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RUSSIAN SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC EMIGRATION DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR: FROM INTERNATIONALISTS TO DEFENDERS (ОБОРОНЦЫ, *OBORONTSY*)

World War I, which ended more than a hundred years ago, is no longer just a historical event, as Russia's current war against Ukraine has brought to the forefront the problems that confronted European and Russian society in 1914. These problems were particularly acute for the democratic and left-wing forces and, in particular, for Social Democracy. The First World War radically changed the balance of forces within Social Democracy, by drawing a new watershed and focusing not on old factional divisions and disputes (which had lost much of their relevance and retained only part of their significance), but on attitudes to a new major factor in Russian and European life – the war.

In principle, attitudes towards the war were repeatedly discussed at international socialist congresses, and in theory Social Democracy was ready for it. At the 1907 Stuttgart Congress of the II International a resolution on militarism and armed conflicts was adopted which ended with the following words: “When war threatens, the working classes of the countries concerned and their representatives in parliament must do everything possible, with the support of the International Socialist Bureau, to prevent war by such means as they deem most valid and which naturally change with the aggravation of the class struggle and the general political situation. In the event that war does break out, they should actively advocate a speedy end to it and strive by all means to use the

economic and political crisis caused by the war to excite the popular masses and hasten the fall of capitalist class domination”¹. This resolution was confirmed at the Copenhagen Congress of the II International in 1910.

An Extraordinary International Socialist Congress was held in Basel on 24–25 November 1912. It was convened due to the danger of an imperialist world war, the threat of which had risen with the outbreak of the First Balkan War. The unanimously adopted war manifesto stated that “The proletariat considers it a crime to shoot each other for the profit of the capitalists, for the ambition of the dynasties, for the fulfillment of secret diplomatic treaties”, and called upon the workers “to oppose capitalist imperialism with the strength of the international solidarity of the proletariat”, and in case of war to use the economic and political crisis caused by the war to fight for the socialist revolution.

Nevertheless, the Social Democratic deputies in the parliaments of European countries took a stand in support of their governments in the war that had broken out. In the Reichstag on 4 August 1914, the social-democratic faction voted in favour of granting the Kaiser's government a 5-billion war loan. It later transpired that the left-wing social-democrats had been against granting war loans to the government before the Reichstag meeting, but had obeyed the decision of the majority. In Belgium in the Chamber of Deputies the Socialists voted unanimously in favour of the war credits. The leader of the Belgian Socialists and Chairman of the International Socialist Bureau of the II International, Emile Vandervelde, joined the Belgian government as Minister of Justice. The leaders of the French Socialist Party pursued the same line. On 4 August the Socialists in the French Parliament voted unanimously for war credits, martial law and military censorship, i.e. forbidding strikes, meetings etc. At the end of August the Socialists, Jules Guesde and Marcel Sembat, and a little later Albert Thomas, joined the French government (the Ministry of “National Defence”).

According to Leon Trotsky (as it was written in his Swiss diary on 9 August), Hermann Greulich (one of the founders of the Swiss Social-Democratic Party, and in 1887–1925 the Secretary of the Swiss Workers' Union) explained this behaviour of the leaders of European Social-Democratic parties and the Second International to him as follows: “The International does not exist now. They are stronger than we are. When we act as a vanguard, we consider ourselves a force. But when the great masses take the stage, then it turns out that we are still a small minority. This is the unraveling of everything that happens. And when we find ourselves in a clear minority, then the general mood powerfully takes hold of our people too”².

¹ The latter thesis was introduced by Vladimir Lenin, Leo Martov and Rosa Luxemburg when discussing the draft resolution drawn up by August Bebel. “I well remember, Lenin later wrote, that the final editing of this amendment was preceded by lengthy direct negotiations between us and Bebel. The first revision spoke much more directly of revolutionary agitation and revolutionary action. We showed it to Bebel; he replied: I do not accept it, because the prosecuting authority would then dissolve our party organisations, and we do not go for this while there is nothing serious yet. After a meeting with the lawyers in the field and many times reworking the text in order to express the same idea legally, a final formula has been found, which Bebel agreed to accept” (В.И. Ленин, *Полное собрание сочинение*, т. 30, p. 238).

² Л.Д. Троцкий, *Война и революция*, т. 1, Москва–Петроград, 1924, pp. 50–51.

The Russian Social-Democrats faced the First World War within a party which was formally united but in fact split into two independent factions, the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks. Despite the formal decision of the January Plenum of the Central Committee of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP) (Paris, 2–23 January (15 January – 5 February), 1910), which was attended by representatives of all factions and groups, about the liquidation of the faction centres and closure of the faction organs and the need to call a general party conference to restore the former unity of the Party, in 1912 two conferences were held. These conferences which fixed not only the division of the Party into two factions but also the actual transformation of these factions into independent parties, although they continued to call themselves Social-Democrats (S-D).

On 18–30 (5–17) January 1912, a conference was held in Prague, at which representatives of all the national organisations and other party groups, except the Bolsheviks and left Mensheviks (меньшевики-партийцы, *mensheviki-partijtsy*) were absent. This conference had declared itself, nevertheless, at Vladimir Lenin's insistence, the all-party conference and supreme body of the party. The Prague conference marked a decisive stage of the division of the united RSDLP into two independent parties in the pre-October history of Russian Social-Democracy. So far, however, no one dared to give up the common name, all the more so because in Russia the majority of workers, sympathising with the S-D and sharing their ideas, did not want to hear the word “split”, considering it necessary to work together in the interests of the working class.

A conference, assembled as a counterbalance to the Prague one, mainly on the initiative of Leon Trotsky, was held in Vienna from 26 (13) August to 2 (20) September 1912. Its delegates included 10 Mensheviks (5 with a casting vote and 5 with a deliberative vote), 4 Bolshevik Party members (3 and 1), 2 left Menshevik (меньшевики-партийцы, *mensheviki-partijtsy*) (1 and 1) and 17 non-factionary Social-Democrats (9 and 8), including the Bundists and Latvians.³ “Compared with the Prague conference, the composition of the gathering in Vienna was clearly more diverse in terms of party-faction. At the same time, there were fewer workers than intellectuals, and there was also less representation from Russian illegal organisations”.⁴ The “August” bloc established in Vienna proved to be considerably less solid than the association of the Bolsheviks – supporters of Lenin. This fragility was predetermined by the too heterogeneous composition of the participants in the Vienna conference, which precluded unity of purpose. As further events showed, this conference failed to restore the unity of the RSDLP and, moreover, failed to unite even the Mensheviks.

The war created a new balance of forces within the RSDLP, and the attitude towards the war became decisive in the formation of new factions. The views of the S-D emigrants played the most important role in the development of key ideological guidelines, since it was abroad that the main ideological forces had been concentrated as a result of the mass “exodus” following the defeat of the 1905–1907 revolution. Moreover, the

³ For details see: *Конференции РСДРП 1912 года. Документы и материалы*, сост., автор коммент. Ю.Н. Амиантов и др.; пер. с нем. С.А. Гаврильченко, Москва, 2008.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 24.

S-D who legally stayed in Russia (mainly Mensheviks) were greatly restricted in their utterances by military censorship, and those serving jail sentences or exile had practically no opportunity to express themselves publicly. In analyzing the positions of various groupings in Social Democracy, we will try to structure our narrative from the left, from the internationalists (or “defeatists” – пораженцы, *porazhentsy*), to the right, towards the “patriots” (or “defenders” – оборонцы, *oborontsy*).

An extreme and consistent internationalist stance was taken from the outbreak of the war by the Bolsheviks – Lenin’s supporters. He himself formulated his position in early September 1914 in a document best known as “Тезисы о войне” (“Theses on War”). He made a report developing these theses at a meeting of the Bernese group of Bolshevik emigrants on 6 September 1914. After discussion and adoption as a resolution, these theses, signed by “Group of Social-Democrats, members of the RSDLP”, were sent to other Bolshevik sections abroad and also forwarded to Russia for discussion by the Russian section of the Central Committee, the Bolshevik Duma faction and Party organisations. It was intended to publish the theses as a separate sheet, but soon it was decided instead to issue a manifesto written on their basis under the title “Война и российская социал-демократия” (War and Russian Social-Democracy) which was eventually signed by “The Central Committee of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party” and printed as a leading article in the Central organ of the RSDLP – the newspaper “Социал-Демократ” (Social-Democrat), No. 33, 1 November 1914. These documents pointed out that “the European and world war has the clearly defined character of a bourgeois, imperialist, dynastic war”; “the conduct of the leaders of the German social-democratic Party, the strongest and the most influential in the II International (1889–1914), a party which has voted for the war credits [...] is sheer betrayal of socialism” that cannot in any way be justified, as well as the conduct of the leaders of the Belgian and French social-democratic parties “who have betrayed socialism by entering bourgeois governments”; “the betrayal of socialism by most leaders of the II International (1889–1914) signifies the ideological and political bankruptcy of that International”; “neither group of belligerents is inferior to the other in spoilation, atrocities and the boundless brutality of war”; “but to hoodwink the proletariat and distract its attention from the only genuine war of liberation, namely, a civil war against the bourgeoisie both of its ‘own’ and of ‘foreign’ countries – to achieve so lofty an aim – the bourgeoisie of each country is trying, with the help of false phrases about patriotism, to extol the significance of its ‘own’ national war, asserting that it is out to defeat the enemy, not for plunder and the seizure of territory, but for the ‘liberation’ of all other peoples except its own”; “the task of Social Democracy in Russia is particularly, and first and foremost, to fight mercilessly and unconditionally against Great Russian and Tsarist-Monarchist chauvinism...”; “it is impossible to determine, from the standpoint of the international proletariat, the defeat of which of the two groups of belligerent nations would be the lesser evil for socialism. But to us Russian Social-Democrats there cannot be the slightest doubt that, from the standpoint of the working class and of the toiling masses of all the nations of Russia, the defeat of the tsarist monarchy, the most reactionary and barbarous of governments, which is oppressing the largest number of nations and the greatest mass of the population

