. The toiling masses abroad will see with their own eyes that everything created here up to now by the will of the workers and peasants was not socialism. Without a single shot, without a drop of blood, the first step has been taken. The toilers do not need blood. They will shed it only in self-defence. In spite of all the outrageous acts of the Communists, we have enough restraint to confine ourselves only to isolating them from public life so that their malicious and false agitation will not hinder our revolutionary work.

The workers and peasants steadfastly march forward, leaving behind them the bourgeois Constituent Assembly, with its bourgeois regime, and the dictatorship of the Communist Party, with its Cheka and its state capitalism, whose hangman's noose encircles the necks of the labouring masses and



threatens to strangle them to death. The present overturn at last provides the toilers with the opportunity to have their freely elected soviets, operating without the slightest force of party pressure, and to remake the bureaucratised trade unions into free associations of workers, peasants and the labouring intelligentsia. At last the policeman's club of the Communist autocracy has been broken.

*Source: Paul Avrich, Kronstadt 1921 (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1970), pp. 241–3, translation modified by the present author.*

The Bolshevik authorities launched a wave of calumny against the insurgents, who had asked for no more than a return to the ideals of the October revolution. These demands, striking at the heart of the Bolshevik legitimacy, threatened their power in a more subversive way than any number of White manifestos. The assault was led by Trotsky across the ice of the gulf, and many delegates (including oppositionists) to the Tenth Party Congress, meeting at the time in Petrograd, joined in the suppression of the insurgents. Their defeat was followed by mass executions and a wall of lies over what the real aims of the movement had been.

### Document 3.25 Bolshevik Bureaucratism Condemned

Alexander Berkman was an American anarchist-communist deported along with hundreds of other radicals of Russian origin (including Emma Goldman) in late 1919. His faith in Russian communism was soon tempered by the realities of Soviet Russia. The libertarian critique of Bolshevik rule was forceful and accurate. His diary chronicles the ups and downs of his time in Russia (he returned with Goldman to America in 1922), but ends with thorough disillusionment.

*2 April 1920* – The Bolsheviks claim they need good workers, but if you are not a Communist they don't want you. We've been called counter-revolutionists, and the Chief of the Tcheka has even threatened to send us to prison . . . 'The Communists won't stand for independent initiative', one of the women remarked; 'it's dangerous for their regime'.

'No, my friends, it's no use deluding yourselves,' a tall, bearded man retorted. 'Russia is not ripe for Communism. Social revolution is possible only in a country with the highest industrial development. It was the greatest crime of the Bolsheviks that they forcibly suspended the Constituent Assembly. They usurped governmental power, but the whole country is against them. What can you expect under such circumstances? They have to resort to terror to force the people to do their bidding, and of course everything goes to ruin' . . .

*Easter week* – Notwithstanding all the faults and shortcomings of the Bolsheviks, I feel that Russia is still the hearth of the Revolution. It is the

torch whose light is visible throughout the world, and proletarian hearts in every land are warmed by its glow . . .

*6 March 1921* – Today Kronstadt sent out by radio a statement of its position. It reads: 'Our cause is just, we stand for the power of Soviets, not parties. We stand for freely elected representatives of the laboring masses. The substitute Soviets manipulated by the Communist Party have always been deaf to our needs and demands; the only reply we have ever received was shooting . . . Comrades! They deliberately pervert the truth and resort to most despicable fabrications . . . In Kronstadt the whole power is exclusively in the hands of the revolutionary sailors, soldiers and workers – not with counter-revolutionaries led by some Kozlovsky, as the lying Moscow radio tries to make you believe . . . Do not delay, Comrades! Join us, get in touch with us: demand admission to Kronstadt for your delegates. Only they will tell you the whole truth and will expose the fiendish calumny about Finnish bread and Entente offers.

Long live the revolutionary proletariat and the peasantry!

Long live the power of freely elected Soviets.'

*7 March* – Distant rumbling reaches my ears as I cross the Nevsky. It sounds again, stronger and nearer, as if rolling toward me. All at once I realize that artillery is being fired. It is 6pm. Kronstadt has been attacked!

Days of anguish and cannonading. My heart is numb with despair; something has died within me. The people on the streets look bowed with grief, bewildered. No one trusts himself to speak. The thunder of heavy guns rends the air.

*17 March* – Kronstadt has fallen today.

Thousands of sailors and workers lie dead in its streets. Summary executions of prisoners and hostages continues . . .

