

## **“Kautsky as Marxist” Data Base**

(Lars T. Lih, February 2008, updated February 2011)

The Kautsky-as-Marxist database is a collection that I have compiled of all comments by Lenin in his final decade, 1914-1924, that bear on the issue on his attitude during those years toward Kautsky’s prewar writings—or rather, his writings up to and including 1909. The original aim of the database was to provide empirical material on a dispute about Lenin’s attitude toward Kautsky after 1914. Both sides acknowledge that Lenin admired Kautsky strongly before 1914 and that he reacted in strongly negative terms to everything that Kautsky wrote starting in 1914. The question is: did Lenin’s post-1914 negative attitude spill over into a reevaluation of writings by Kautsky earlier endorsed by Lenin? According to one side of the dispute, Lenin regarded Kautsky as a *renegade* who failed to live up to his earlier, still valid, positions. According to the other side, the *scale fell from Lenin’s eyes* about Kautsky in general, leading to a root-and-branch reevaluation not only of Kautsky but of “Second International Marxism” in general. The two sides of the debate are set forth in the Symposium on *Lenin Rediscovered in Historical Materialism*, 18:3 (2010), pp. 25-174.

The aim of the database is to collect and arrange all evidence in Lenin’s collected works relevant to deciding this dispute. The database is divided into two categories. The first is a *comprehensive* collection of all references in Lenin’s post-1914 works to anything Kautsky did or wrote up to and including 1909. The cutoff date of 1909 is imposed by unambiguous statements by Lenin himself that Kautsky’s *Road to Power*, published in 1909, was his last production as a consistent Marxist. The main tool for locating these references is the bibliographies provided in each volume of the 5<sup>th</sup> Russian edition of Lenin’s collected works.

These bibliographies provide *full* information on every work mentioned or even alluded to by Lenin. Added to the systematic search based on these bibliographies are the results of a less systematic hunt for any relevant item. The aim in this category is to include *every* relevant item.

The second category in the database is material on various topics that provide relevant context for the questions that concern us. The aim here is to be accurately representative rather than comprehensive. The topics included are: the meaning of Lenin's coinage *kautskianstvo* (translated in the English-language *Collected Works* as "Kautskyism"); Lenin's view of the Second International as a whole; Lenin's view of Kautsky as a person after 1909; Lenin's view of other "renegades" such as Jules Guesde. The most important of these topics is the meaning of *kautskianstvo*. Lenin's post-1914 polemics will be thoroughly misunderstood if this term is thought of as an "ism," that is, an ideology or system of ideas similar to those of Karl Kautsky.

The evidence gathered here show beyond doubt Lenin's own view of the matter: Kautsky was a renegade who had betrayed the truths for which he earlier had been such an eloquent spokesman. Furthermore, the database unexpectedly turns out to be a powerful and insightful portrait of Lenin's major concerns during these years. We should be astonished at the sheer quantity, range and variety of the topics about which Lenin felt it necessary to refer to "Kautsky when he was a Marxist." These include the fundamental features of the new era of revolutions, the state, nationalism, opportunism, foreign policy, peasant policy and dialectics. In many cases, Lenin had recently reread the Kautsky texts in question. On more than one occasion, Lenin went out of his way to pay tribute to the special role Kautsky played as ideological mentor to Russian Social Democracy. Kautsky past and present was clearly a major obsession for Lenin during these years.

The database has served me as a starting point for research into a whole range of issues concerning Lenin's outlook and its roots in international Social Democracy. But I believe that anyone interested in Lenin will also be fascinated by the partial but hugely revealing portrait that emerges from this mosaic of comments throughout the most dramatic decade of his life.

## Road to Power

### Introduction

Kautsky's *Road to Power* was published in 1909 and for Lenin represented the last full-bodied production of Kautsky the Marxist. Kautsky's book was particularly important to Lenin because of its prediction of an approaching "new era of revolutions" on a global scale. Before the war broke out, there is no mention in Lenin's writings of *Road to Power*, although its influence can be seen in articles by Lenin and Kamenev (and possibly others). Its extraordinary significance for Lenin becomes manifest only in his outraged reaction to Kautsky's actions after war broke out. Lenin often associates *Road to Power* with the Basel resolution as evidence of a consensus of revolutionary Social Democracy prior to the war. In one of his first wartime programmatic statements in September 1914, Lenin ties his central slogan—"turn the imperialist war into a civil war"—directly to the Basel Manifesto ("The War and Russian Social Democracy," 26:22).

### Citations

1. October 1914. Cliff and others have cited Lenin's very angry attacks on Kautsky in his letters to Shliapnikov. For us, the key passage is the following: "Obtain without fail and reread (or ask to have it translated for you) *Road to Power* by Kautsky [and see] what he writes there about the revolution of our time! And now, how he acts the toady and disavows all that!" 49:24
2. October 1914. From a lecture in Switzerland on "The Proletariat and the War": "In his book *Road to Power*, Kautsky shows, after attentively considering economic phenomena in detail and drawing extremely cautious conclusions from them, that we are entering into a phase that is utterly dissimilar to the previous peaceful gradual development." (Lenin often refers to Kautsky's theoretical caution, not as an insult, but as a quality that adds extra weight to his conclusions. ) 26:30
3. December 1914. In his article "Dead Chauvinism and Living Socialism," Lenin starts off by noting that in previous decades German Social Democracy was a model even more for Russians than for other Social Democrats. He then asks: "What was it [German Social Democracy]? What is it? What will it be? An answer to the first question can be found in K. Kautsky's *Road to Power*, published in 1909 and translated into many European languages. This book, written by the most authoritative writer of the Second International, contains the

most complete exposition of the tasks of our times; it is the most advantageous [evidence] for the hopes one could put on the German Social Democrats. Let us go over this book in detail; this will be all the more useful, the more often people now shamefully discard these ‘forgotten words’.” Lenin then goes on for a full page and a half on the basic points of *Road to Power*. He concludes: “That’s what Kautsky wrote in the days ever so long ago—a whole five years ago. This is what German Social Democracy was—or rather, promised to be. This is the Social Democracy that one could and had to respect.” On two key points—a revolution in Europe cannot now be premature and war leads to revolution —“Kautsky expressed in 1909 the undisputed opinion of all revolutionary Social Democrats.” 26:98-105.

4. January 1915. This article, “Under an Alien Flag,” was written for an abortive attempt at legal publication in Russia; the article was published only in 1917. Owing to the censor, Lenin speaks only of “democracy,” not “socialism.” Lenin talks about three epochs: the first from 1789 to 1871; the second from 1871 to 1914, the third from 1914 to indefinite future. “It was none other than Kautsky himself, in a whole series of articles and in his book *Road to Power* (which came out in 1909), who described with the fullest possible definiteness the basic traits of the approaching third epoch and who pointed out its radical distinctiveness from the second (yesterday’s) epoch. He acknowledged the change in immediate tasks, and, along with this, a change in the conditions and forms of the struggle of contemporary democracy—a change that flows out of the shift in objective historical circumstances. But Kautsky now commits to the flame what he once worshipped and he is changing front in the most incredible, most indecent, most shameless fashion.” Kautsky predicted exactly the kind of war that indeed broke out in 1914. [That is, a revolutionary war: Lenin resorts to euphemism for the censor.] All you have to do is compare passages from his book to what he’s saying now, and you will see his betrayal of his own convictions and solemn pronouncements. And in this, Kautsky is typical of the whole upper stratum of contemporary socialism. 26:143-44.
5. Spring 1915. “The Collapse of the Second International.” In his polemic against Kautsky’s current theory of “ultra-imperialism,” Lenin insists that a great power can’t opt out of imperialist competition, because it would then be unable to provide the privileges to the petty bourgeoisie need to stave off revolution. “This is a fact fully demonstrated by the war. This is in practice what the sharpening of contradictions—as acknowledged long ago by everybody, including Kautsky himself in his book *Road to Power*—is moving towards.” A few pages later, Lenin returns to *Road to Power*, goes over its main points (a new “revolutionary period,” no premature revolution, need for optimistic confidence in an uprising), and describes these points as “not refuted by anybody and irrefutable.” 26:234
6. Summer 1915. *Socialism and War*. In a section entitled *Kautskianstvo*, Lenin writes: “Kautsky, who in 1909 wrote a whole book of the nearness of the epoch of revolutions and the links between war and revolution, Kautsky, who in 1912 signed the Basel Manifesto about the revolutionary utilization of the coming war,

now in every way justifies and prettifies social chauvinism, and like Plekhanov, unites with the bourgeoisie to mock any thought of revolution, any steps toward immediate revolutionary struggle.” (More from this section under *Kautskianstvo*. ) 26:324