of Europe and Asia, would be the lesser evil”; the slogans of Social-Democracy at the present time must be “firstly all-embracing propaganda, involving the army and the theatre of hostilities as well, for the socialist revolution and the need to use weapons, not against their brothers, the wage slaves in other countries, but against the reactionary and bourgeois governments and parties of all countries [...] secondly, as an immediate slogan, propaganda for republics in Germany, Poland, Russia, and other countries, and for the transforming of all the separate states of Europe into a republican United States of Europe; thirdly, and particularly, a struggle against the tsarist monarchy and Great-Russian, Pan-Slavist chauvinism, and advocacy of a revolution in Russia, as well as of the liberation of and self-determination for nationalities oppressed by Russia, coupled with the immediate slogans of a democratic republic, the confiscation of the landed estates, and an eight-hour working day”; “but in all the advanced countries the war has placed on the order of the day the slogan of socialist revolution, a slogan that is the more urgent, the more heavily the burden of war presses upon the shoulders of the proletariat, and the more active its future role must become in the re-creation of Europe, after the horrors of the present ‘patriotic’ barbarism in conditions of the tremendous technological progress of large-scale capitalism”; “the conversion of the present imperialist war into a civil war is the only correct proletarian slogan, one that follows from the experience of the Commune, and outlined in the Basle resolution (1912); it has been dictated by all the conditions of an imperialist war between highly developed bourgeois countries”⁵.

From the same standpoint, Lenin criticised Georgi Plekhanov at his public speech on “Об отношении социалистов к войне” (The Socialist Attitude to War) held in Lausanne on 11 October 1914, at the invitation of a local group of emigrant Mensheviks (see below for Plekhanov’s position). It was the last face-to-face discussion between the two recognised leaders of Russian Social Democracy⁶. According to a brief newspaper report published in “Голос” (“Golos”, Voice) on 21 October 1914, objecting to Plekhanov, Lenin stressed that “the proletariat must not take part in defending the old framework of bourgeois states, but create a new framework of socialist republics”. “It is better to go to a neutral country and tell the truth from there, better to address the proletariat with a free independent word than to become a minister”, is how the opponent ends his brief speech⁷.

Two days later, in Lausanne, Lenin gave an essay on “Пролетариат и война” (The Proletariat and War), in which he developed the theses expressed in his polemic with Plekhanov. Since the text of the abstract has not been preserved, we refer again to the report of the correspondent of the newspaper “Golos”. In detailing the nature of the wars of the 18th and 19th centuries, Lenin stressed that “today’s war is imperialist, and that is its basic character”. Moving on to the definition of “fatherland” from a socialist point of view, Lenin stressed: “The proletariat cannot love what it does not have. The proletariat has no fatherland”. As for the tasks of the socialists in the coming war, they are defined

⁵ V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works* [in English], vol. 21, Moscow, 1964, pp. 15–20, 25–35.

⁶ For more details see: С.В. Тютюкин, *Г.В.Плеханов: Судьба русского марксиста*, Москва, 1997, pp. 309–313.

⁷ В.И. Ленин, *Полное собрание...*, т. 26, pp. 25–26.

by the resolutions of the Stuttgart, Copenhagen and Basel Congresses, and therefore "one must go and do one's work as a socialist" – "It is impossible to pass from capitalism to socialism without breaking the national framework, just as it was impossible to pass from feudalism to capitalism without national ideas"⁸.

Later, justifying and defending the idea of "defeatism" (пораженчество, *porazhenchestvo*,) and polemicising with the proponents of "defending one's fatherland", Lenin wrote in his article "О национальной гордости великороссов" (On the national pride of Great Russians): "No nation can be free if it oppresses other nations," said Marx and Engels... And, full of a sense of national pride, we Great-Russian workers want, come what may, a free and independent, a democratic, republican and proud Great Russia, one that will base its relations with its neighbors on the human principle of equality, and not on the feudalist principle of privilege, which is so degrading to a great nation. [...] We say that the Great Russians cannot 'defend the fatherland' otherwise than by desiring the defeat of tsarism in any war, this as the lesser evil to nine-tenths of the inhabitants of Great Russia"⁹.

In characterizing the position of Lenin and his supporters, one cannot fail to note their intolerance, their inclination to split, their desire to expel from their ranks those who disagreed (even in particulars) with the "general line of the Party", which in orthodox Bolshevik literature and later in official Soviet historiography was glorified as ideological principledness and "the struggle for the purity of the ranks". As applied to the period of the First World War, this was expressed in calls to declare war on the "social-chauvinists" and "opportunists" who were traitors to the cause of the working class, and such an interpretation of "the unity of the proletarian struggle for the socialist revolution" that "now, after 1914, demands the unconditional separation of the workers' parties from the opportunist parties". A quite logical continuation of this kind of reasoning was the understanding of internationalism within the party: "A genuinely proletarian internationalist policy cannot be pursued, active opposition to the war cannot be preached, and forces for such action cannot be mustered while we are in the company of the opportunists and the social-chauvinists"¹⁰.

To consolidate the Bolsheviks abroad, at the initiative of Lenin in Bern, 14–19 February (27 February – 4 March), 1915, a conference of foreign sections of the RSDLP was held, which discussed both purely emigrant and general political issues. Despite the existence of disagreements on the eve of the conference, the resolutions reflected only the Leninist point of view: they stated the imperialist character of the modern war and pointed out that "more than ever before, the words of the 'Communist Manifesto' are now true, that 'the workers have no fatherland'. Only the international struggle of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie can safeguard its gains and open to the oppressed masses the way to a better future", that "the civil war to which revolutionary social-democracy is calling in the present epoch is the struggle of the proletariat with arms in hand against the bourgeoisie for the expropriation of the capitalist class in the advanced capitalist

⁸ *Ibidem*, т. 26, pp. 28–35.

⁹ V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works...*, p. 104.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 114.

countries, for a democratic revolution in Russia (democratic republic, 8-hour working day, confiscation of the landed estates) – for a republic in the backward monarchist countries in general, etc.”, that “as the first steps towards the transformation of the modern imperialist war into a civil war, we must point out: 1) the unconditional renunciation of war credits and the withdrawal from bourgeois ministries; 2) the complete break with the policy of ‘national peace’ (*bloc national, Burgfrieden*); 3) the establishment of an illegal organisation everywhere wherever governments and the bourgeoisie, by imposing martial law, abolish constitutional freedoms; 4) the support of fraternising (братание, *bratanie*) soldiers of warring nations in the trenches and in theatres of war generally; 5) supporting all kinds of revolutionary mass actions of the proletariat in general”, that “the collapse of the Second International is the collapse of socialist opportunism”, that “it would be a harmful illusion to hope for the restoration of a truly socialist International without a complete organisational separation from the opportunists. The RSDLP must support all kinds of international and revolutionary mass actions of the proletariat, striving to bring together all the anti-chauvinist elements of the International”, that “propaganda for peace at present, not accompanied by a call for revolutionary action by the masses, can only sow illusion, corrupt the proletariat by instilling confidence in the humanity of the bourgeoisie and make it a toy in the hands of the secret diplomacy of the warring countries. In particular, the idea that a so-called democratic world is possible without a series of revolutions is deeply mistaken”. “The Russian victory entails a strengthening of world reaction, a strengthening of reaction within the country, and is accompanied by the total enslavement of the peoples in the areas already conquered. Because of this, the defeat of Russia under all conditions appears to be the least evil”. “The task of the S-D workers' party in Russia is to further strengthen the proletarian unity created in 1912–1914, especially by ‘Правда’ [‘Pravda’, ‘The Truth’ a legal Bolshevik newspaper published in St.-Petersburg – A.M.], and restore the party organisations of the working class on the basis of a decisive organisational separation from the social-chauvinists. Temporary agreements are admissible only with those social-democrats which stand for a decisive organisational break with ОК (Организационный комитет, Organisational Committee, a Menshevik body – A.M.), ‘Наша Заря’ (‘Nasha Zarya’, ‘Our Dawn’) and the Bund”¹¹.