*30 September* – Gray are the passing days. One by one the embers of hope have died out. Terror and despotism have crushed the life born in October. The slogans of the Revolution are forsworn, its ideals stifled in the blood of the people. The breath of yesterday is dooming millions to death; the shadow of today hangs like a black pall over the country. Dictatorship is trampling the masses under foot. The Revolution is dead; its spirit cries in the wilderness.

High time the truth about the Bolsheviks were told. The whited sepulcher must be unmasked, the clay feet of the fetish beguiling the international proletariat to fatal will o' the wisps exposed. The Bolshevik myth must be destroyed.

I have decided to leave Russia.

*Source: Alexander Berkman, The Bolshevik Myth (London, Pluto Press, 1989), pp. 115–16, 302–3, 318–19.*



Whether the intervention should be of an economic or philanthropic character was a year ago a secondary question. The Bolshevik régime being based almost entirely on abnormalities, it needed but the establishment of any organization on normal lines for the latter ultimately to supersede the former . . .

I make no excuse for concluding this book with the oft-quoted lines of 'the people's poet', Tiutchev, who said more about his country in four simple lines than all other poets, writers, and philosophers together. In their simplicity and beauty the lines are quite untranslatable, and my free adaptation to the English, which must needs be inadequate, I append with apologies to all Russians:

Umom Rossii nie poniatj;  
Arshinom obshchym nie izmieritj  
U niei osobiennaya statj –  
V Rossiu možno tolko vieritj.

Seek not by Reason to discern  
The soul of Russia: or to learn  
Her thoughts by measurements designed  
For other lands. Her heart, her mind,  
Her ways in suffering, woe, and need,  
Her aspirations and her creed,  
Are all her own –  
Depths undefined,  
To be discovered, fathomed, known  
By Faith alone.

*Source: Paul Dukes, Red Dusk and the Morrow: Adventures and Investigations in Red Russia (London, Williams and Norgate, 1923), pp. 274–5, 295, 296, 299, 308.*

### Putting the Lid on the Opposition

Lenin, fearing that power was slipping from his grasp, next turned his attention to the party itself. The discipline that had long been claimed was now at last imposed on the party. Note that this was not at a time of civil war – the last of the White forces had in late 1920 been defeated in the Crimea and General Wrangel and the remnants of his forces had gone into exile. Peace threatened Bolshevik rule perhaps more than war, and thus Lenin took the necessary action in two resolutions adopted by the Tenth Party Congress that defined the way that the party would work until Gorbachev began to make changes in the late 1980s. The Congress did make some economic concessions which turned into the New Economic Policy (NEP) (see chapter 4).

### Document 3.27 The 'Ban on Factions'

At the Tenth Congress, in the wake of the Kronstadt rebellion, two resolutions were passed at Lenin's insistence that were to have epochal significance, closing down the scope for debate in the party. The language used to denounce the Kronstadt insurgents was imported into intra-party discourse. The first was the resolution 'On Party Unity' (better known as the 'ban on factions').

1 The Congress calls the attention of all members of the party to the fact that the unity and solidarity of the ranks of the party, ensuring complete mutual confidence among party members and genuine team work, genuinely embodying the unanimity of will of the vanguard of the proletariat, are particularly essential at the present juncture when a number of circumstances are increasing the vacillation among the petty-bourgeois population of the country.

2 Notwithstanding this, even before the general party discussion on the trade unions certain signs of factionalism had been apparent in the party, viz. the formation of groups with separate platforms, striving to a certain degree to segregate and create their own group discipline. Such symptoms of factionalism were manifested, for example, at a party conference in Moscow (November 1920) and in Kharkov, both by the so-called 'Workers' Opposition' group, and partly by the so-called 'Democratic Centralism' group.

All class-conscious workers must clearly realise the perniciousness and impermissibility of factionalism of any kind, for no matter how the representatives of individual groups may desire to safeguard party unity, in practice factionalism inevitably leads to the weakening of team work and to intensified and repeated attempts by the enemies of the party, who have fastened themselves on to it because it is the governing party, to widen the cleavage and to use it for counter-revolutionary purposes.

The way the enemies of the proletariat take advantage of every deviation from the thoroughly consistent Communist line was perhaps most strikingly shown in the case of the Kronstadt mutiny, when the bourgeois counter-revolutionaries and White Guards in all countries of the world immediately expressed their readiness to accept even the slogans of the Soviet system, if only they might thereby secure the overthrow of the dictatorship of the proletariat in Russia, and when the Socialist Revolutionaries and the bourgeois counter-revolutionaries in general resorted in Kronstadt to slogans calling for an insurrection against the Soviet government of Russia ostensibly in the interest of Soviet power. These facts fully prove that the White Guards strive, and are able, to disguise themselves as Communists, and even as the most Left Communists, solely for the purpose of weakening and overthrowing the bulwark of the proletarian revolution in Russia . . .