7. September 1915. “True Internationalists: “Kautsky, Axelrod, Martov.” Lenin makes an analogy between 1901 (when the revolutionary situation in Russia was evident, although the revolution itself only broke out years later) and the current situation in Europe: “We stand, *without a doubt*, on the eve of a socialist revolution. This was acknowledged even by ‘super-cautious’ theorists such as Kautsky, already in 1909 (*Road to Power*).” The Basel Manifesto shows the same thing. 27:56-7
8. December 1915. Introduction to Bukharin’s “World Economy and imperialism.” Kautsky dreams of “peaceful” capitalism. But: “That ‘peaceful’ capitalism has been replaced by non-peaceful, warring and catastrophic imperialism is something that Kautsky is compelled to admit, because he admitted it in 1909 in a work on the topic in which he came forth the last time with undiluted conclusions as a Marxist ... Kautsky *swore* to be a Marxist in this impending acute and catastrophic epoch that he was compelled to predict and admit with complete precision when he wrote his 1909 book about the coming epoch.” 27:96-7
9. 1916. In a footnote added to a republication of Lenin’s 1914 writing *On the Right of Nations to Self-Determination*, he speaks of Kautsky’s “excellent book *Road to Power*,” written at a time when Kautsky was still a foe of opportunism” (see under Nationalism, Spring 1914, for full passage). 25:259
10. January 1916. “Opportunism and the Collapse of the Second International.” The Basel Manifesto is a summary of “millions and millions of proclamations, newspaper articles, books, speeches of the socialists of all countries” from the entire epoch of the Second International. “To brush aside the Basel Manifesto means to brush aside the whole history of socialism. The Basel Manifesto does not say anything *special*, anything *extraordinary*. It says this, and only this: *what* socialists had used in order *to gain the following of the masses*: the acknowledgement of ‘peaceful’ work as a *preparation* for the proletarian revolution.” It only repeats what Guesde said in 1899 “or Kautsky in 1909 in *Road to Power*, when he pointed to the end of the ‘peaceful epoch,’ to the coming on of the epoch of wars and revolutions, of the struggle of the proletariat for power.” (Also listed under Second International.) 27:102
11. January 1916. “Opportunism and the Collapse of the Second International.” Lenin is outraged that Kautsky is denying the revolutionary tasks of the proletariat—during the very crisis that he himself predicted! “And the one denying revolutionary action is the very same authority of the Second International who in 1909 wrote a whole book, *Road to Power*, translated into practically all the major European languages and demonstrating the *link* between the future war and revolution, demonstrating that ‘the revolution *cannot* be premature’!! In 1909 Kautsky demonstrated that the epoch of ‘peaceful’ capitalism was past, the epoch

of wars and revolutions was approaching.” The Basel resolution said the same thing, and the very war predicted by Stuttgart and Basel came out in 1914. “And Kautsky is thinking up theoretical ‘reservations’ *against* a revolutionary tactic!” 27:109-10

12. 1916. *Imperialism*. Lenin discusses the position of “bourgeois writers” about international cartels, and mentions that in agreement with them is “K. Kautsky, completely unfaithful to his Marxist position, for example, of 1909.” 27:372
13. January-February 1917. “Marxism and the State” Notebooks. Lenin takes notes on *Road to Power* and adds comments that mainly point to lack of concreteness. For example, Kautsky writes: Revolution is a change in the essence of state power (Wesen der Staatsgewalt). Lenin comments: “That’s all? [*I tol’ko?*] How exactly?” Kautsky states: The dictatorship of the proletariat is its political *Alleinherrschaft*. Lenin: “That’s all? of what it consists, not a word.” Lenin cites the statement he admired earlier, about always starting a fight with a belief in victory, and adds: That’s all? Nothing about making revolutionary use of a revolutionary situation? Lenin grudgingly notes that Kautsky “is aware of the growth of bureaucracy and army,” and he fills a page with passages from the book about the “new era of revolutions.” His final judgment: the *particularities* of the proletariat revolution are passed over, and the “concretization” provided by Marx and Engels in their Commune writings is not mentioned. 33: 278-88.
14. August 1917. *State and Revolution*. The page that Lenin devotes to *Road to Power* is almost all complimentary. It is the “best of Kautsky’s writings against the opportunists ... a giant step forward” because it talks about “concrete conditions.” Lenin repeats his 1914 comment that *Path* shows the great potential promise of German Social Democracy and therefore how far it has fallen, since it turned out to be “more moderate and opportunist than it seemed!” His entire criticism is contained in one sentence: “All the more characteristic, then, that with such definiteness about the era of revolutions that is already beginning—in a book that is dedicated (as he himself says) to the ‘*political* revolution’—he nevertheless completely evades the question of the state.” 33:110-1.
15. October 1918. *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*. In the foreword, Lenin documents that the Bolsheviks had been calling Kautsky a renegade long before they took power and Kautsky became an open opponent. He cites the passage from *Socialism and War* (1915) about Kautsky who “wrote in 1909 a whole book about the closeness of the epoch of revolutions and about the link between war and revolution,” who signed the Basel resolution, but who nevertheless justifies and prettifies social-chauvinism (see above for whole passage). 37:238
16. October 1918. *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*. How can Kautsky say, without self-contradiction, that soviets are unfit to be the basis of the state? “Kautsky wrote in 1909, when he was not yet a renegade, that a *premature* revolution is no longer something that anyone need fear, that anyone who refuses revolution from fear of defeat is a traitor. Kautsky can’t bring himself to disavow

these things *directly*.” Thus, Kautsky’s self-contradictory argument is: on the one hand, “Europe has matured for socialism and is approaching the decisive battle between labor and capitalism,” while on the other, a militant, vanguard, organizing *vozhd* of the oppressed (the proletarian soviets) must not be turned into a state form! 37:272-3

17. October 1918. *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*. “When Kautsky was still a Marxist, for example, in 1909, when he wrote *Road to Power*, he defended precisely the idea of the inevitability of *revolution* in connection with the war, he talked about the nearness of the *era of revolutions*.” The same is true of the Basel resolution. You mean this isn’t renegade behavior? 37:294
18. October 1918. *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*. “Long before the war, all Marxists, all socialists were in agreement that a European war would create a revolutionary situation. When Kautsky was not yet a renegade, he clearly and with definiteness acknowledged this—in 1902 with *Social Revolution* and in 1909 (*Road to Power*).” 37:300

## New era of revolutions

### Introduction

Closely related to Lenin’s references to *Road to Power* are those which associate Kautsky with the main points taken from that book about the nature of the era ushered in by the outbreak of war. We learn that Kautsky had been making very similar points for a long time (articles from 1900, 1904, 1907 and 1910 are cited).

### Citations

1. February 1915. Lenin objects to Axelrod’s assertion that the ground is not prepared for full internationalism on the part of the proletariat. “Bourgeois fatherlands will exist until they are destroyed by the international revolution of the proletariat. The ground for this [revolution] already exists, as acknowledged even by Kautsky in 1909,” and as shown by the unanimous Basel resolution, by the sympathy felt by workers for socialists who voted against credits, and so forth. 26:124
2. Spring 1915. “The Collapse of the Second International.” In a 1915 article, Kautsky cites an article he wrote in 1904 in which he asserted that (in Lenin’s paraphrase), “‘democratic Russia’ will set afire the aspirations of the nations in the east of Europe for freedom.” Lenin says that this premise is “indisputable,” but Kautsky’s 1915 conclusions from this true premise are indefensible. 26:239-40
3. Autumn 1915. Imperialism Notebooks. In a 1915 article, Kautsky cited his own earlier 1911 article “War and Peace,” mainly on the topic of a United States of Europe. Lenin writes down a whole list of passages that Kautsky did *not* cite (the implication being that Kautsky would thereby reveal his apostasy). One such Kautsky passage states that even if a revolution did not break originally as a

protest against war burdens and even if it was not international but confined to one state, nevertheless, “*under present conditions such a state of affairs could not continue long*. It (the revolution) *must* be transferred to other states ...” This chain reaction will lead to a United States of Europe and eventually of the world. (It is unclear whether the emphasis in the quotation is from Kautsky or Lenin.) 28:360-1.

4. Autumn 1915. Imperialism Notebooks. Lenin takes notes on Kautsky’s 1905 article “Patriotism, War and Social Democracy.” Among others, he takes down the following passage by Kautsky: “The proletariat is already strong enough in all capitalist states that any war leading to no result and associated with huge losses should become the starting point for a revolution that will establish a proletarian regime.” 28:596-7.
5. Autumn 1915. Imperialism Notebooks. After taking notes on a 1900 article by Belfort-Bax, Lenin cites an exchange between Kautsky and Bernstein about Belfort-Bax in which Kautsky makes clear that he has always been against colonialism. The source of this citation is unclear. 28:571
6. Autumn 1915. Imperialism Notebooks. Almost a page of passages from Kautsky’s 1907 work *Socialism and the Colonial Policy*. Capitalism is already at the point where it is a hindrance for productive forces (this has been true since the 1880s), and colonialism will not save it. Socialism is already an economic necessity, and its coming is only a matter of relative strength. Increasing proletarian strength through education and organization of the proletariat thus remains the most important task for Social Democracy. It is not the job of socialists to worry about capitalism’s productive forces [by supporting colonialism]. (Lenin makes no explicit marginal comment about this or the previous citation.) (See also the mention of *Socialism and the Colonial Policy* under Nationalism.) 28:652-3
7. Autumn 1915. Imperialism Notebooks. Lenin takes down a sentence from a 1911 article by Kautsky: “It (our electoral campaign) could turn overnight into a struggle for power.” Lenin adds an exclamation point in the margin, presumably to find Kautsky still so revolutionary in 1911. 28:358
8. 1916. *Imperialism*. On the opening page of this work, Lenin refers to Hobson, writing from the point of view of “bourgeois social-reformism and pacifism” and adds that his viewpoint is essentially similar to “the present position of the former Marxist K. Kautsky.” 27:309
9. 1916. *Imperialism*. After giving his own definition of imperialism, Lenin says that he will have to dispute on this topic, “more than anybody else, with the major Marxist theorist of the Second International epoch, that is, the 25 years from 1889 to 1914, K. Kautsky. Against the basic ideas expressed in our definition of imperialism, Kautsky spoke out quite decisively both in 1915 and even already in Nov. 1914...” 27:387