Since the discussion of the slogan “United States of Europe” took on a purely political character, it was decided to postpone the question “until the *economic* side of the case was discussed in the press”. Lenin returned to this question in a work under the same title, in which he formulated the conclusion that this slogan was wrong, while at the same time putting forward a position new to Marxism that socialism could win in a single, isolated country: “A free union of nations in socialism is impossible without a more or less prolonged and stubborn struggle of the socialist republics against the backward states”¹².

¹¹ See: КПСС в резолюциях и решениях съездов, конференций и Пленумов ЦК, 7 издание, ч. 1, Москва, 1953, pp. 325–331.

¹² V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works...*, vol. 21, pp. 342–343.

The resolutions of the Bern conference, together with other materials, were published as a supplement to the Leninist work “Социализм и война (Отношение РСДРП к войне)” (Socialism and War (Attitude of the RSDLP towards the War)), (Grigory Zinoviev took part in the work on this brochure), which was conceived by Lenin in connection with the preparation for the first international socialist conference, published on the eve of the Zimmerwald conference¹³ in a small brochure in Russian and German and distributed among the conference participants. After the conference it was published in French and published in its entirety in Norwegian in the organ of the Norwegian Left social-democrats. It reached Russia in limited numbers and was circulated illegally.

In this work Lenin's basic views on the war and the role and tasks of Social-Democracy under the new conditions were set out, substantiated on historical material and promoted in a fairly popular form. The main idea of the work is to justify the necessity of not only an ideological but also an organisational break¹⁴ between the supporters of the internationalist viewpoint, who consider the defeat of the tsarist regime the least evil for the Russian proletariat, and the defenders of the idea of defending the fatherland in the ongoing war, whom Lenin calls opportunists and social-chauvinists, which in his mouth sounds like an undoubted and very strong invective.

At the beginning of 1916, in the “Предложение Центрального комитета РСДРП Второй социалистической конференции” (Proposal of the Central Committee of the RSDLP for a Second Socialist Conference)¹⁵ (this document was distributed for discussion among the Bolshevik organisations and left social-democrats of France, Germany,

¹³ The first international socialist conference, convened at the initiative of the Italian and Swiss socialists, was held in Zimmerwald, 5–8 September, 1915. The conference was attended by 38 delegates from 11 European countries: Germany, France, Italy, Russia, Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, Sweden, Norway, Netherlands and Switzerland. The largest parties of the Second International – the German Social Democratic Party and the French Socialist Party – were not officially represented; 10 delegates represented the three different shades of opposition in German Social Democracy; from France the opposition elements of the professional movement were present. The Balkan Federation of Socialists, the opposition of Swedish Social Democracy and the Norwegian Youth Union, the Left Socialists of Holland, the Regional Board of the Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania also sent delegates to the conference. The Central Committee of the RSDLP was represented at the conference by Lenin and Grigory Zinoviev. Pavel Axelrod and Martov (from the Menshevik OK of the RSDLP) and Victor Chernov and Mark Natanson (from the Socialist-Revolutionary Party) also attended the conference. Largely thanks to Lenin's efforts, among the conference delegates stood out the so-called Zimmerwald Left, which stood on the most consistent internationalist positions and presented its draft resolution on the war and tasks of social-democracy and the draft manifesto, some provisions of which were nevertheless included in the manifesto adopted by the conference (the text of which was prepared by Leo Trotsky), rejected by the majority of the conference. According to Lenin, the rallying of this group was “one of the most important facts and one of the greatest successes of the conference” (В.И. Ленин, *Полное собрание...*, т. 27, p. 43).

¹⁴ In a separate chapter, entitled *История раскола и теперешнее положение социал-демократии в России* (The history of the split and the present state of Social Democracy in Russia), the entire history of Russian Social Democracy is expounded precisely from the point of view of an internal struggle and schism, the separation of the “clean” from the “unclean”.

¹⁵ The second international socialist conference, held in Kiental, Switzerland, on 24–30 April 1916, was attended by 43 delegates from 10 countries: Russia, Germany, France, Italy, Switzerland, Poland, Norway, Austria, Serbia and Portugal. In addition, some representatives of the left handed over their credentials to other parties. The left group proved to be stronger than at the previous conference in Zimmerwald.

England, Switzerland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and other countries), Lenin describes the split in the international socialist movement as an accomplished fact.

The Bolshevik position cannot be reduced only to Lenin's point of view, as Soviet historiography usually did, in which all opinions different from those of the "leader of the world proletariat" were declared a priori erroneous or deviationist. Nevertheless, there were always people and groups within Bolshevism who disagreed with Lenin on key issues. The years of World War I were no exception.

The Leninist slogan of contributing to the defeat of his government in the imperialist war, in particular, provoked considerable controversy. For example, Nikolai Bukharin believed that one could passively wish military failures for Russia, but not contribute to them. He wrote: "I personally think that 'defeat of Russia' is not a slogan for us – and this must be emphasised with all our strength – i.e., a party directive entailing certain practical actions contributing to defeat"¹⁶. He considered the possibility of extending the defeat slogan to all belligerent countries to be a "social myth". He declared himself a supporter of the civil war slogan, understood as the struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat and socialism, and considered it quite sufficient. In addition, he pointed out the unsuitability of the defeat slogan for the agitation in the masses, which would not understand what good can come from the defeat of the Russian army¹⁷.

It is necessary to say separately about a position of "revolutionary pacifism", which appeared at the end of 1914 – the beginning of 1915 in a number of Bolshevik groups abroad (Montpellier, Geneva, Bogis) and in Russia. Alexandra Kollontai, a brilliant representative of revolutionary pacifism, in her anti-war appeal "Товарищам социалисткам, работницам всех стран" (To Comrades Socialist women, workers of all countries"), noted that the task of the moment was to demand peace now, without delay, until hostilities, hunger and exhaustion gave one of the warring parties the upper hand. In the appeal, however, it was described not a peace made by the bourgeois diplomats in the interests of one grouping of imperialist states, but a peace made under the influence of the struggle of the proletariat of all countries: "We demand peace, but not the peace that crowned heads and capitalists want to dictate to the peoples. We want the peace that the international proletariat will conclude over the heads of the perpetrators of the modern slaughter [...] We demand an end to the slaughter of the peoples, we demand peace dictated by the proletariat itself, we call for a struggle against the perpetrators of war, for a disarmed, international, non-class humanity!"¹⁸

Both Kollontai and Alexander Shlyapnikov, who stood on similar positions, considered Lenin's civil war slogan too abstract, incomprehensible to the masses, and instead proposed a slogan of peace which would resonate with the workers and at the same time lead to inevitable clashes between the working masses and the authorities, seeking to continue the war at all costs.

¹⁶ Quoted from С.В. Тютюкин, *Война, мир, революция: Идеиная борьба в рабочем движении России 1914–1917 гг.*, Москва, 1972, p. 147.

¹⁷ See *ibidem*, pp. 147–148.

¹⁸ Quoted from: *ibidem*, p. 121.

In the camp of the internationalists, a place between the Bolshevik-Leninists and the editorial staff of "Golos" (later "Наше Слово" – "Nashe Slovo", Our Word) (about them see below) was occupied by the *впередовцы* (*vperedovtsy*, members of the leftist Bolshevik group "Вперед" ("Vpered", Forward) formed around Alexander Bogdanov in late 1909¹⁹). Finding points of convergence with the positions of both of these currents, the *vperevedovtsy* criticised the latter for "hesitation and indecision, sometimes half-spoken and vague practical proposals", and the former for the "idealistic explanation of the collapse and the desire to turn the party into a sect with fixed dogma", for their characteristic "decisiveness, sometimes bordering on lack of a comprehensive understanding of unfolding events", for their "often utopian and internally contradictory practical proposals"²⁰.

However, aversion to individual points or aspects of the programme of one or another group of internationalists did not prevent the *vperedovtsy* from co-operating with them. Moreover, they made it one of their objectives "to agitate for the unification of all the revolutionary-internationalist elements, despite some differences that do not go beyond the basic principles of revolutionary Marxism"²¹.

However, we cannot fail to note that the *vperedovtsy* criticised Leninists much more sharply than, for example, the editorial board of "Nashe Slovo". This, it seems to us, was partly a kind of "tribute to tradition" that had developed over many years of polemic between the two branches of Bolshevism. On the other hand, it was the ideological closeness of those and others (after all, *vperedovtsy* always considered themselves Bolsheviks) that made *vperedovtsy* be so jealous of the erroneous steps of Leninists, from their point of view. Already in February 1917. Anatoly Lunacharsky formulated this position: "The S-D current led by Lenin is dear to us, too much is connected with its future in the near future of the Russian proletariat, and when its ideological leaders do something wrong, we feel bitter, even when this 'step' is dominated by elements of the comic"²².