4 In the practical struggle against factionalism, every organisation of the party must take strict measures to prevent any factional actions whatsoever.



Criticism of the party's shortcomings, which is absolutely necessary, must be conducted in such a way that every practical proposal shall be submitted immediately, without any delay, in the most precise form possible, for consideration and decision to the leading local and central bodies of the party. Moreover, everyone who criticises must see to it that the form of his criticism takes into account the position of the party, surrounded as it is by a ring of enemies, and that the content of his criticism is such that, by directly participating in Soviet and party work, he can test the rectification of the errors of the party or of individual party members in practice . . .

5 . . . While ruthlessly rejecting unpractical and factional pseudo-criticisms, the party will unceasingly continue – trying out new methods – to fight with all the means at its disposal against bureaucracy, for the extension of democracy and initiative, for detecting, exposing and expelling from the party elements that have wormed their way into its ranks, etc.

6 The Congress therefore hereby declares dissolved and orders the immediate dissolution of all groups without exception that have been formed on the basis of one platform or another (such as the 'Workers' Opposition' group, the 'Democratic-Centrism' group, etc.). Non-observance of this decision of the Congress shall involve absolute and immediate expulsion from the party.

7 In order to ensure strict discipline within the party and in all Soviet work and to secure the maximum unanimity in removing all factionalism the Congress authorises the Central Committee, in cases of breach of discipline or of a revival or toleration of factionalism, to apply all party penalties, including expulsion, and in regard to members of the Central Committee to reduce them to the status of alternate members and even, as an extreme measure, to expel them from the party. A necessary condition for the application of such an extreme measure to members of the Central Committee, alternate members of the Central Committee and members of the Control Commission is the convocation of a plenum of the Central Committee, to which all alternate members of the Central Committee and all members of the Control Commission shall be invited. If such a general assembly of the most responsible leaders of the party, by a two-thirds majority, deems it necessary to reduce a member of the Central Committee to the status of alternate member, or to expel him from the party, this measure shall be put into effect immediately.

Source: Lenin, 'O edinstve partii' ('On Party Unity'), Resolution of the Tenth Congress of the RCP(b), March 1921, PSS, vol. 43, pp. 89–93.

### Document 3.28 The End of the Trade Union Debate

The second resolution, 'On the Syndicalist and Anarchist Deviation in our Party', abruptly terminated the debate over the role of the scope of Soviet trade unions.

1 In the past few months a syndicalist and anarchist deviation has been definitely revealed in our party, and calls for the most resolute measures of ideological struggle and also for purging and restoring the health of the party.

2 The said deviation is due partly to the influx into the party of former Mensheviks and also of workers and peasants who have not yet fully assimilated the communist world outlook; mainly, however, this deviation is due to the influence exercised upon the proletariat and on the Russian Communist Party by the petty-bourgeois element, which is exceptionally strong in our country, and which inevitably engenders vacillation towards anarchism, particularly at a time when the conditions of the masses have sharply deteriorated as a consequence of the crop failure and the devastating effects of war, and when the demobilisation of the army numbering millions releases hundreds and hundreds of thousands of peasants and workers unable immediately to find regular means of livelihood.

3 The most theoretically complete and formulated expression of this deviation [see source note, p. 109] are the theses and other literary productions of the so-called 'Workers' Opposition' group. Sufficiently illustrative of this is, for example, the following thesis propounded by this group: 'The organisation of the administration of the national economy is the function of an All-Russian Producers' Congress organised in industrial trade unions, which elect a central organ for the administration of the entire national economy of the Republic.'

The ideas at the bottom of this and numerous analogous statements are radically wrong in theory, and represent complete rupture with Marxism and communism as well as with the practical experience of all semi-proletarian revolutions and of the present proletarian revolution . . .

Marxism teaches – and this tenet has not only been formally endorsed by the whole of the Communist International in the decisions of the Second (1920) Congress of the Comintern on the role of the political party of the proletariat, but has also been confirmed in practice by our revolution – that only the political party of the working class, i.e. the Communist Party, is capable of uniting, training and organising a vanguard of the proletariat and of the whole mass of the working people that alone will be capable of withstanding the inevitable petty-bourgeois vacillations of this mass and the inevitable traditions and relapses of narrow craft unionism or craft prejudices among the proletariat, and of guiding all the united activities of the whole of the proletariat, i.e. of leading it politically and, through it, the whole mass of the working people. Without this the dictatorship of the proletariat is impossible. . . .