10. 1916. *Imperialism*. Lenin occasionally refers to Engels' letter of 1892 to Kautsky about the relation of the English workers to English imperialism. This letter was first published in 1907 in a book by Kautsky, *Socialism and the Colonial Policy*. When Lenin references the Kautsky book, he usually adds, as here: "this book was written in those infinitely distant times when Kautsky was a Marxist." 27:405 (See also under Nationalism.)
11. July 1916. "Results of the Discussion on Self-Determination." "All of us Left Zimmerwaldians are convinced of what Kautsky also, for example, was convinced of prior to his turnaround in 1914 from Marxism to the defense of chauvinism, namely, that socialist revolution is entirely possible *in the very nearest* future, 'any day now,' as the same Kautsky once expressed it." 30:51
12. Autumn 1916. "A Caricature of Marxism and Imperialist Economism." In a dispute with fellow Bolsheviks, Lenin cites Kautsky as an authority: "Up to the 1914-16 war Karl Kautsky was a Marxist, and many of his extremely important writings and statements will always remain a model of Marxism. On August 16, 1910, he wrote in *Die Neue Zeit* about the impending war that was swiftly approaching: 'In a war between Germany and England the issue is not democracy, but world domination, that is, exploitation of the world. That is not an issue on which Social Democrats can side with the exploiters of their nation.'" There you have an excellent Marxist formulation, one that fully coincides with our own and fully exposes the *present-day* Kautsky, who has turned from Marxism to defense of social-chauvinism, one that clearly brings out the principles of the Marxist attitude toward war." 30:85
13. May 1919. "Heroes of the Bern International." "But *Mr.* Kautsky has lost his head to such an extent that he forgets what he wrote earlier, when he was a Marxist, namely, that war would very likely be the occasion for a revolution." ("Mr." demonstratively indicates that Kautsky is no longer a comrade.) (See more on this passage under Dialectics.) 38:394

## **Social Revolution**

### **Introduction**

Lenin had a long history with Kautsky's *Social Revolution*, which was originally published in 1902, only a month or two after *What Is to Be Done?*. Lenin immediately organized a Russian translation. In 1907 Kautsky published a second edition of *Social Revolution* which incorporated the experience of the 1905 revolution. In 1908, Lenin wrote an article that praised Kautsky's remarks and used them to support the Bolshevik position on the December uprising ("The Assessment of the Russian Revolution"). After 1914, Lenin did not refer to *Social Revolution* (but see under Dialectics) until early 1917, when he decided to re-read it in conjunction with his investigations into Marxism and the state. Lenin did not find in *Social Revolution* what he suspected he would not find, namely, a sufficiently robust critique of the state. But he was also obviously reminded of why he liked the book in the first place ("a great deal that is extraordinarily valuable") and positive references to the 1902 book begin almost immediately, even before the writing of *State and Revolution* several months later.

## Citations

1. January-February 1917. "Marxism and the State" Notebooks. As with *Road to Power*, Lenin's marginal comments to the passages he cited ring variations on "That's all?" "Everywhere he talks about the state in general!" Kautsky says that the revolution will be a long battle that will transform political and social structures: "That's all!! Too little!" Kautsky says that the proletariat in power will immediately carry out the democratic part of the program. "That's all!! Not a peep about the special combination of democracy with the dictatorship of the proletariat." Kautsky mentions the *Machtmittel des modernen Grosstaates: seine Bureaukratie and Armee*, but "nevertheless not a word about the destruction, Zerbrechen, of these *Machtmittel!!!*" Lenin also expresses surprise to find some sentiments of which he presumably approves, for example, that English workers are little more than petty bourgeois. 33:272-7.
2. January-February 1917. "Marxism and the State" Notebooks. In his notes on Marx's *Civil War in France*, Lenin is impressed with Marx's idea of combining legislative and executive functions, and notes: "With K. Kautsky (p. 43, here) a philistinization: not a shadow of an idea of *another kind* of democracy." This reference is to *Social Revolution*. 33:272.
3. August 1917. In *State and Revolution*, Lenin introduces *Social Revolution* by saying "The author gives here a great deal that is extraordinarily valuable, but he avoids precisely the question of the state." Kautsky shows what Engels calls 'superstitious reverence' toward the state, because he a. stays too much at the level of "ringing banalities" and b. does not take up certain subjects that Lenin thinks he should have taken up, for example, how the experience of the Paris Commune in 1871 showed the difference between bourgeois democracy and proletarian democracy. 33:107-8.
4. August 1917. *State and Revolution*. So far, Lenin's critique and the materials used to support it are what we find in the Notebooks. Lenin at this point brings up a new passage from *Social Revolution* in which Kautsky seems to endorse the continuance of "bureaucracy" under socialism. About half of the three pages given to *Social Revolution* in *State and Revolution* is devoted to this passage. 33:108-10
5. August 1917. *State and Revolution*. Lenin mentions a few passages from *Social Revolution* of which he seems to approve, but which he feels are not worth much, given the evasion of the question of the state: the significance of the 'idea of revolution,' 'revolutionary idealism first of all,' and the characterization of English workers as 'little more than petty bourgeois.' 33:108
6. January 1917. Lenin wrote *State and Revolution* several months after rereading *Social Revolution*. Lenin's January lecture to Swiss workers about the significance of the 1905 revolution show the immediate impact of his rereading. "The higher rose the waves of the movement [in 1905], all the more did the reaction arm itself against the revolution with ever greater energy and

decisiveness. The case of the Russian revolution of 1905 confirmed what K. Kautsky wrote in 1902 in his book *Social Revolution* (by the way, he was then still a revolutionary Marxist, and not a defender of social-patriots and opportunists, as at present). He wrote the following: ‘The coming revolution ... is less similar to a sudden rising against the government than to a drawn-out *civil war*.’ And that’s how it happened! Undoubtedly, that’s the way it will be in the coming European revolution!” 30:323

7. April 1917. 7<sup>th</sup> Bolshevik Conference. In a speech explaining peasant policy: “Kautsky himself writes: ‘not one socialist talks about eliminating private property for peasants’.” (This particular formulation seems to come from *Social Revolution*, although Lenin also associates the basic point with Kautsky’s *Agrarian Revolution*. See under Agriculture and Peasant Policy for a fuller discussion of this Lenin’s remark.)
8. April 1918. From a debate in the Executive Committee of the Soviets (Karelin was a Left SR). “When people such as Karelin and Martov talk here about conciliation with the bourgeoisie, this is nonsense. I remind you of the authoritative book of Kautsky’s, where he talks about life on the day after the social revolution. I will tell you approximately what he wrote: It won’t do to have the organizers of trusts sitting around with nothing to do. This was written by a person who understands that organizing tens of millions of people for the production and distribution of products—that’s something! We [undergrounders] didn’t learn this and there was no place we could learn it, but the organizers of trusts know that without it there is no socialism. And we have to know this as well. And therefore all these phrases [accusing us of] conciliation and compromise with the bourgeoisie are empty chatter. You will not be able to refute Kautsky’s position, namely, you have to know [how to handle] large-scale production from experience.” 36:276
9. October 1918. *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*. After Lenin’s re-reading, he realized that Kautsky predicted that war would lead to revolution not only in *Road to Power* but also in the earlier *Social Revolution*, so he mentions the two books together when referring to Kautsky’s prewar prediction. (For the full citation, see under *Road to Power*.) 37:300
10. December 1918. Remarks at Moscow Party Conference (unpublished during Lenin’s lifetime). “If we aspire to install *kontrol* and to organize the economy in a practical way for hundreds of thousands of people, then we must not forget that when socialists think about this question, they note that leaders of trusts, as experienced practical men, can be useful to them.” Other comments in this section make it clear that Kautsky is foremost in Lenin’s mind on this issue. 37:230
11. July 1919. “Lackeys” (not published in Lenin’s lifetime). “Martov, like Kautsky, like the entire Bern International, knows very well that they enjoyed sympathy from the workers as socialists because they preached the necessity of the revolution of the proletariat. In 1902 Kautsky wrote of the possible link of

revolution with war and also that the coming revolution of the proletariat would likely coincide more with civil wars than previous revolutions.” The Basel resolution in 1912 also tied the war to the revolution. “But when the war broke out, the ‘revolutionaries’ of the Second International turned out to be lackeys of the bourgeoisie!” 39:144.

12. Autumn 1919. Outline for “On the Dictatorship of the Proletariat” (the planned book or article itself was never written). Under the heading “Civil War,” Lenin puts: “cf. K Kautsky 1902 in *Social Revolution*.” Next to it he has a reference to a recent Kautsky pronouncement on civil war as the ‘annihilation’ of the party. (Presumably Lenin means to contrast Kautsky’s 1902 description of revolution as civil war to his current position.) 39:262

## Kautsky and the State

### Introduction

In his Notebooks on the State and in *State and Revolution*, Lenin also takes note of a few other early Kautsky productions. I have also included in this section the summary passages on the pre-1909 material found in *State and Revolution*. The basic argument is that silences and evasions have led the way to the open betrayal found in Kautsky’s 1912 article on Pannekoek. (NB: Lenin reacted angrily to this article right after it came out.) The critique of the 1912 article is the heart of Lenin’s case. This is shown by later references to his findings. I have put these later references in the data base, although they are perhaps not strictly relevant, since they refer to a post-1909 work.

### Citations

1. January-February 1917. “Marxism and the State” Notebooks. After listing various differences between opportunists and Marxists on the question of the state, Lenin adds: “And also don’t forget that the *dictatorship of the proletariat* is directly denied by the opportunists in Germany (Bernstein, Kolb and so forth), and *indirectly* by the official program and Kautsky, remaining silent about it in everyday agitation and *tolerating* the apostasy of Kolb and Co.” 33:173
2. January-February 1917. “Marxism and the State” Notebooks. Lenin quotes a passage from a 1904 article in which Kautsky puts off agitation in the troops until the situation is such that direct disobedience is the aim. Lenin comments: “In opportunist fashion, against agitation in the troops.” 33:277-9
3. January-February 1917. “Marxism and the State” Notebooks. Lenin cites what Kautsky said in his anti-Bernstein book (1899) in reaction to Bernstein on the dictatorship of the proletariat: “A solution of the problem of the proletarian dictatorship we can with complete calm leave to the future.” Lenin comments: “What a pearl! Ha-ha-ha!! ‘With complete calm’!!” Another marginal comment on this Kautsky passage: “Cf. Engels on revolution in *Anti-Dühring*!! Look at the extent to which Marxism has been philistinized!!” 33:302.