A more "quiet" attitude toward the mistakes of "Nashe Slovo" allowed the *vpere-dovtsy* to cooperate quite actively with this newspaper during the first year of the war. However, this cooperation, in turn, obliged them to soften their criticism of the newspaper. Nevertheless, I. Bezrabortny (Dmitry Manuilsky, editorial board member) and A. Voinov (Lunacharsky, newspaper employee) signed an "dissenting opinion" after the resolution on the principles of disassociation and unity in the International's revival adopted by the editorial board and Paris staff of "Nashe Slovo" on 9 May 1915. In contrast to the majority, which dissociated itself from supporters of both "unity by all means" (the OK and Bund line) and "schism by all means" (the position of newspaper "Social Democrat"), but was nevertheless inclined to compromise and agreement with the hesitant and inconsistent

¹⁹ Alexander Bogdanov left the group in the spring of 1911, when, in his opinion, it "began to move from cultural-propaganda work to policy in a foreign spirit". By the beginning of the First World War, *Впередовство* (*Vperedovstvo*) was represented by the Geneva and Paris circles and separate organisations in Russia. For more details see: А.Ю. Морозова, "Неленинский большевизм" А.А. Богданова и "впередовцев": идеи, альтернативы, практика, Москва-Санкт-Петербург, 2020.

²⁰ "Вперед", 25 August 1915.

²¹ *Ibidem*.

²² "Вперед", 1 February 1917.

elements of their factions in terms of internationalism, the supporters of the dissenting opinion considered that “the conditions for the further development of revolutionary social-democracy in Russia and its struggle in the ranks of the international proletarian movement require a decisive organisational separation of the vast majority of the RSDLP from that social-nationalist current which represents in Russia the germ of the emerging imperialist workers' party”. At the same time, “genuine party unity of the RSDLP can be achieved not by artificially preserving the old factions and [...] foreign groups and circles [...], but only by the rallying together of all the S-D internationalist elements for revolutionary action, irrespective of their former factional affiliation”. Therefore, “in pursuing this task, ‘Nashe Slovo’ [...] must strive for rapprochement in the first place with the elements grouped around the newspaper ‘Social-Democrat’, as already radically dissociated [...] with all shades of social patriotism”²³. The Geneva Idea Circle “Vpered” supported its comrades and adopted a special resolution on the subject²⁴.

For the internationalists, faced with the task of not just restoring the old, but creating a new Workers' International, it was important, after realising the very fact of the collapse of the old organisation, to understand first of all the causes of this collapse. Answering this question, the *vperedovtsy* remained faithful to their old ideas. In the first part of the article of Valerian Polyanski “Questions of Time”, published in “Nashe Slovo”, first of all it paid attention to the fact that “the organisation of the International is broken, but the idea of the International is alive”. Therefore “the main task must be to work not only in breadth but also in depth. The Third Workers' International must be called so because of its spirit and the nature of its activities, not because of its organisational form”²⁵. According to Polyanski, the lack of “work in depth” was one of the main reasons for the collapse of the II International: “The class consciousness of the proletariat, poisoned for years by the poison of opportunism, became captive to bourgeois ideology, and the working class failed to overturn and destroy the slogan of national unity and defence of the fatherland. More than that, it has become a servant of the bourgeoisie...”, he wrote in the first issue of the “Vpered” newspaper²⁶.

In the second part of the article, published in “Nashe Slovo” on 22 June 1915 (two months later and already under the heading “Free Tribune”, indicating a certain distance between the editorial board and the views of the author of this article), it was stressed that the cause of uniting the international proletariat must begin by separating the internationalists from the social-chauvinists, who “have no place in the International not because they have turned right from Marxism, not because they are opportunists – they have turned completely away from Marxism [...] Internationalism and nationalism are two political systems diametrically opposed to each other”²⁷. Therefore, when we talk about unity, we are referring to the unity of the S-D internationalists.

²³ “Наше слово”, 6 June 1915.

²⁴ Российский государственный архив социально-политической истории (РГАСПИ), Фонд 436, Опись 1, Дело 19, Лист 1.

²⁵ “Наше слово”, 18 March 1915.

²⁶ “Вперед”, 25 August 1915.

²⁷ “Наше слово”, 22 June 1915.

At the same time, the author of the article is far from rejecting those internationalists, whose views have the tinge of opportunism: “While separating ourselves from the social-chauvinists with the greatest determination and being quite aware of where opportunism can lead, at the same time we can't put them on the same board: the first are outside the proletariat, the second are grouped closely together around the workers banner, around the class struggle slogan”²⁸. Therefore opportunism can be overcome not by splits with its supporters with the internationalist standpoint, but by an ideological struggle within the proletarian organisation. Polanski also developed this idea in articles published in a newspaper published by the Geneva *vperedovtsy*²⁹. Polanski preached the necessity of a decisive (including organisational) break with the social-patriots and cooperation with those internationalists who were under the influence of opportunism in practically all his articles in “Vpered”. At the same time, he called to unite all internationalists without distinction of old groups in his faction, and abandon the sectarian view of the Party, while fighting the chauvinists within his faction³⁰.

However, in the “Vpered” milieu there was also another point of view on the question of unity and schism, which found expression in an article by Lunacharsky in the third volume of “Vpered”. He was of the opinion that the organisational split of the old parties was not advantageous at the moment, and therefore the Internationalists could remain within the same organisation as the Social-Patriots³¹.

In the second volume of “Vpered”, an article entitled “Наша программа в России и в Интернационале” (Our Programme in Russia and in the International) was published. It was printed unsigned and was seen as the very beginning of the publication of the draft platform³². Believing that victory in the war would lead to the triumph of reaction in the country, the *vperedovtsy* did not regard themselves as the “defeatists”, believing that the defeat would fall heavily on the shoulders of the working masses first of all. That is why they “rejected all positions of question which proceeded from the game of military forces of imperialisms equally hostile to us, and contrasted them all with the great power of the international proletariat”³³.

A year after the outbreak of the war, however, they put the question differently: “An early peace means a relative defeat. Continuation of the war means total defeat”. It is obvious that the working class is interested in ending the war as soon as possible, dragged out by the bourgeoisie in the name of its profits. But “the only real salvation for popular Russia lies in its radical democratisation”. “If the revolution had arrived before the conclusion of peace”, continued the author of the article his reasoning, a democratic government, “having peace as its slogan”, would have turned to Europe with the offer of peace without

²⁸ *Ibidem*.

²⁹ See: В. Полянский, *Русские социал-шовинисты и задачи революционной социал-демократии*, “Вперед”, 25 August 1915.

³⁰ See: *Задачи дня*, “Вперед”, № 3, 21 January 1916.

³¹ “Вперед”, № 3.

³² See РГАСПИ, Фонд 157, Опись 2, Дело 31, Лист 1 (letter of 28 August 1915).

³³ “Вперед”, 20 October 1915.

annexations and contributions, and “by the very fact of its democracy new Russia would have already disarmed its enemies”.

However, another option is more likely – peace would be concluded before Russia gets a democratic government. Then the first demand of the proletariat should be a Constituent Assembly, and also the renunciation of military alliances and the creation of a democratic United States of Europe, and the general disarmament and disarmament of Russia, while it simultaneously organises a defensive force in the form of a “model militia”. Further, the “triumph of freedom” would make it possible to keep all the nations now oppressed by autocracy in a fruitful union, and in the field of domestic politics the proletariat would advocate “a broad monopolisation by a democratic state of all the most developed branches of industry, more or less ripe for it”, and the implementation of the agrarian programme of 1905³⁴. The provisions briefly formulated in this article were developed and argued in subsequent publications of the group members.

The programme of peace was regarded by the *vperedovtsy* as the “minimum programme in international politics” throughout World War I. Since the vanguard of the proletariat “is not able at present”, they wrote in the sixth volume of their newspaper of 1 February 1917, “to dictate a peace which would only satisfy it, a socialist peace, coinciding with its maximum program”, it was necessary “to seek the relatively most advantageous, relatively progressive for the present”³⁵.

Polyanski also sharply polemicised with the proponents of Russia's defeat in the face of the editorial board of the “Social-Democrat”. He believed that the slogan of “civil war” and “social revolution”, preached by them, was out of time: “The proletariat, of course, will put an end to imperialism, but the scale must match the force of the blow, we must adjust our attack to the real force, and only then, as the revolutionary activity and our victories increased, move further and further forward, right to the end; it will be worse if we begin with a social revolution and then we have to immediately return to the daily small work”³⁶.

In opposition to them and to the similarly rejected slogan “no victories, no defeats”, he put forward the struggle for peace without annexations, disarmament and the United States of Europe as a slogan designed to unite the proletariat of the whole world. Actively arguing for a new International and staying in the centre of emigration – in Geneva, the *vperedovtsy* could not fail to express their attitude towards the international conferences of internationalists in Zimmerwald and Kiental, although they themselves did not take part in them. In their addresses they welcomed the first of them and solidarity with the position of the Zimmerwald “left”, wishing it at the second conference “to present itself as an ideologically sharply defined, ideologically uncompromising group, whose actions should not be bound by any restrictive fetters either. But on the other hand, it is clear that this group should seek allies and enter into a broad political alliance with the less strong internationalists in order to influence them most effectively and facilitate

³⁴ *Ibidem*.

³⁵ “Вперед”, 1 February 1917.