5 In addition to theoretical fallacies and a radically wrong attitude towards the practical experience of economic construction already begun by the Soviet government, the Congress of the Russian Communist Party discerns in the views of these and analogous groups and persons a gross political



mistake and a direct political danger to the very existence of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

In a country like Russia, the overwhelming preponderance of the petty-bourgeois element and the devastation, impoverishment, epidemics, crop failures, extreme want and hardship inevitably resulting from the war engender particularly sharp vacillations in the moods of the petty-bourgeois and semi-proletarian masses. At one moment the wavering is in the direction of strengthening the alliance between these masses and the proletariat, and at another moment in the direction of bourgeois restoration. The whole experience of all revolutions in the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries shows with utmost and absolute clarity and conviction that the only possible result of these vacillations – if the unity, strength and influence of the revolutionary vanguard of the proletariat is weakened in the slightest degree – can be the restoration of the power and property of the capitalists and landlords.

Hence, the views of the 'Workers' Opposition' and of like-minded elements are not only wrong in theory, but in practice are an expression of petty-bourgeois anarchist wavering, in practice weaken the consistency of the leading line of the Communist Party, and in practice help the class enemies of the proletarian revolution.

6 In view of all this, the Congress of the Russian Communist Party, emphatically rejecting the said ideas which express a syndicalist and anarchist deviation, deems it necessary:

First, to wage an unswerving and systematic ideological struggle against these ideas;

Second, the Congress regards the propaganda of these ideas as being incompatible with membership of the Russian Communist Party.

Instructing the Central Committee of the party strictly to enforce these decisions the Congress at the same time points out that space can and should be devoted in special publications, symposiums, etc., for a most comprehensive interchange of opinion among party members on all the questions herein indicated.

Source: Lenin, 'O sindikalistskom i anarkhistskom uklone v nashei partii' ('On the Syndicalist and Anarchist Deviation in our Party'), Resolution of the Tenth Congress of the RCP(b), March 1921, PSS, vol. 43, pp. 93–7.

### Bolshevism in Perspective

In a letter to Lunacharsky on 22 September 1920, the writer V. Korolenko had noted that 'Russia stands at the crossroads between two Utopias: the Utopia of the past and the Utopia of the future, and is deciding into which Utopia to throw itself.' The only option that appeared excluded was 'normal' practical development.

### Document 3.29 Sukhanov, *Notes on the Revolution*

Nikolai Sukhanov had been a witness to the revolution of 1917 and in 1922 produced one of the most perceptive analyses of the revolutionary events and of Lenin personally.

There can be no doubt, above all, that Lenin is an extraordinary phenomenon. He is a man with extraordinary mental powers . . . If I had to find a term or epithet, I would not hesitate to call Lenin a genius, bearing in mind what is meant by the term genius. A genius is, as is well known, an 'abnormal' person, who is 'not quite right in the head'. More concretely, he is a person with an extremely narrow sphere of mental activity, but who in that sphere works with extraordinary force and productivity. A genius is an extremely narrow person, a chauvinist to the core, who is not receptive to and is unable to understand the most simple and straightforward things . . . Lenin is undoubtedly like this, whose mind cannot understand many elementary truths, even in the field of social movements. From this arose an endless number of elementary mistakes by Lenin both in the period of his agitation and demagogy and in the period of his dictatorship. But in the sphere of the intellect Lenin had a few 'core ideas' that he pursued with amazing force, with superhuman endeavour, to ensure his enormous influence among socialists and revolutionaries . . .

The Bolshevik party was Lenin's work and his alone. Dozens and hundreds of people passed through in responsible posts, changing one after the other the revolutionary generations, but Lenin unshakeably stood at his post, defining alone the physiognomy of the party and sharing power with no one . . . Developing 'leftism', his shameless radicalism, primitive demagogy, held back by neither learning nor common sense, later guaranteed him success among the proletarian-peasant masses, having no experience other than the tsarist whip . . .

A Utopianist and fantasist, focused on abstractions, Lenin was also a brilliant realist politician, both in the large and the small. 'To set Europe alight', to provoke the 'worldwide socialist revolution', to secure the flag of socialism by Lenin's methods was not possible and will not be. But to conquer one's own party, putting aside all one's own knowledge, this Lenin was able to do brilliantly, taking advantage of all favourable circumstances, invoking to assist him the shades of Bonaparte and Machiavelli.

Source: N. Sukhanov, *Zapiski o revolyutsii*, cited in *Literaturnaya gazeta*: dos'e, no. 5, 1992, p. 8.