4. January-February 1917. "Marxism and the State" Notebooks. Bernstein cites Marx's words about not taking over the state machine ready-made. Kautsky's response is (in Lenin's paraphrase): "You can't take it over *simply* and *ready-made*, but in general you can!" 33:305
5. August 1917. *State and Revolution*. Lenin spends a page on the debate between Bernstein and Kautsky about Marx's *Civil War in France*. Bernstein's comments are described as a "crude and scandalous distortion of the thought of Marx." Kautsky is criticized because he limits himself to the general arguments that Lenin cited in his Notebook (see above). Lenin sums up: "The result is that the most essential distinction between Marxism and opportunism on the issue of the tasks of the proletarian revolution is glossed over by Kautsky!" 33:106
6. August 1917. *State and Revolution*. Lenin introduces his analysis by saying that in his very polemics with the opportunists, Kautsky shows a "systematic deviation toward opportunism precisely on the question of the state." He ends up by saying: "From all these evasions of the question, silences and equivocations, there inevitably has resulted the full transition to opportunism about which we must now speak [that is, Kautsky's 1912 polemic with Pannekoek]. German Social Democracy, speaking through Kautsky, seems to have declared: I stand by revolutionary views (1899). I acknowledge in particular the inevitability of the social revolution of the proletariat (1902). I acknowledge the coming of a new era of revolutions (1909). But I nevertheless go backwards in comparison to what Marx said in 1852, once the question is raised of the tasks of the proletarian revolution in relation to the state (1912)." 33:105, 110.
7. August 1917. *State and Revolution*. In the section on Pannekoek, Lenin says that Kautsky is now (1912) repeating the old sneers of Bernstein and the Webbs against "primitive democracy." As I point out in *Lenin Rediscovered*, Lenin has here forgotten that he himself sided with Kautsky in a very similar rejection of "primitive democracy" in *What Is to Be Done?*. 33:115-6.
8. March 1917. Letters from Afar. "We need a state. But what we need is *not the kind* of state that the bourgeoisie everywhere create, starting with constitutional monarchies and ending with the most democratic republics. And this marks our distinctiveness from opportunists and *kautskianty* of the old socialist parties who are starting to rot away and who have distorted or forgotten the lessons of the Paris Commune and the analysis of those lessons by Marx and Engels." In a footnote to this paragraph, Lenin remarks that in a later letter or in a special article, he will set out this analysis and also "the complete distortion of Marxism by Kautsky in his polemic of 1912 against Pannekoek on the question of the so-called 'destruction of the state'." 31:39
9. April 1917. Speech to Bolshevik meeting explaining April Theses. Not a parliamentary republic, but a republic of soviets, without police, etc. "This is the lesson that the French Commune gave, that Kautsky forgot and that the workers learned in 1905 and 1917." 31:108

10. April 1917. “On Dual Power.” Lenin explains the features of the Commune-type state, and comments that the “essence” of the Paris Commune was forgotten and distorted by the Plekhanovs (outright social chauvinists) and the Kautskys (“people of the ‘center,’ that is, wavering between chauvinism and Marxism”). 31:146
11. June 1917. “The Tasks of the Proletariat in our Revolution.” In another exposition of the Commune state, Lenin says that Kautsky and Plekhanov defend “an ordinary parliamentary bourgeois republic” as the appropriate type of state in the revolutionary period and the transition to socialism. The more we reject the prejudices of their pseudo-Marxism, the more we will be able to help the *narod* create soviets. 31:162-4. A similar charge is made later in this pamphlet, 31:180.
12. March 1918. Seventh Party Congress, Program Debate. Lenin gives an example of what should and should not be included in a party program: We don’t know yet what completed socialism will look like. “Theoretically, in theoretical writings, in articles, in speeches, in lectures, we can develop the line of thought that Kautsky conducts the struggle against the anarchists improperly, but we can’t put that in the program, because there does not yet exist [experiential] materials for the characterization of socialism.” 36:65-6.
13. October 1918. *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*. In his introduction, Lenin documents the fact that he had been calling Kautsky a renegade since 1914. He mentions the section in *State and Revolution* devoted to Kautsky and quotes a sentence from the section on the dispute with Pannekoek: Kautsky “disavows the revolution in practice while acknowledging it in words.” “In essence, the basic theoretical mistake of Kautsky in his book on the dictatorship of the proletariat consists precisely in the opportunist distortions of Marx on the state that are set out in detail in my book *State and Revolution*.” 37:239

## Oppportunism

### **Introduction**

Lenin accuses Kautsky of caving in to “opportunism.” But the *definition* of opportunism remains one of the core “Kautsky-shared ideas”—indeed, Kautsky is mentioned in the same breath with Marx and Engels as an authority on the topic. Even on the question of the state, Lenin’s indictment of pre-1909 Kautsky is for his insufficient prosecution of opportunism (Lenin does not accuse Kautsky of holding wrong views on this question prior to 1912). Kautsky knew what opportunism was, and he can therefore be cited as an authority on the dangers of opportunism and the necessity of a split with it under certain circumstances. Kautsky’s error in the past was not his refusal to insist on a split during a non-revolutionary period (Lenin realizes this is usually impracticable), but rather his inability to foresee the inevitability of a split in a revolutionary period such as the current one.

## Citations

1. August 1914. “Tasks of Revolutionary Social Democracy in the European War.” Immediately after the outbreak of war—even before he was scandalized by Kautsky’s first wartime articles during the fall of the year—Lenin identifies opportunism as the cause of the International’s collapse. “The bourgeois nature and the danger [of opportunism] have long been indicated by the finest representatives of the revolutionary proletariat of all countries.” 26:2
2. December 1914. “Dead Chauvinism and Living Socialism.” Lenin explains that the long decades of a ‘peaceful’ epoch had the effect of greatly strengthening opportunism within the socialist parties. “This same Kautsky wrote 15 years ago, at the beginning of the Bernstein affair, that if opportunism changed from a mood to a tendency, a split would be on the order of the day.” 26:102
3. December 1914. “A German Voice on the War.” “Yes, if Social Democrats like these [Kautsky and Plekhanov] wish to be in the majority and to form the official “International” (=an alliance for international justification of national chauvinism), then is it not better to give up the name of ‘Social Democrats,’ which has been besmirched and degraded by them, and return to the old Marxist name of Communists? Kautsky once threatened to do that when the Bernsteinist-opportunists seemed to be close to conquering the German party officially. What on his lips was an idle threat will perhaps become *deeds* [*delo*] for others.” 26:95
4. January 1915. “What Next?” “Hardly a single Marxist of note can be found who has not acknowledged many times and on a variety of occasions that the opportunists are truly hostile to the socialist revolution, a non-proletarian element.” 26:113
5. February 1915 (first published 1917). “Under a False Flag.” “Opportunism is liberal worker politics. Anyone who fears the “factional” appearance of these expressions is advised to take the trouble to study the opinions of Marx, Engels and Kautsky (an ‘authority’ especially convenient for the opponents of ‘factionalism, don’t you think?) about, let us say, English opportunism. There cannot be the slightest doubt that the result of such a study will be the recognition of the radical and essential identity of opportunism and liberal worker politics.” 26:151
6. June 1915. “The Collapse of the Second International.” “And now, Kautsky noble places on the *masses* the blame for the treachery and spinelessness of that social *stratum* whose *ties* with the tactics and ideology of opportunism Kautsky himself has written about scores of times over the course of many years!” In the following discussion, Lenin refers to Kautsky’s initial passivity against Millerand, Bernstein, etc. 26:234-4.
7. August 1915. “Socialism and War.” “In the course of the whole epoch of the Second International a struggle raged everywhere within the Social Democratic parties between the revolutionary and the opportunist wing ... Not a single Marxist has ever doubted that opportunism expresses a bourgeois politics within

the worker movement, expressed the interests of the petty bourgeoisie and the alliance of a tiny section of bourgeoisified workers with their ‘own’ bourgeoisie, against the proletarian masses, the oppressed masses.” 26:321-2.

8. September 1915. “The Voice of an Honest French Socialist.” Lenin quotes Paul Golay, a French-speaking Swiss socialist, as saying: “When, under the name of revisionism, Bernstein formulated a kind of democratic reformism, Kautsky shattered him with the aid of relevant facts.” But (continues Golay) the SPD only preserved appearances that covered up its *Realpolitik*. Lenin evidently approves of Golay’s views on this topic. Later in the article, he mentions the “present [*sovremennoe*] dominance” of “a vicious caricature of Marxism by Kautsky, *Neue Zeit* and the Germans in general.” (See more from this passage under “Second International.”) 27:8-10
9. 1916. In a republication of his 1914 article on national self-determination, Lenin added a footnote: “We ask the reader not to forget that up to 1909, up to his excellent book *Road to Power*, Kautsky was a foe of opportunism, to whose defense he turned only in 1910-11, and completely decisively only in 1914-16.”) 25:259
10. August 1917. *State and Revolution*. “Let’s take Kautsky’s first substantial writing against opportunism, his book *Bernstein and the Social Democratic Program*. Kautsky refutes Bernstein in detail. But here’s what is characteristic”—on the question of the state, Kautsky did an inadequate job of refutation. 33:105-6
11. July 1919. “Lackeys” (not published in Lenin’s lifetime). “The following were the two different theories [current] before the war about the internal struggle within socialism. Kautsky and Martov, and also the majority of opportunists, saw in the reformists and the revolutionaries two lawful nuances, necessary wings of a single movement of a single class. A split between these nuances was condemned. Their rapprochement and merger in any serious moment of proletarian class struggle was considered inevitable. The advocates of a split were accused of myopia. The other view, the Bolshevik one, saw in the reformists a channel for bourgeois influence on the proletariat, regarded union with them as a temporary evil under circumstances that were evidently non-revolutionary, and judged that a split and schism with them was inevitable given any serious sharpening of the struggle, and all the more when a revolution began. Who turned out to be right? The Bolsheviks.” (This comment reflects a genuine difference with Kautsky over an important issue, but one that Lenin already acknowledge *before* the war.) 39:145
12. 1920. Foreword to French and German editions of *Imperialism*. “In the case of Kautsky and those like him, views like this are a complete renunciation precisely of those revolutionary foundations of Marxism that this writer defended for decades—among other subjects, especially in the struggle with socialist opportunism (Bernstein, Millerand, Hyndman, Gompers and so forth).” (For the full passage, see under *Kautskianstvo*.) 27:306-7

## Nationalism

### Introduction

Lenin makes clear that he still sides with “Kautsky as Marxist” on the issue of national self-determination.