³⁶ В. Полянский, *О поражении России*, “Вперед”, 20 October 1915.

their evolution to the left"³⁷. At the same time, the *vperedovtsy* called on the true internationalists to "make a definite break in the face of the proletariat" with the "supporters of continuing the war under whatever pretext".

However, while rejoicing at the growing influence of the "left" at the Kiental conference, they bitterly stated, after analysing its decisions, that "Kiental was not a step forward compared to Zimmerwald"³⁸.

The internationalist wing in the Menshevik part of Russian Social Democracy was represented by the Menshevik internationalists around Leo Martov and the émigré newspaper "Golos" (since January 1915, "Nashe Slovo") published in France. These newspapers were not a narrow factional body – in addition to the Mensheviks (Alexander Martynov, Vladimir Antonov-Ovseenko, Solomon Lozovsky, Kollontai, Moisei Uritsky, M. Pavlovich, Yuri Larin) Trotsky (who gradually ousted Martov from the leadership of the newspaper), the *vperedovtsy* Lunacharsky and Manuilsky and some Bolsheviks collaborated in them. Even Lenin, who never stopped criticizing Martov, admitted that "Golos" "is now the best socialist newspaper in Europe. The more often and more strongly I diverged from Martov, the more definitely I must say that this writer is now doing exactly what a Social-Democrat should be doing. He criticises his government, he exposes his bourgeoisie, he scolds his ministers. Socialists, on the other hand, who are engaged, being disarmed to their own government, in exposing and shaming the ministers and ruling classes of another country, are fulfilling the role of bourgeois writers"³⁹.

Martov himself wrote in a December 1914 letter to the editors and staff of the journal "Наша Заря" ("Nasha Zarya") that one should not be afraid of the coincidence of his positions with Bolshevism: "Our Menshevism is and has rasion d'être as an application of orthodox Marxism adapted to specific conditions. When it has to *Stellungnehmen* to questions of the world, it must not dance from the furnace of anti-Bolshevism, but draw its orientation from the 'eternal' foundations of Marxism, without being embarrassed if in a given situation it coincides in some essential way with the 'Большевики' (Bolsheviks), with the more sensible syndicalists, with Luxemburg, Pannekuk. It is in much greater danger to coincide in something essential with our Marxist-like and Народник (*Narodnik*) democrats, who are following the lead of the Kadet leaders of public opinion [...] it is the МЕНЬШЕВИКИ (Mensheviks), who, with all the adaptations of practice to the most backward external conditions, have sought to preserve the revolutionary method and 'orthodox' theoretical basis, who must show that with a change in the historical situation within 24 hours they can fundamentally revolutionise the tactics. On the contrary, to give the honour of a new orientation at a moment of historical turning point to the representatives of simplistic vulgarised Marxism is to pour water on its mill, as Plekhanov, Kautsky and Ged are pouring it at present. Only by taking it upon ourselves to show that social-democracy can reveal its historically-revolutionary content at the moment of a radical breakdown of the prevailing conditions that define the 'world-wide' legalist-possibilist

³⁷ "Вперед", 14 April 1916.

³⁸ "Вперед", 8 June 1916.

³⁹ В.И. Ленин, *Полное собрание ...*, т. 26, р. 31.

forms of its political expression will we be able to wrest the ground from under the feet of all kinds of rebellious anarcho-syndicalism, which will inevitably flourish today as the polar opposite result of the proletarian crisis, alongside opportunism reduced to its last degree of meanness”⁴⁰.

Later, in the preface to the collection of his anti-war articles published in 1917, Martov defined his political position during the war years as follows: “From the first days of the crisis, there are no political opponents ‘on my left’, but only like-minded persons on the basic principle question, with whom a struggle and often violent disputes over the methods of defending the basic principles are possible and necessary. In this respect the catastrophe has created a new situation everywhere, showing to all for whom the ultimate aims and basic principles of democracy have not become an empty sound, that in the ranks of workers’ democracy during the current moment the internal enemy is placed *only to the right* and that the task of fighting this internal enemy must in all circumstances be subordinated to the tasks of separation and ideological struggle with ‘neighbours on the left’ [...] It goes without saying that from this attitude to these ‘neighbours’ the possibility for real cooperation follows only in so far as they show even least ability to stand over the coterie traditions and even for a period to learn the password ‘fight together’”⁴¹.

In a letter to the editors of “Новая Заря” (Novaya Zarya) Martov also outlined the basic provisions of his position towards the war, which he considered “above all an off-spring of imperialist irreconcilable antagonism”, which marked the beginning of a new phase in the development of capitalism. According to Martov, “for socialism, this prospect means the beginning of a period of decisive direct struggle for mastery of power in the developed capitalist states as the only way out of the dead end into which imperialism is driving society. The social contradictions which, within every country, are bound to be exacerbated to an extreme during and as a result of the war, [...] the internal contradictions of imperialism itself, [...] the forced flirtation of all ruling classes with the proletariat, [...] – all this together creates elements for the creation in Europe of that revolutionary situation which it has not experienced since the age of bourgeois and national revolutions; that instability of social relations which, during the Second International, was not enough to fully reveal and reflect in the minds and will of the proletariat the socio-revolutionary sides of its place in capitalist society which make it able to put on the agenda and practically solve the question of seizure of the political power and change of the economic regime. The dilemma – either the constant wars on the road to the final triumph of imperialist supercapitalism, or the decisive stages of the class struggle on the road to the liquidation of capitalism – will sooner or later be clothed in blood and flesh [...] of the proletarian masses”⁴².

The crisis of the international socialist movement, from Martov’s point of view, consisted in the socialist parties taking the question of tactics in the plane of a dilemma

⁴⁰ *Меньшевики. Документы и материалы. 1903–1917*, сост., автор ввводной статьи и коммент. С.В.Тютюкин, Москва, 1995, pp. 367–368.

⁴¹ Л. Мартов, *Против войны. Сборник статей (1914–1916)*, Москва, 1917, pp. X–XI.

⁴² *Меньшевики. Документы и материалы...*, p. 361.

“either a military defeat leading to the economic and political suppression of a given fatherland or the destruction of its conditions to the present economic prosperity and progress, or a military victory as the basic condition for the existence of the fatherland and its progress, whatever world consequences and blows to other fatherlands this victory might be bought by”. They gave their answer “in the plane of yesterday's historical day of the class struggle of the proletariat”, and the answer which all the parties gave was homogeneous, this “led them into hostile camps and set them one against the other, thus destroying their international unity which is the basic ideological premise for the formulation and solution of the social-revolutionary problems of the class movement”⁴³. Martov saw the methodological error in applying to the participants of the war the criterion of progressiveness and reactionarity, which had become anachronistic, and which “might become relevant again if foreign policy were to be driven by the proletariat”. At the moment, however, there is no side in the war whose victory in the historical sense would carry with it a “revolutionary emancipatory beginning”, because “only socialism can wage a progressive [...] struggle against imperialism”⁴⁴.

At the same time, emphasised Martov, “we do not stand and must not stand on the point of view of benefiting to Russia from the defeat, as some of the ‘consistent’ are inclined to do, because, on the one hand, even in relation to Russia, Germany and Austria are not the carriers of historically progressive principles in this war. [...] On the other hand it is a false assumption that every defeat leads to revolution, every victory leads to a victory of reaction. [...] It is impossible to take into account in advance the likely consequences of victory and defeat for Russia, because of the existence of an equation with many unknowns. [...] However, one point will remain valid for our tactics – that only a force can make use of the conditions created by victory or defeat, if it does not tie itself to the war, does not assume any responsibility for it or for the inevitable – in the case of either victory or defeat – consequences which will bring about an exacerbation of internal contradictions and will consequently drive social development forward”⁴⁵.

Later, in his article “Ни германофобия, ни германофильство” (“Neither Germanophobia nor Germanophilism”, 6 February 1915) Martov wrote: “In *each* of the warring countries military failure and the final defeat can create objectively favourable conditions for the development of the people's forces, delayed by the war itself. The democracy is able and obliged to use them, just as it is able to use the conditions favourable for the movement which may result from the victory of this country. But to make use of these results democracy in this and other cases, [...] democracy in the course of the war itself must clearly separate its cause from the speculations of these and other conquerors, appear before the masses as a social force which has not for one moment sanctioned the crimes of historical catastrophe or its illusions, which has remained pure both from the blood of its countless victims and from the mud of the political speculations which accompany it. [...] Democracy should be imbued with the consciousness

⁴³ *Ibidem*, pp. 361–362.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 353, 364, 365.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 366.

that in the present crisis it has to act as a force, ideologically and politically independent from the conservative forces of contemporary society, which first of all works in the chaos of historical cataclysm⁴⁶.

Standing on this position, Martov criticised the above quote from the editorial board of “Nasha Zarya” about “not opposing the war” and the formula of Alexander Potresov “We do not oppose the war, but we do not stop the internal struggle”, showing its internal contradiction: “To say: ‘we do not oppose the war, but we do not stop the internal struggle’, means to get into a very contradictory situation. For the serious internal struggle of the serious opposition is undoubtedly counteracting the war that the rulers of the country are waging as part of their overall anti-democratic policy. [...] From ‘non-confrontation’ it is in fact only one step to the cessation or only softening of the opposition struggle, to the *Burgfrieden* [civil peace (German)] established by the Germans, or to the policy of *union nationale* [national unity (Fr.)] of the French”⁴⁷.

