

Lenin's April Theses

April 1917

Lenin's famous April Theses called for Soviet control of the state and were a precursor to the Russian Revolution and the Bolshevik coup d'état.

I have outlined a few theses which I shall supply with some commentaries. I could not, because of the lack of time, present a thorough, systematic report. The basic question is our attitude towards the war.

The basic things confronting you as you read about Russia or observe conditions here are the triumph of defencism, the triumph of the traitors to Socialism, the deception of the masses by the bourgeoisie... The new government, like the preceding one, is imperialistic, despite the promise of a republic - it is imperialistic through and through.

One

In our attitude toward the war not the slightest concession must be made to "revolutionary defencism," for under the new government of Lvov & Co., owing to the capitalise nature of this government, the war on Russia's part remains a predatory imperialist war.

In view of the undoubted honesty of the mass of rank and file representatives of revolutionary defencism who accept the war only as a necessity and not as a means of conquest, in view of their being deceived by the bourgeoisie, it is necessary most thoroughly, persistently, patiently to explain to them their error, to explain the inseparable connection between capital and the imperialist war, to prove that without the overthrow of capital it is impossible to conclude the war with a really democratic, non-oppressive peace.

This view is to be widely propagated among the army units in the field...

Two

The peculiarity of the present situation in Russia is that it represents a transition from the first stage of the revolution - which, because of the inadequate organisation and insufficient class-consciousness of the proletariat, led to the assumption of power by the bourgeoisie - to its second stage which is to place power in the hands of the proletariat and the poorest strata of the peasantry...

This peculiar situation demands of us an ability to adapt ourselves to the specific conditions of party work amidst vast masses of the proletariat just wakened to political life.

Three

No support to the Provisional Government; exposure of the utter falsity of all its promises, particularly those relating to the renunciation of annexations. Unmasking, instead of admitting, the illusion-breeding "demand" that this government, a government of capitalist, should cease to be imperialistic...

Four

Recognition of the fact that in most of the Soviets of Workers' Deputies our party constitutes a minority, and a small one at that, in the face of the bloc of all the petty bourgeois opportunist elements... who have yielded to the influence of the bourgeoisie...

It must be explained to the masses that the Soviet of Workers' Deputies is the only possible form of revolutionary government and that, therefore, our task is, while this government is submitting to the influence of the bourgeoisie, to present a patient, systematic, and persistent analysis of its errors and tactics, an analysis especially adapted to the practical needs of the masses...

Five

Not a parliamentary republic - a return to it from the Soviet of Workers' Deputies would be a step backward - but a republic of Soviets of Workers', Agricultural Labourers' and Peasants' Deputies throughout the land, from top to bottom.

Abolition of the police, the army, the bureaucracy...

All officers to be elected and to be subject to recall at any time, their salaries not to exceed the average wage of a competent worker...

Six

In the agrarian programme, the emphasis must be shifted to the Soviets of Agricultural Labourers' Deputies.

Confiscation of private lands.

Nationalisation of all lands in the country, and management of such lands by local Soviets of Agricultural Labourers' and Peasants' Deputies.

A separate organisation of Soviets of Deputies of the poorest peasants.

Creation of model agricultural establishments out of large estates...

Seven

Immediate merger of all the banks in the country into one general national bank, over which the Soviet of Workers' Deputies should have control...

Eight

Not the "introduction" of Socialism as an immediate task, but the immediate placing of the Soviet of Workers' Deputies in control of social production and distribution of goods...

Nine

Party tasks:

- A. Immediate calling of a party convention.
- B. Changing the party program, mainly:
 - 1 Concerning imperialism and the imperialist war.
 - 2 Concerning our attitude toward the state, and our demand for a 'commune state.'
 - 3 Amending our antiquated minimum programme.

Ten

Rebuilding the International. Taking the initiative in the creation of a revolutionary International, an International against the social-chauvinists and against the "centre"...