### Citations

1. Spring 1914. “On the Right of Nations to Self-Determination.” At a number of points in the course of this major statement, Lenin makes clear that he sides with Kautsky against Rosa Luxemburg. “If we do not set forth and use as a slogan in agitation the *right* to separation, we play into the hands not only of the bourgeoisie, but of the feudalism and absolutism of the *oppressing* nation. Kautsky urged this conclusion against Rosa Luxemburg, and this conclusion is indisputable” (25:275). It is “irrefutable” (25:278). “The example of Asia speaks *for* Kautsky, *against* Rosa Luxemburg ... the example of Asia shows, as opposed to Rosa Luxemburg, but correctness of Kautsky’s position” (25:262-3). (This article was written before the war broke out. The reason that it belongs in the data base is when Lenin prepared a new publication in 1916, he added a footnote to a passage from the 1914 edition in which Lenin had cited Kautsky’s 1908 article “Nationalism and Internationalism” against Luxemburg. The 1916 footnote reads: “We ask the reader not to forget that up to 1909, up to his excellent book *Road to Power*, Kautsky was a foe of opportunism, to whose defense he turned only in 1910-11, and completely decisively only in 1914-16.”) 25:259
2. Autumn 1915. Imperialism Notebooks. In notes on Kautsky’s imperialism articles of 1914-1915, Lenin takes down Kautsky’s claim to priority in investigating ‘the new imperialism,’ back in 1897-8. Lenin does not have notes on the specific article cited by Kautsky, but he does write down a passage from another 1898 article on China, in which Kautsky describes colonialism as regressive even from a bourgeois standpoint. 28:245-6
3. July 1916. “Results of the Discussion on Self-Determination.” Lenin refers to the debate in the late 1890s between Kautsky and Luxemburg (30:17). He clearly sides with Kautsky. “In his book *Socialism and Colonial Policy* (Berlin, 1907), Kautsky, then still a Marxist, published a letter from Engels ...” (30:50) (Lenin took notes on this work in his Imperialism Notebooks; see under New Era of Revolutions.)

## Agriculture and Peasant Policy

### Introduction

With this topic, Lenin’s references to Kautsky enter a new dimension: actual policy of the new proletarian state. Lenin gives special attention to Kautsky’s earlier agreement with the Bolsheviks about peasant policy, particularly in his 1906 article *Forces and Prospects of the Russian Revolution* (Lenin immediately arranged a Russian edition of this article and wrote a highly enthusiastic foreword).

## Citations

1. April 1917. 7<sup>th</sup> Bolshevik Conference. Lenin is talking about possible peasant support for measures such as state control of banks. He comments: “Kautsky himself writes: ‘not one socialist talks about eliminating private property for peasants’.” (These remarks are based on someone’s notes and were published only after Lenin’s death. The flow of the argument and the specific point of the Kautsky citation are unclear from this excerpt, but presumably Lenin is making the same basic argument as he does in the November 1917 passage given below: it’s OK for the Bolsheviks to accept a less than ideal land policy, if it comes from the peasants, if it does not do active harm to socialism, and if the proletariat controls the levers of political and economic power. The orthodoxy of this line reasoning can be shown by citing Kautsky’s authority.) (The words attributed to Kautsky are very close to a sentence in *Social Revolution*, which he had just reread. Lenin associates this whole issue more fundamentally with Kautsky’s *Agrarian Question*.)
2. November 1917. Letter to *Pravda* on peasant policy. Lenin is going over his speech to the peasant congress earlier that day. There he made the point that the workers *should* agree to any transitional measures proposed by the working peasants, if these measures do not harm the cause of socialism. “And Kautsky, when he was still a Marxist (from 1899-1909), acknowledged many times—I said [in my speech]—that transitional measures to socialism cannot be the same in countries of large-scale and countries of small-scale agriculture.” (The dates given here by Lenin do not mean that Kautsky was not a Marxist before 1899, but rather that the point about agricultural policy was made during these years. Kautsky’s *Agrarian Question* was published in 1899.) 35:103
3. October 1918. *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*. “Kautsky, who in far distant times long ago, almost 20 years ago, wrote an excellent Marxist work about the agrarian question, must surely know Marx’s argument that nationalization of the land is precisely a *thorough-going* slogan of the *bourgeoisie* ... All that Kautsky the Marxist wrote in *Agrarian Question* in 1899 on the issue of the means at the disposal of the proletarian state for the gradual transition of small-scale peasants to socialism—all this is forgotten by the renegade Kautsky in 1918.” 37:325, 327
4. October 1918. *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*. After reviewing disputes over the peasant question between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, Lenin goes on to say: “Kautsky took an indirect part in this dispute in 1905 [actually in 1906], when, at the request of the then Menshevik Plekhanov, he spoke out in essence *against* Plekhanov, which then led to some razzing [of Plekhanov] in the Bolshevik press [that is, by Lenin]. Today Kautsky says *not a word* to recall the dispute back then (he fears exposure by his own pronouncements!) and thereby deprives the German reader of any possibility of understanding the essence of the matter. Mister Kautsky *is unable* to inform the German worker in 1918 that in 1905 he was for the union of the workers with the peasants and not with the liberal bourgeoisie, nor [can he mention] under what

conditions he defended that union, what program he suggested for that union.” 37:306

5. October 1918. *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*. Yes, as we always said, the revolution is a bourgeois one as long as we are allied with the peasantry as a whole. “Kautsky’s strained efforts to ‘expose’ us on this point expose only the confusion of his own views and his fear of recalling what he wrote in 1905, when he was not yet a renegade.” 37:311
6. October 1918. *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*. “On one hand, he [Kautsky] *does not dare* to say that the proletarians should have separated from the peasantry over the question of land equalization, since he feels the absurdity of a break-up of this kind (and besides, in 1905, when Kautsky was not yet a renegade, he clearly and directly defended the union of the workers and peasants as a condition of the victory of the revolution).” On the other hand, even though land equalization is admittedly reactionary from a *socialist* point of view, Kautsky underestimates the importance of the *struggle* for it as a force for the *bourgeois-democratic* revolution. 37:322-3
7. December 1918. Remarks at Moscow Party Conference (unpublished during Lenin’s lifetime). The cooperatives are a good example of the need to change policy under changed circumstances. “The cooperative apparatus is a supply apparatus based on the mass participation of the laboring people themselves, instead of the private initiative of capitalists. Kautsky was right when he said, long before he went over to the renegades, that socialist society is one big cooperative.” 37:230
8. March 1919. Speech to 8<sup>th</sup> Party Congress. Lenin is setting forth the shift to the middle peasant that constituted a major change of emphasis in Bolshevik agricultural and peasant policy. “It is completely clear that the basic question is the more complicated but no less essential task: *how do we determine exactly the relation of the proletariat to the middle peasantry?* Comrades, this question for a Marxist does not present difficulties from a theoretical point of view—a point of view that has been assimilated by a vast majority of workers. I recall, for example, that in Kautsky’s book about the agrarian question, written back in the time when Kautsky correctly set forth the teachings of Marx and was acknowledged to be the undisputed authority in this area—in this book on the agrarian question he said the following about the transition from capitalism to socialism: the task of the socialist party is the *neutralization of the peasantry*, that is, making sure that the peasant remains neutral in the struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, that the peasant does not provide active help to the bourgeoisie against us.” 38:193-4.
9. March 1919. Speech to 8<sup>th</sup> Party Congress. In this same speech, he makes the point associated specifically with Kautsky in November 1917: “Not a single socialist in the world denies that the creation of communism will go along different paths in countries with large-scale agriculture and in countries with

small-scale agriculture. This is a completely elementary, ABC-type truth.” 38:195.