Martov conceded that the “defence” task could only form part of the overall task of democracy if democracy triumphed in the country. In that case “the defence of a triumphant democracy with arms in hands against an external enemy would have as little imperialist character or serve alien imperialist aims, as it did with France in 1783”. But since “the victory of at least a bourgeois democracy in one country would immediately explode the present relationship of states in this conflict, uniting the entire capitalist bourgeoisie of the whole world in an effort to put out the fire”, “it would not be a defensive war in the ordinary sense of the word, but an entirely new war, which, like that of the first French republic, would have the character of *offensive liberation*, or would have to assume such character, since it would be certain that the situation of international imperialist reaction would not allow the setting up of democracy in one country”⁴⁸.

In the article “Демократическое «оборончество» в России” (Democratic “Defence” in Russia, 18 April 1916) Martov emphasised again that “it is not the imperialist war that can solve for Russia the problem of its renewal, but only the crushing of global imperialist reaction, which in the end is the cause of the survival of all the regimes in the backward countries. Only a movement based on the struggle against global imperialism, and thus freed from any national exclusiveness and openly directed against imperialist methods for solving historical problems, can prove fruitful also in the field of purely national problems. Nowadays there cannot be a truly progressive movement outside of a movement imbued with the idea of peace”⁴⁹.

As mentioned above, Trotsky gradually pushed out Martov (who, in his opinion, moved to the right) from the leadership of “Nashe Slovo”, the editorial board of which, according to his testimony, formulated the following on 1 March 1916: “Joining the Zimmerwald group of internationalists and seeing in it the first milestone on the road to the creation of a revolutionary *Third International*, ‘Nashe Slovo’ considered it the duty

⁴⁶ Л. Мартов, *Против войны...*, pp. 32–33.

⁴⁷ *Меньшевики. Документы и материалы...*, pp. 366–367.

⁴⁸ Л. Мартов, *Против войны...*, pp. 67–68.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 76.

of the *left wing* internationalists to decisively criticise the political half-heartedness and socialist eclecticism, to clarify to the proletariat the conditions and character of the historical epoch and propagate revolutionary tactics, which basically means the proletariat's transition from defensive to offensive struggle by systematically deepening and widening economic and political conflicts between working class and imperialistic bourgeoisie and its state under the banner of *gaining political power in the aims of social revolution*. Within Russian Social Democracy, 'Nashe Slovo' sets itself the task of purging the ranks of the party of social patriotism, which in the conditions of Russia must be of a most anti-revolutionary and demoralising character. An open break with the Social-Patriotic headquarters and a merciless struggle against them for influence over the working masses is considered by 'Nashe Slovo' as an essential condition for the effective unification of the Russian internationalists by overcoming their coterie exclusiveness and factional isolationism⁵⁰.

However, in spite of its such resolute determination to fight social patriotism, the position of "Nashe Slovo" still did not coincide with that of the Lenin's "Social-Democrat", differing from it in three main points: "These points concerned defeatism (*пораженчество*, *porazhenchestvo*), the struggle for peace and the nature of the coming Russian revolution. 'Nashe Slovo' rejected defeatism. 'Social-Democrat' rejected the slogan of the struggle for peace, fearing that it would conceal pacifist tendencies, and contrasted it with civil war. Finally, 'Nashe Slovo' stood on the point of view that the task of our party must be to win power in the name of a socialist coup. 'Social-Democrat' continued to stand for the 'democratic' dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry"⁵¹.

As for Trotsky's own position, from the beginning of the war he adopted internationalist positions, considering "the idea of militant nationalism fatally hostile to the real interests of the proletariat". However, in the fact that the ruling classes managed to impose their will and their interests on the proletariat, he saw not only "the terrible defeat of socialism", but also "the possibility of its final victory". Trotsky believed that "it is impossible to doubt that the class, capable of deploying such endurance and self-sacrifice in the war, which it recognised as 'just', will be even more capable of deploying its qualities when the further course of events presents it with tasks truly worthy of its historical mission"⁵². Moreover, according to Trotsky, "the deeper scars the experience of war has left in the consciousness of the proletariat, the faster and more violent the process of its emancipation from the non-revolutionary methods, techniques and skills of the past epoch, the tighter and more immediate, more bloody and at the same time more conscious the ties of international solidarity will become – no longer as a principle, or as a foreshadowing, or as a symbol, but as a direct fact of revolutionary cooperation on the international arena in the name of a common struggle against capitalist society"⁵³.

⁵⁰ Л.Д. Троцкий, *Война и революция*, т. 1..., pp. 26–27.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*, p. 27.

⁵² *Ibidem*, pp. 147–148.

⁵³ *Ibidem*, т. 2, p. 73.

And yet, since this war “can exhaust not only the material resources of society, but also the moral forces of the proletariat itself”, it is necessary to struggle with all means to put an immediate end to it. “An immediate cessation of the war! – is the slogan under which Social Democracy can again gather its scattered ranks, both in the parties of separate countries and in the whole International [...] True national self-defence now consists in the struggle for peace. This means for us not only the struggle to save the material and cultural goods of humanity from further reckless extermination, but above all the struggle to preserve the revolutionary energy of the proletariat. [...] The conditions on which peace can be concluded – peace of the peoples themselves, not a deal between diplomats, must be the same for the whole International. *No annexations! No contributions! The right of every nation to self-determination! The United States of Europe – without monarchies, without standing armies, without ruling feudal castes, without secret diplomacy!*”⁵⁴

The slogan of peace, according to Trotsky, plays an enormous role “in mobilising the leftist, internationalist wing in all countries and [...] a political mistake was made, and to a great extent is still being made, by the ‘Social-Democrat’ group trying to place this slogan at the exclusive disposal of sanctimonious pacifists and popes.

Just as under the slogan of war to the end the bearers of different tendencies in socialism have grouped together, so under the slogan ‘war on war’ stand both those who seek as soon as possible to restore under the feet of the proletariat the ‘normal’ basis for its class movement, all in the same form of the struggle for reform and consolidation of organisations, and those who see in this war a bloody prologue to an age of deepest social upheaval. The further course of the war and these or those its consequences may undoubtedly divide in different directions those deeply different in their ideological upbringing and political past socialist elements which are now united by the struggle for an end to the war. But on the other hand [...] the mobilisation of the working masses against the imperialist slaughter could directly lead to an open clash between the proletariat [...] and the state power. Beginning with the struggle to end the war, the revolutionary mobilisation of the masses can end with the proletariat winning political power”⁵⁵. Therefore, “our ideological-theoretical, propaganda work must [...], by revealing the limitations and contradictions of the position of the Second International, clarify the historical prerequisites and conditions of the new social-revolutionary epoch and in this way prepare the consciousness of the advanced working strata for the solution of tasks of a scope unprecedented in the history of mankind”⁵⁶.

Trotsky resolutely rejected defeatism as a whole, believing that “the slogan ‘Russia’s defeat is the lesser evil’, at least guesswork in the sense of theoretical foresight, unfit in the agitational sense, and for this very reason rejected by all the internationalist groups in Russia, proved definitively liquidated by the political test of its events: if defeats split the will of the proletariat, introducing into its broad circles a mood standing on the border

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, t. 1, pp. 150–151.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, t. 2, p. 83.

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 84.

between the national and, so to speak, the 'biological', then the revolutionary party of the proletariat cannot see in defeats even an indirect ally of its own"⁵⁷.

Addressing the burning question of schism and unity, Trotsky pointed out the invalidity of the accusations of the editorial board of "Nashe Slovo" both in pursuing a schismatic line (on the part of the OK) and in "half-heartedness", in their unwillingness to draw conclusions from the ideological and political struggle with the social patriots in the direction of an organisational split (on the part of "Social-Democrat"). He characterised the position of the editorial board as follows: "Rejecting all experiments of premature, artificial split, i.e. the split not deriving inevitably for the masse from its own political action – and this is the point of our contradiction with 'Social-Democrat' – at the same time – and this is our profound difference from our critics from the other camp – we do not in any way consider it acceptable to subordinate the question of the decisiveness, completeness and irreconcilability of our internationalist criticism and agitation to fears that an organisational split might flow out of this work [...] We resolutely refuse to approach the enormous work now facing the internationalist elements in all the socialist parties with any supreme organisational criterion. We subordinate the question of the organisational methods of the struggle against social patriotism entirely to considerations of political expediency. And we are deeply convinced that in the present period, when the Internationalists have only to unfold their programme within the framework of the old workers' organisations, a split would be in the overwhelming majority of cases inadvisable"⁵⁸.