10. May 1919. Speech to Adult Education Congress. Lenin is making a point highly important to him during this period: free trade in grain during a post-revolutionary time of hunger is “freedom of the capitalist, freedom of the restoration of the power of capital.” Here he backs this up with the following: “I affirm that anyone who reads Marx, especially the first chapter of *Capital*, anyone who reads the popularization of Marx even by Kautsky, *The Economic Doctrines of Karl Marx*, should come to the realization” that when a proletarian revolution has taken place, when the country is hungry, the economy destroyed by an imperialist and civil war, free trade in grain is impermissible. 38:355
11. May 1919. Speech to Adult Education Congress. Lenin refers to the same heavy guns to make a related point, namely, that the peasant cannot take an independent path but must follow either the workers or the capitalists. He imagines a democrat asking ‘why can’t the peasants go their own path?’ “If you don’t know why, I would say to such a citizen, read the beginnings of Marx’s political economy, its exposition by Kautsky, think about the development of any of the large-scale revolutions of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, about the political history of any country during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It will give you the answer why. The economy of capitalist society is such that the dominating force can only be capital or the proletariat that has overthrown it. *There can be no other forces in this society.*” 38:362-3
12. Autumn 1919. Outline for “On the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.” In a section entitled “‘Neutralization’ of the small-scale peasantry, especially the peasantry,” Lenin writes the following: “*Communist Manifesto* (reactionary and revolutionary ‘to the extent which.’ K. Kautsky in *Agrarian Question* [has] neutralization—the same idea *verballhornt*.” (*Verballhornt* means “made worse than the original.” Given the other citations of Kautsky as an authority on this point, the accent here should be on “the same idea” rather than *verballhornt*—especially as the very term “neutralization” seems to be from Kautsky rather than Marx.) 39:263
13. 18 November 1919. “Speech at Conference on Party Work in the Villages.” In a discussion of policy toward the “middle peasant,” Lenin comments: “Here lies our most difficult task. Socialists have always pointed out that the transition to socialism will raise this difficult problem—the attitude of the worker class to the middle peasantry.” (As other comments in this section show, the principal socialist authority on this topic for Lenin was Kautsky.) 39:312

## ***Slavs and Revolution***

### ***Introduction***

In 1919, in connection with the Second Congress of the Communist International, Lenin made reference Kautsky’s 1902 article “Slavs and Revolution” (published in *Iskra* weeks after the appearance of *What Is to Be Done?* and probably read by Lenin while writing his book.) My

guess is that he went to the trouble of digging up the article in connection with the work “On the Dictatorship of the Proletariat” that he outlined in autumn 1919. He was so delighted with what he found that he very probably shocked his listeners and readers at his birthday celebration and at the Third Congress of the Comintern with a long passage from this article, accompanied by an enthusiastic appreciation of Kautsky as Marxist.

## **Citations**

1. May 1919. “The Third International and its Placed in History” “When Karl Kautsky was still a Marxist, and not the renegade of Marxism that he became in his capacity as a fighter for unity with Scheidemanns and for bourgeois democracy against soviet or proletarian democracy, he wrote at the very beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century an article entitled ‘*Slavs and Revolution.*’ In that article he laid out the historical conditions that created the possibility of the transfer of hegemony in the international revolutionary movement to the Slavs. And that’s what happened. For a time—it goes without saying only for a short time—hegemony in the revolutionary proletarian International has come over to the Russians, just as at various periods in the 19<sup>th</sup> century it belonged to the English, then the French, then the Germans.” 38:306
2. Autumn 1919. Outline for “On the Dictatorship of the Proletariat” Under the heading “Dictatorship of the Proletariat and Soviet Authority,” one outline entry is: “Russia’s Particularities. Kautsky: Slavs and Revolution” 39:268
3. April 1920. Remarks on the Occasion of Lenin’s 50<sup>th</sup> Birthday. Lenin reads out the long quotation from *Slavs and Revolution* that can be found in *Left-Wing Communism*. He introduces it with a description of Kautsky’s role that can be found under Kautsky as Mentor. The quotation, which points to Bolshevik successes, leads Lenin on to the thought that Bolsheviks might “give themselves airs” (*zaznalsia*). (It’s probably a coincidence, but Lenin uses this same expressive word, taken from the title of a short story by Gorky, in a work that came out at almost exactly the same time as *Slavs and Revolution*, namely, *What Is to Be Done?*, where it is applied to Legal Marxists [6:16].) 40:325-7
4. Summer 1920. *Left-Wing Communism: A Symptom of Growing Pains*. Lenin introduces the same long quote with these words: “In the days long past, so long ago, when Kautsky was still a Marxist and not a renegade, he approached this question as a historian and foresaw the possibility of the coming of a situation in which the revolutionary nature of the Russian proletariat would become a model for Western Europe. This was in 1902, when Kautsky wrote an article for the revolutionary *Iskra* entitled ‘Slavs and Revolution’.” After giving the quote, Lenin exclaims: “How well Karl Kautsky wrote eighteen years ago!” 41:4-5

# Dialectics

## Introduction

The label “dialectics” is derived from the citation given below from *Left-Wing Communism*. The other citations do not use this word, but they illustrate the same argument: When he was a Marxist, Kautsky understand the need for flexible tactics, for adjusting to new and unexpected situations while remaining true to basic positions. But when he himself was confronted with the new realities created by war and revolution, he was completely unable to adjust. Lenin makes this argument sometimes in an angry tone of voice, sometimes in a more regretful tone of voice.

## Citations

1. 1914. Philosophical Notebooks. Lenin does not take notes on any Kautsky work in these notebooks. Kautsky is mentioned twice by other writers. In case, V. Shuliatikov mentions that both Marx and Kautsky show a connection between a commodity economy and abstract religious views. Lenin comments: “Not in the same spirit as you do” (29:462). In the other case, Iu. Steklov cites Kautsky’s *Social Revolution* in connection with his, Steklov’s analysis of Chernyshevsky. Lenin comments: “Oho! Com. Steklov is tangled up in his lies!” (Lenin’s point here is still opaque to me.) 29:589
2. October 1918. *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*. Kautsky’s *Road to Power* and the Basel Manifesto both spoke of the coming era of revolutions. “But in 1918, when revolutions did begin in connection with the war, Kautsky, instead of explaining that they were inevitable, instead of thinking over and carrying out to their conclusion a *revolutionary* tactic, the ways and means of preparing for revolution, began to describe the reformist tactics of the Mensheviks as internationalism. Isn’t this apostasy?” This critique of Kautsky is also a description of Lenin’s own sense of mission. 37:294
3. May 1919. “Heroes of the Bern International.” “The record in substituting reactionary whining for Marxism is taken by Mr. Kautsky. He holds one note: cries about what is happening, is upset, weeps, is horrified, preaches conciliation! All his life this knight of the doleful countenance *wrote* about class struggle and about socialism, and when matters came to the maximum sharpening of the class struggle and the eve of socialism, our wise man lost his bearings, wailed away and became an out-and-out philistine. [He forgets what he wrote when he was a Marxist about the link between revolution and war (see above under *Road to Power*).] Now, instead of a sober, fearless analysis of what changes in the form of revolution are *inevitable* as a consequence of the war, our ‘theoretician’ weeps and wails over his smashed ‘expectations’.” (This is in response to a Kautsky comment in 1919 that the revolution came about, not as a result of a class struggle, but rather as a result of a war-induced collapse of the dominant system, contrary to expectations.) 38:394 (See also 38:365-6 for a similar point about Kautsky’s “frightened” attitude toward civil war.)

4. September 1919. “How the bourgeoisie utilizes renegades.” Lenin reacts to Kautsky’s latest anti-Soviet book, although all he has to go on is a newspaper account. Kautsky evidently called the Bolsheviks hypocrites for installing the death penalty after being opposed to it, and Lenin brings up material about the 1903 debate on this topic at the Second Congress. “Kautsky has to such an extent unlearned [*razuchilsia*] to think in revolutionary fashion, so such an extent mired himself in philistine opportunism, that he can’t even imagine how a revolutionary proletarian party, long before its victory, could openly acknowledge the necessity of the death penalty for counter-revolutionaries!” (I include this comment because (a) it implies that Kautsky did once think in revolutionary fashion, and (b) it documents the argument that Kautsky’s principal fault is his inability to apply his Marxist principles to the new era of revolutions.) 39:184
5. Summer 1920. *Left-Wing Communism: A Symptom of Growing Pains*. “What happened to such highly learned Marxists as Kautsky, Otto Bauer, and others—*vozhdi* of the Second International who are devoted to socialism—can (and should) serve as a useful lesson. They were completely aware of the necessity for flexible tactics, they studied and they taught Marxist dialectics to others (and much of what they did in this connection will forever remain a valuable acquisition of socialist literature), but in the *application* of this dialectic, they made such mistakes or showed themselves in practice *not* to be dialecticians, they turned out to be people who could not take into account the swift change of forms and the swift filling of old forms with new content, that their fate is little more envious than the fate of Hyndman, Guesde, and Plekhanov.” 41:87-8
6. Spring 1921. “On the Food-Supply Tax.” Lenin introduces the term ‘war communism’ to describe the policy of taking from the peasants with very little compensation besides worthless paper money—a policy that Lenin says was forced on the Bolsheviks by circumstances. “We could not conquer the landlords and the capitalists in a devastated small-peasant country in any other way. ... This fact also shows the role played in practice by the lackeys of the bourgeoisie—Mensheviks, SRs, Kautsky and Co.—when they said that this ‘war communism’ was our *fault*. It must in fact be put down as our *merit*.” 43:219-20
7. January 1923. “On Our Revolution” “There is no doubt that a textbook written à la Kautsky (*po Kautskomu*) was a very useful thing for its time. But the time has come nevertheless to renounce the thought that this textbook foresaw all forms of development of the rest of world history. It is high time that people who think like this are shown to be fools.” (The usual translation is: “a textbook written on Kautskyite lines.” But this is just a mistranslation, since anyone familiar with what Lenin meant by “Kautskyite” will realize that he could not have said that “a textbook written on Kautskyite lines” was *ever* useful. In the context of earlier statements on this theme, we see that Lenin is not being at all ironical when he says that a textbook à la Kautsky was once a very useful thing. Lenin is not making the claim that he himself foresaw all the tactical changes made necessary by the actual “new era of revolutions.” His own merit is that he was able to dialectically adjust and draw the necessary tactical consequences, Kautsky’s

demerit is his inability to do this. Lenin does not say explicitly that Kautsky himself was one of the fools who thought that future world history would hold no surprises, and indeed Kautsky strongly emphasized the wealth of new and unpredictable developments to come.) 45:382

## **Kautskianstvo**

### **Introduction**

In this section are included a few characteristic passages that help us determine what Lenin meant by *kautskianstvo*. It seems that *kautskianstvo* is (a) anti-Marxist, (b) not theoretical opportunism, but a de facto alliance with opportunists; (c) a wide international tendency not restricted to people who are influenced Kautsky's specific ideas or even to those who use Marxist phrases; (d) a product in large part of the contradictions of the Second International; (e) defined in Kautsky's particular case by his apostasy from his prewar views. At its heart, *kautskianstvo* is the use of high-sounding phrases, whether "Marxist" or not, to evade and avoid the tactical implications of the present revolutionary era.

### **Citations**

1. February 1915. "The Conference of RSDWP Groups Abroad." "The so-called 'Center,' with Kautsky at the head, has in practice completely slid down into opportunism, covering it up with especially harmful hypocritical phrases and with a falsification of Marxism to the tune of imperialism." (The term *kautskianstvo* is not used.) 26:165
2. June 1915. "British Pacifism and the British Dislike of Theory." The term *kautskianstvo* is not used, but the main point is that the 'Marxist' Kautsky and the non-Marxist Fabians are *essentially* the same: hypocritical quasi-leftism as a cover for bourgeois influence. "The Fabians are more sincere and more honest than Kautsky and Co., since they did not promise to stand to revolution, but politically they are of a *single* essence." 26:268
3. Summer 1915. *Socialism and War*. This work contains a short section devoted to defining *kautskianstvo*. A contrast is made between what Kautsky wrote in 1909 and what he says today (see under *Road to Power*). "The working class cannot carry out its world revolutionary role without conducting merciless war against this apostasy [*renegatstvo*], lack of character, servility toward opportunism and unprecedented theoretical philistinization of Marxism. *Kautskianstvo* is not an accident, but a social product of the contradictions of the Second International, a merger of loyalty to Marxism in words and subordination to opportunism in practice." *Kautskianstvo* takes different forms: some who fall under this description reject the idea of defense of the fatherland but still want unity with the opportunists (for example, Trotsky), while others reject the opportunists but support patriotic defense (Rakovsky). 26:323-4
4. January 1916. "Opportunism and the Collapse of the Second International." Kautsky predicted the war and the revolutionary crisis, but now that it is here,

“Kautsky thinks up theoretical ‘reservations’ *against* a revolutionary tactic!”  
(For full passage, see under *Road to Power*) 27:109-10

5. 1916. *Imperialism*. The petty bourgeois democratic opposition to imperialism exists in most countries. “The break with Marxism by Kautsky and by the wide international tendency of *kautskianstvo* consists precisely in the fact that Kautsky not only does not worry about, [or] is not able, to oppose himself to this [democratic type of] opposition—petty-bourgeois, reformist, economically reactionary at its basis—but, on the contrary, in practice merges with it.” 27:408-9
6. October 1917. “On the revision of the party program.” The party program should state that the present war is an imperialist war, and not be satisfied with more general propositions. Otherwise there is a loophole for opportunists: “they can say, ‘imperialism is an era of imperialist war, but *this* war is *not entirely* imperialist’ (Kautsky, for example, reasons this way).” 34:364
7. October 1918. *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*. Discussing Kautsky’s brand of internationalism is worthwhile, “since Kautsky is not along, but is spokesman for a trend which inevitably grew up in the atmosphere of the Second International (Longuet in France, Turati in Italy, Nobs and Grimm, Graber and Naine in Switzerland, Ramsay MacDonald in Britain, etc.).” 37:292
8. October 1919. “Greetings to Italian, French and German Communists.” Lenin dismisses the German Independent Party of which Kautsky was a founder. “The *kautskianskaia* (or ‘independent’) party is perishing and soon, inevitably, will perish and fall apart due to the clash between the revolutionary outlook of the mass of its members and its counter-revolutionary ‘*vozhdi*’.” 39:217
9. 1920. Uncompleted foreword to English edition of *Renegade Kautsky*. Ramsey MacDonald belongs in essence to the *kautskianstvo* tendency. “MacDonald is not a Marxist, and the use of Marxism to prettify opportunism [*marksistski podkrashennyi opportunizm*] that constitutes Kautsky’s specialty is not typical for England.” 40:228
10. 1920. Foreword to French and German editions of *Imperialism*. This foreword contains one of the most succinct sum-ups of *kautskianstvo*. It is an international ideological tendency that includes former *vozhdi* of the Second International as well as “a mass of socialists, reformers, pacifists, bourgeois democrats, priests.” “In the case of Kautsky and those like him, views like this are a complete renunciation precisely of those revolutionary foundations of Marxism that this writer defended for decades, and, among other subjects, especially in the struggle with socialist opportunism (Bernstein, Millerand, Hyndman, Gompers and so forth). It is therefore no accident that, throughout the world, ‘*kautskianty*’ are in practical political terms now united with extreme opportunists (through the Second or the yellow International) and with bourgeois governments (through coalition bourgeois governments with participation by socialists).” A thorough analysis and struggle with this tendency is necessary, especially to win over

“small property owners and the millions of toilers who are placed in more or less petty bourgeois conditions of life.” 27:306-7

11. October 1920. “A Contribution to the History of the Question of the Dictatorship.” After praising Rosa Luxemburg for studying the experience of the events of the revolutionary year of 1905, Lenin contrasts this to “the vast majority of the official representatives of the official Social Democratic and socialist parties, including the reformists and people of the type of the future ‘*kautskianty*,’ ‘Longuetists,’ the followers of Hillquit in America, etc.—[who] proved absolutely incapable of grasping the significance of this experience and of performing their duty as *revolutionaries*, that is, to take up the lessons of this experience for study and propaganda.” 41:371. [As this passage indicates, one cannot be a *kautskianets* before the war, one can only be a “future *kautskianets*.” It is quite unlikely that Kautsky himself should be numbered among these future *kautskianty*, since in 1908 Lenin specifically praised Kautsky for performing this particular revolutionary duty (“The Assessment of the Russian Revolution”).]

## Kautsky as a Person

### Introduction

Lenin’s consistent take on Kautsky as a person, as revealed by his actions after 1914, is that he is weak-willed and without character (*beskharakternyi*), prone to vacillation and tends to react to crisis with confusion and panic. Hints of these traits were visible beforehand.

### Citations

1. December 1914. “Dead Chauvinism and Living Socialism.” In this article, his first detailed reaction to Kautsky’s actions after the war, Lenin describes him in the following way (sometimes not by name). After quoting Kautsky’s article “Social Democracy in time of war,” Lenin asks where one could find, outside of writings by direct and open renegades, such shameful evasions of the truth and cover-ups of what is really an open renunciation of socialism. But crises have at least the good effect of destroying rotten or rapidly rotting authorities. People like Kautsky are in the middle, between the chauvinists and the out-and-out enemies of opportunism. These people, “losing their bearings and wavering, are now following in the wake of the opportunists and causing the proletariat more harm than anybody else because of their hypocritical attempts to justify opportunism in quasi-scientific and Marxist (don’t laugh!) fashion.” Lenin holds out the possibility that some of these people may be “restored to socialism,” but only if they resolutely break with the opportunists [a last hope for Kautsky’s return to the fold?]. Kautsky is politically dead. “The bankruptcy of individual persons is not a marvel in the era of great world-wide shifts and breakthroughs. Kautsky, despite his tremendous services, never belonged to those who immediately took a militant Marxist position at a time of great crises (recall his hesitations on the Millerand issue).” 26:102-4

2. August 1917. *State and Revolution*. In trying to explain “how it was that Kautsky ended up in the unbelievably disgraceful morass of confusion and defense of social-chauvinism at a time of the great crisis of 1914-15,” Lenin points to the “almost unknown fact” that Kautsky showed much vacillation before coming out against Bernstein and Millerand. Lenin recalls the epithet “rubber-like” that was applied by *Iskra*’s sister journal *Zaria* in order to condemn Kautsky’s “evasive, temporizing, and conciliatory attitude” toward the opportunists at the Paris Congress of the International in 1900. (Lenin does not mention that the polemics in *Zaria* were conducted by Plekhanov, himself also at this point a “traitor to socialism.”) 33:105
3. May 1920. Marginal notes to Bukharin’s *Economy of the Transition Period*. On p. 57, Bukharin has a sarcastic fn., showing Kautsky’s various excuses for inaction (including waiting for catastrophe before war), and adds “No doubt about it, a consistent conception.” Lenin’s marginal note: “very true!” *Leninskii sbornik*, XL (1985), p. 394. (Also, p. 401, when Bukharin calls Kautsky a ‘sociologist’ in scare quote [ETP, p. 84], Lenin happily notes that at least Bukharin is now using scare quotes.)
4. Summer 1920. *Left-Wing Communism*. Lenin mentions articles by Kautsky and Arthur Crispian as typical *vozhdi* of the Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany: “These gentlemen have absolutely no conception of what it is to think and reason like revolutionaries. They are weepy philistine democrats, who are a thousand times more dangerous for the proletariat if they declare themselves to be supporters of soviet power and the dictatorship of the proletariat, for in practice at every difficult and dangerous moment they will inevitably commit treason... under the ‘very sincere’ conviction that they are helping the proletariat!” (Ellipsis in the original.) 41:97
5. August 1921. “Letter to German Communists.” Lenin makes a distinction between two different gangs of “lackeys of capital”: “the Scheidemanns, Legiens, Davids and Co.,” who are venal and corrupt, and “the Kautskys, Hilferdings and Co.,” who are weak-willed and without character (*beskharakternyi*, often applied to Kautsky and translated as “spineless” by the Collected Works). 44:89

## Other Renegades

### Introduction

Other “renegades” are mentioned in passing by Lenin: Jules Guesde, Otto Bauer, Rudolf Hilferding and Plekhanov. As with Kautsky, Lenin does not mean to deny their past services because of their present apostasy. (Plekhanov is a special case, since he is the one candidate for being a *kautskianets* before the war, due to his role in the Russian revolutionary movement. I have not included comments on Plekhanov.) Rosa Luxemburg is almost a Kautsky in reverse: she made plenty of theoretical mistakes before the war, but she magnificently rose to the occasion when crisis struck.