Close to Martov, but more restrained, centre-right, was Pavel Axelrod, who believed that it was necessary to recognise the right of every nation to defend its fatherland, which lasted as long as these national fatherlands existed, and who neither condemned the French socialists for joining the Ministry nor accused the German social-democrats of treason (although he disapproved of their vote for loans). He believed that the defeat of any power in a war would be a threat to peace, as it would strive for revenge (let us note that this is what happened later with the humiliated Weimar Germany), and there was no reason to wish Russia victory, as it would strengthen the position of tsarism⁵⁹. Together with Fiedor Dan, Martov, Irakli Tsereteli, Martynov, Ivan Maisky and others Axelrod signed an open letter against the main points put forward by the "Самозащита" (Self-Defence) group led by Potresov, and later proposed his own plan for an "international struggle for peace": pressure from workers on their party leaders to withdraw Socialists from governments and to refuse the Social-Democratic parties to vote for war loans. As an active participant in the Zimmerwald and Kiental conferences, Axelrod regarded them only as private meetings to bring the war-divided parties closer together and to prevent Leninist schism from penetrating Western European Social Democracy. After the Kiental Conference had adopted the Leninist position that real lasting peace was only possible after the establishment of proletarian power, Axelrod began to emphasise that he was a "Zimmerwaldite" but not a "Kientalian"⁶⁰.

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 164.

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 84, 88.

⁵⁹ See С.В. Тютюкин, *Меньшевизм. Страницы истории*, Москва, 2002, p. 289.

⁶⁰ See: А.П. Ненароков, *В поисках жанра. Записки архивиста с документами, комментариями, фотографиями и посвящениями*, кн. 2: *Свеча в доме*, Москва, 2009, pp. 48–49.

Together with Martov, Axelrod spoke under the banner of the Foreign Secretariat of the Menshevik Organisational Committee, which also included Martynov, Semen Semkovsky and I. Astrov. In the letter of the Foreign Secretariat of the OK to the comrades in Russia of 21 August (3 September), 1915 it was noted that the blame for the military defeats and suffering of the peoples living in Russia lay with its ruling classes and capitalists, and therefore the workers should not respond to calls for general unity to prevent the national danger, because “there is no other, no worse national danger than the domination of Russia by a bunch of bureaucrats and nobles with the Tsar at the head. [...] And to save Russia from defeat at the cost of combining the living forces of the country with this bunch of predators would mean to destroy by the left hand what you create by the right”. Strengthening the army, the mobilisation of industry in the country for military needs, which is called for by the ruling circles, can only prolong the war, but cannot ensure the victory of Russia: “The victorious German imperialism cannot be stopped on its way by force of arms: it has shown itself the strongest among the other imperialist forces. One force alone can block its way to further victories, to the further trampling and torment of a defeated Russia. It is *the power of the people's revolution*. [...] Only by seeking to destroy the bulwark of global reaction – Russian Tsarism, Russian democracy will ensure that this war will end without new violence against the peoples of Russia, without alienation from Russia of areas whose population does not want such alienation, without contributions that would have ruined the country for a long time, without the trampling of Poland, Belgium and Serbia by the victors. [...] Now the struggle for peace in Russia is closely and inextricably intertwined with the struggle for the overthrow of the dominant order⁶¹. The proletariat of Russia had to use as its slogan “an All-Russian Constituent Assembly for the abolition of the war and the abolition of the autocratic system”, and to call in word and deed on the workers of Western Europe “for a common and resolute stand against militarism, for a common struggle for the immediate conclusion of a peace without contributions, without conquests, without the crushing and suppression of nationalities”⁶². The letter also expressed the hope that “the sound of a victorious or winning revolution in Russia will awaken the consciousness, conscience and will to struggle in the proletariat of other countries as well, will arouse the desire to break the alliance with the imperialist governments, will indicate that the world proletariat is coming to pay the price of the perpetrators of the world slaughter”⁶³.

In November 1915 the Foreign Secretariat of the OK issued a “Draft Platform of the Organisations of the August Bloc”, which stressed that in the conditions of world war Russian Social Democracy “remained on the ground of class struggle and international solidarity of the workers”⁶⁴. Noting that the nature of the war excluded any notion of its liberating or historically progressive character in any respect, that “none of the hostile coalitions embodies historical progress in this war”, that the attitude of the proletariat to this war should not be determined by considerations of the relatively less reactionary

⁶¹ *Меньшевики. Документы и материалы...*, pp. 386–387.

⁶² *Ibidem*, p. 388.

⁶³ *Ibidem*, pp. 386–387.

⁶⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 395.

character of one of the warring sides, that the proletariat of the different countries, split by the war, should “revive as an internationally united and internationally acting class-independent force”, that “Russian Social-Democracy [...] rejects [...] any participation in the cause of so-called military defence; exposes to the proletariat the hypocrisy of the Russian government and ruling classes in calling the proletariat to cease the class struggle and to promote the cause of defence in the state [...]; exposes to the proletariat the responsibility of both the present rulers of the country and of the opposition bourgeoisie in provoking war [...] fights against the poisoning of the people’s consciousness with the liberal-chauvinist slogan of ‘struggle until victory’ and opposes the slogan of separate peace with its demand for immediate *general peace* [...]; seizes every opportunity it has to organise the workers on the basis of the struggle against the consequences of the crisis which has gripped the country [...] demands that this liberation [of the social forces chained by tsarism – A.M.] first of all untie the hands of the working class by giving it freedom of coalition and press, by abolishing censorship, exceptional provisions and the militarisation of labour, by freeing the exiles and prisoners; supporting the demands of other parties for the removal of the present “government of treason”, [...] and unites all its political struggle with the slogan of calling *an All-Russian Constituent Assembly to liquidate tsarism and war*; [...] calls on the proletariat to support its political and economic demands through mass organised revolutionary actions and seeks to introduce spontaneous outbursts of popular indignation into the mainstream of such organised protests”⁶⁵.

On the extreme right “defensive” flank of the Menshevik Party during the war was Plekhanov. At the very beginning of the war, while in exile in Paris, he took an active part in drawing up a declaration of volunteers from among the Russian emigrants, among whom were also socialists who voluntarily enlisted in the French army to fight against Germany, whose victory, in their opinion, would lead to the defeat of European democracy. At the last meeting of volunteers before their departure from Paris, Plekhanov gave a welcoming speech, the main ideas of which were later repeated by him in an open letter to the editors of the newspaper “Речь” (Rech) of 30 September 1914, that was repeatedly reprinted in Russia in various newspapers and magazines⁶⁶. In this letter of explanation he stressed that the main idea of his parting word to the volunteers was simple: “It boils down to the fact that in the war between Austria-Hungary and Germany and France, Belgium and England the interests of *the international proletariat and social progress* are on the side of the latter three states and that therefore everyone who cherishes these interests must wish victory to these very states”. Plekhanov went on to point out that as an opponent of war in principle, he could not, however, take a neutral stand, and therefore wished “defeat to the guilty party, i.e. the attacker”, which, in his “deep conviction, was Germany and its ally Austria-Hungary”⁶⁷.

Plekhanov expounded his position on the war in detail in an essay organised by a group of Menshevik emigrants in Lausanne on 11 October 1914. This speech is significant in that, as noted above, it was the last face-to-face meeting between the two leaders of Russian

⁶⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 397–404.

⁶⁶ For more details see: С.В. Тютюкин, *Г.В.Плекханов...*, pp. 306–307.

⁶⁷ *Меньшевики. Документы и материалы...*, pp. 352–353.

Social Democracy, Plekhanov and Lenin. Fortunately, unlike other émigré speeches with abstracts, it turned out to be recorded in some detail by one of the audience, as well as by a member of the Foreign Agents of the Police Department, and is reflected in a number of memoirs⁶⁸. In the first part of his abstract Plekhanov described the behaviour of the German Social-Democrats in voting for war credits in the Reichstag as a betrayal of socialism, while excusing the French Socialists, as they were in a position of legitimate self-defence. However, the rapporteur pointed out, they had to tell the truth about the reactionary nature of the ruling circles in Russia, an ally of France. After a break Plekhanov analysed the conduct of the Russian Social-Democrats, stressing that both S-D factions of the State Duma had acted as true Social-Democrats, although they should have mentioned the cause of Russia's military weakness – the policy of Tsarism. In his opinion, “the war will lead to the triumph of Socialism in Russia because the Russian Socialists have shown that they are incapable either of dealing with the Tsarist Government or of opportunist tactics”⁶⁹.

Plekhanov's speech was greeted with enthusiastic applause by the majority of those present, but he was sharply opposed by Lenin (see above for his position). In his brief reply Plekhanov recalled Marx's position that the right of a people to exist also implied the right to defend itself against an external enemy, and that therefore, not forgetting the socialist struggle against chauvinism at home, in the event of war one should identify its culprit and attack him with all force⁷⁰.

In a revised and enlarged version, Plekhanov's Lausanne essay was published as a reply to a letter by the Bulgarian Socialist, Z. Petrov, being entitled “О войне” (On War). In it Plekhanov justified his different attitude to the behaviour of the French and German Socialists: “The fact is that when one nation pursues imperialist aims, attacking another, that latter cannot but defend itself, unless it has reached an extreme degree of decay and weakness. And international social democracy cannot but sympathise with its self-defence, unless it is indeed guided in its foreign policy by ‘the simple laws of morality and law’. This defines my attitude to the French socialists who voted for war credit and even joined, in the person of Guesde and Sembat, the ministry. France is an attacked country. Hence the conduct of the French Socialists could not have been what the German Socialists, i.e., the Socialists of the attacking side, should have been”⁷¹.

In assessing the prospects for a revolutionary movement in Russia under war conditions, Plekhanov constructed the following logical chain. In his view, the source of the liberation movement in Russia is in its capitalist development, therefore, “such a defeat of Russia, which slows its economic development, will be harmful to the cause of popular freedom and useful to the old order”, that is, the defeat of Russia in the war will be harmful to its further economic development. Victory in the war, on the contrary, “even by strengthening reaction for a time, [...] will ultimately lead to its disappearance, because thanks to victory Russia will avoid the obstacles which defeat [would] have erected in the way of its economic development”⁷².

⁶⁸ For more details see: С.В. Тютюкин, *Г.В.Плеханов...*, pp. 309–313.

⁶⁹ Quoted from: *ibidem*, p. 312.

⁷⁰ See: *ibidem*, p. 313.

⁷¹ Г.В. Плеханов, *О войне. Статьи*, Петроград, 1917, pp. 22–23.

⁷² *Ibidem*, p. 36–40.

In February 1915, in a letter to his associates in Russia, Plekhanov again stressed that since the war had been launched by Germany, the Russian proletariat not only had the right, but the duty to defend its country, and this would not be a break with the Marxist idea of the class struggle, for in fact the war was against the German bourgeoisie and the opportunists of German Social Democracy who had allied with it. Plekhanov did not rule out the possibility of the war with the aggressor turning into a civil war within Russia, but believed that revolutionary sentiments in Russian society would grow on the basis of patriotic feelings. And yet Plekhanov advised the Duma Social Democratic faction to vote against military loans, as the cause of the country's self-defence was at present "in too unreliable hands" of the Tsarist government, which could not be trusted⁷³.

However, as early as the summer of 1915, after a number of major defeats of the Russian army, in a letter to the S-D deputy of the State Duma, A. Buryanov, who was not formally a member of the Social Democratic faction, on the eve of the convocation of the Duma, Plekhanov stressed that "at present one cannot be against popular self-defence", as in the result of the German victory "the Russian proletariat and the Russian labouring mass in general will suffer first of all". Addressing Buryanov and other S.D. deputies, he wrote: "You and your comrades, the Social-Democratic deputies in the State Duma, simply cannot vote against the war credits. Make your reservations – they are necessary – but vote for the credits. To vote against the credits would be treason (to the people), and to abstain from voting would be cowardice; vote – for!"⁷⁴.

Plekhanov's defensive position was further substantiated in a letter to the Bulgarian Socialist Nusinov, written in May 1915⁷⁵. It stressed: "Russia belongs to its working population. Who cares about the interests of that population, cannot be indifferent to the fate of Russia". Objecting to his opponents, who believed that it was not necessary to defend the country from the German invasion, but to make a revolution, Plekhanov wrote: "But revolution implies a revolutionizing of social relations. It is a whole process. War has sometimes been the mother of revolution. But whenever revolution was born in the throes of war, it was the fruit of the people's disappointment in the ability of their government to defend the country against the enemy. Woe to the imaginary revolutionaries who direct their agitation against the natural and inevitable desire of the people to fight back against an external enemy!"⁷⁶.

In early September 1915 a meeting of a group of S-D and Social Revolutionaries in Lausanne, in which Plekhanov participated, adopted an appeal written by him (*К сознательному трудящемуся населению России*). In it appeals to direct all efforts to the struggle against the external enemy were justified by the fact that the participation of the Russian proletariat in the struggle against an external invasion organised by the German junkers and the bourgeoisie, in effect means the continuation of the class struggle in a new form. According to Plekhanov, in defending their country, the workers are not defending their government, but their own future, therefore without ceasing to struggle to improve

⁷³ See: С.В. Тютюкин, *Г.В.Плекханов...*, p. 315.

⁷⁴ *Меньшевики. Документы и материалы...*, p. 375.

⁷⁵ It was included in a collection of articles, *Война*, published soon in Paris, the authors of which, besides Georgi Plekhanov, were L. Deich, L. Axelrod, P. Dnevniysky, G. Aleksinsky, V. Fomin, A. Lyubimov and K. Andronikov.

⁷⁶ Г.В. Плеханов, *О войне...*, pp. 90–91.

their economic situation, the proletariat must be extremely cautious, lest by its actions it should harm the cause of the defence of Russia. Stressing that “Russia's defeat would be its defeat in the struggle for freedom”, Plekhanov put forward the formula: the road to victory is the road to freedom, and called upon the workers to take part in all the institutions set up to fight against the external enemy, including the VPK (Военно-промышленные комитеты – *Voенno-promyshlennyye komitety*, Military-Industrial Committees. – A.M.)⁷⁷.

Throughout the war Plekhanov remained an opponent of the internationalist slogans that had gained international expression in the Zimmerwald and Kiental movements, the principle of national defence being the main one for him. In his article “Социалисты и голосование военных кредитов” (Socialists and the War Loan Voting) in January 1916, he wrote: “The proletariat is pitiful if it is unable to defend its rights against attacks by any means”. And since the imperialist policy of the German ruling circles was supported by the German workers and Social-Democrats, Plekhanov believed that “the internationalist can not only with a quiet conscience support the armed struggle against such exploitative attempts, but must support it with all his strength, with all his heart and mind, if he does not wish to betray himself, if he does not wish to stop being an internationalist”⁷⁸.

The February Revolution of 1917 radically changed the position of all political forces in Russia, particularly those on the left which opposed the regime, bringing them into the broader political arena. Revolutionary emigration practically ceased to exist, as the vast majority of emigrants moved to Russia and continued their political and social activities in their home country. Although Russia was still involved in the First World War, it was no longer the war and the attitude towards it, but the revolutionary events and the struggle for power and for the choice of the path of Russia's future development that determined public life. However, it cannot be overlooked that the “legacy of the war” influenced the social and political life, mentality and psychology of the broad masses of the Russian population both in 1917 and after the First World War.

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Russian Social Democratic Emigration during the First World War: from Internationalists to Defenders (оборонцы, *oborontsy*)

On the vast amount of sources the author analyses the views of Russian social-democratic (S-D) emigrants in Europe during World War I. The positions of the S-D emigrants played the most important role in the development of key ideological guidelines, since it was abroad that the main ideological forces had been concentrated as a result of the mass “exodus” following the defeat of the 1905–1907 revolution. The Russian Social-Democrats faced World War I within a party which was formally united but in fact split into two independent factions, the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks. The war created a new balance of forces within the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, and the attitude towards the war became decisive in the formation of new factions. The author traces the whole

spectrum of views from internationalists to defenders (so called *oborontsy*), paying special attention to the positions of Vladimir Lenin, Alexander Bogdanov, the left-bolshevik group “Vpered”, Alexandra Kollontai and Alexander Shlyapnikov, Leo Martov and the émigré newspaper “Golos”/“Nashe Slovo”, Lev Trotsky, Pavel Axelrod and Georgi Plekhanov.

KEYWORDS:

World War I, Russian social-democratic labour party, internationalists, defenders (*oborontsy*), bolsheviks, mensheviks

Rosyjska emigracja socjaldemokratyczna w czasie I wojny światowej: od internacjonalistów do obrońców (оборонцы, *oborontsy*)

Bazując na ogromnej ilości źródeł, autorka analizuje poglądy rosyjskiej emigracji socjaldemokratycznej w Europie w okresie I wojny światowej. Stanowiska prezentowane przez emigrantów należących do środowiska socjaldemokratycznego odegrały najistotniejszą rolę w kształtowaniu się kluczowych wytycznych ideologicznych, ponieważ w wyniku masowego *exodusu* po klęsce rewolucji lat 1905–1907 to właśnie za granicą skupiły się jego główne siły ideowe. Wybuch I wojny światowej zastał rosyjskich socjaldemokratów w sytuacji, gdy ich partia była formalnie zjednoczona, lecz w rzeczywistości była podzielona na dwie niezależne frakcje – bolszewików i mienszewików. Wojna stworzyła nowy układ sił w Socjaldemokratycznej Partii Robotniczej Rosji, zaś stosunek do wojny stał się decydującym czynnikiem prowadzącym do powstania nowych frakcji. Autorka śledzi całe spektrum poglądów – od internacjonalistów do obrońców (tzw. *oborońców*) – zwracając szczególną uwagę na stanowiska Włodzimierza Lenina, Aleksandra Bogdanowa, lewicowej, bolszewickiej grupy „Wpieriod”, Aleksandry Kołłontaj i Aleksandra Szłapnikowa, Lwa Martowa i emigracyjnej gazety „Gołos”/„Nasze Słowo”, jak również Lwa Trockiego, Pawła Akselroda i Georgija Plechanowa.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE

I wojna światowa, Socjaldemokratyczna Partia Robotnicza Rosji, internacjoniści, obrońcy (*oborońcy*), bolszewicy, mienszewicy

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