## Citations

1. February 1915. “Russian Südekums.” Pavel Axelrod says that we should be careful about accusing tried and true leaders like Jules Guesde of opportunism. This is preaching slavishness toward leaders. “Learn from the example of the entire life of Guesde, we say to the workers, *except* his clear betrayal of socialism in 1914. Perhaps personal or other circumstances will be found to mitigate his guilt, but we’re not talking about the guiltiness of *individuals*, but about the socialist significance of *events*.” Guesde’s 1899 prediction of war and revolution is sometimes mentioned positively e.g., in the 1916 article “Opportunism and the Collapse of the Second International” (see under *Road to Power*). 26:124 (By the way, Kautsky felt the same way in 1903-4 about Lenin’s attacks on Axelrod: how plausible is it that Pavel Axelrod is an opportunist?!)
2. October 1915. “Revolutionary Marxists at the International Socialist Conference, September 5-8, 1915.” A critic said that the International has always been against violence. “It was very easy for us to reply to this —using a citation from Jules Guesde in *En garde!*—by saying that not a single influential leader [*vozhd*] of the Second International ever rejected the use of violence and direct revolutionary methods of the struggle in gel. It has always been argued that the legal struggle, parliamentarianism and insurrection are interlinked, and *must inevitably* pass into each other according to the changes in the conditions of the movement.” Lenin quotes another statement by Guesde from *En garde!* (1899) and comments: “In this speech Guesde condemned himself in advance.” 27:46
3. 1916. Imperialism Notebooks. Lenin finds a paraphrase in *Neue Zeit* of a 1911 article by Otto Bauer: “A world war will be capitalism’s last word... If the Turkish revolution leads to a general European war, then the inevitable result will be a European revolution.” 28:361
4. 1916. *Imperialism*. On the opening page, he mentions Hobson’s *Imperialism and Finance Capitalism* by “the Austrian Marxist Rudolf Hilferding.” Hilferding becomes the central authority in *Imperialism*, especially in the second half of the book. “Despite a mistake by the author about the theory of money and a certain inclination to conciliate Marxism and opportunism, this work [*Finance Capitalism*] represents to the highest degree a valuable theoretical analysis ‘of the latest phase in the development of capitalism’—so runs the subtitle of Hilferding’s book.” (Lenin probably got the point about monetary theory from Kautsky.) Lenin goes on to say that the recent discussion of imperialism—including the Basel resolution—is mostly within the conceptual framework of these works. (27:309-10)
5. February 1922. “Notes of a Journalist.” Rosa Luxemburg is an eagle who made mistakes, Kautsky and others are barnyard fowl who will never go high. Luxemburg was mistaken about Polish independence, Menshevism in 1903, the accumulation of capital. “She was mistaken when she defended the unification of Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, along with Plekhanov, Vandervelde, Kautsky and others.” She made mistakes in her prison writings. Nevertheless her *complete*

works should be published. Her denunciation of German Social Democracy as a stinking corpse after August 1914 is enough to assure her place in the history of the world worker movement. 42:421-2

6. March 1922. Eleventh Party Congress. Lenin mentions a new book by Otto Bauer that welcomes NEP and the partial legalization of market forms in 1921 as an indication that Bauer and others were right to call the Russian revolution a bourgeois one. Lenin mentions that Bauer is a person “from whom we all learned, but who after the war became a pitiful philistine like Kautsky.” 45:89 (See also the mention of Bauer under Dialectics.)

## Second International

### Introduction

A “Second International data base” that collected all post-1914 Lenin references to the prewar Second International would be a useful thing. I give here a few indicative comments. Note that Lenin seems to have no trouble with the basic message propagated by the Second International over the decades. In fact, he often justifies his post-1914 stands by affirming that they reflect a prewar socialist consensus.

### Citations

1. December 1914. “Dead Chauvinism and Living Socialism.” “The Second International succeeded over 25-45 years (depending on whether one starts from 1870 or 1889) to do exceptionally important and useful work in the dissemination of socialism in breadth and in the preparatory, elementary and simple organization of its force, but it has played out its historical role and died, conquered not so much by the von Klucks [a German general] as by opportunism.” 26:103
2. March 1915. “Conference of RSDWP Foreign Sections.” “Voting for war credits, participation in governments, the policy of a class truce, the repudiation of an illegal organization when legality has been rescinded—these all constitute the frustration of highly important decisions of the International and a direct betrayal of socialism.” 26:165
3. September 1915. In response to the distaste for “doctrinaire theory” shown by Swiss socialist Paul Golay, Lenin writes that proletarian liberation is unthinkable without a revolutionary theory, and continues: “Such a theory cannot just be made up. It *grows up* out of the sum total of the revolutionary experience and the revolutionary thinking of all countries in the world. And such a theory *has grown up* during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century. It is called Marxism.” One can only a socialist by adhering to this theory and fighting “in our days” against the mutilation of it by Plekhanov, Kautsky and their ilk. 27:11
4. November 1915 “Of Two Lines in the Revolution.” “There is no need here for us to prove that the objective conditions in Western Europe are ripe for a socialist revolution; this was admitted before the war by all influential socialists in all advanced countries.” 27:79-80

5. January 1916. "Opportunism and the Collapse of the Second International." The Basel Manifesto is a summary of "millions and millions of proclamations, newspaper articles, books, speeches of the socialists of all countries" from the entire epoch of the Second International. The positions of the Manifesto were recognized "by all socialists" and thus conclusively prove the hypocrisy of those who stand for "defense of the fatherland." "The Basel Manifesto says nothing *unusual* or *out of the ordinary*. It provides only and exclusively that *by which* the socialists *managed to lead the masses*—recognition of 'peaceful' work as *preparation* for a proletarian revolution." (The full passage is given under *Road to Power*.) 27:101-2
6. September 1916. "The Military Program of the Proletarian Revolution." "The greatest, and fatal, error of the bankrupt Second International was that its words did not correspond to its deeds, that it acquired the habit of hypocrisy and the unscrupulous revolutionary phrase (note the present attitude of Kautsky and Co. towards the Basel Manifesto." 30:141
7. December 1916. "Draft of Theses." "The war proved with particular clarity and in practical terms the truth that before the war was repeated by all the leaders [*vozhdi*] of socialism who are now going over to the bourgeoisie, namely, that contemporary capitalist society, especially in the advanced countries, is completely ripe for the transition to socialism." 30:278-9
8. March 1917. Farewell Letter to the Swiss Workers. Lenin affirms his continued faith in the German proletariat. "In Germany the mood of the proletarian mass is *seething*—the proletarian mass that has given so much to humanity and socialism by its stubborn, insistent, consistent organizational work during the course of the long decades of the European 'quiet period' of 1871-1914. The future of German socialism will not be represented by traitors such as Scheidemann, Legien and David and Co., or by such wavering, spineless [*beskharakternyie*] politicians, crushed by routine, as Messrs. Haase, Kautsky and their ilk." The future rather belongs to such as Karl Liebknecht. (The "Messrs." indicates "no longer comrades.") 31:93
9. April 1917. "The Tasks of the Proletariat in Our Revolution." "The 'center' consists of people of routine, eaten up by rotten legality, spoiled by conditions of parliamentarianism, etc., bureaucrats accustomed to warm sinecures and to 'calm' work. Speaking historically and economically, they do not represent a *special* stratum, they represent only a *transition* from an outlived phase of the worker movement, from the phase of 1871-1914—a phase that gave much that was valuable, especially in the art, so necessary for the proletariat, of slow, consistent, systematic, organized work in broad, very broad, fashion—to a *phase* that is new, one that became *objectively* necessary from the time of the imperialist war, opening an *era of social revolution*. The main *vozhd* and representative of the 'center' is Karl Kautsky, the most prominent authority of the Second (1889-1914) International, a model of the utter bankruptcy of Marxism, unheard-of lack of character, of the most pitiful vacillations and betrayals, starting from August

1914.” (The Collected Works translates: “a model of utter bankruptcy as a Marxist,” which is undoubtedly what Lenin meant, but not what he wrote.) 31:171-2

10. September 1917. “The Impending Catastrophe and How To Combat It.” “The capitalist gentlemen have learnt very well a truth that all supporters of scientific socialism profess to recognize but which the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries tried to forget as soon as their friends had secured cushy jobs as ministers, deputy ministers, etc.”—namely, that a switch from monarchy to a democratic republic changes the form of capitalist exploitation but not the substance of exploitation. 34:157

## Kautsky as Mentor

### Introduction

On several occasions Lenin described in broader terms Kautsky’s historical role as mentor specifically to the Russian proletariat and to the Bolsheviks. Kautsky played a central role in allowing the young Russian movement to assimilate European experience, he was an inspiring fighter against opportunism and he taught valuable lessons in the dialectics of tactical flexibility. I have included a passage from *Left-Wing Communism* that does not mention Kautsky but when we put this passage alongside the others, we see that, from Lenin’s point of view, Kautsky played a key role in giving the Bolsheviks the “granite theoretical base” mentioned in this passage. Indeed, Lenin (modestly or accurately?) does not claim any originality here.

### Citations

1. August 1917. *State and Revolution*. “Undoubtedly an immeasurably larger number of Kautsky’s works have been translated into Russian than into any other language. It is not without justification that some German Social Democrats make the joke that Kautsky is more widely read in Russia than in Germany (we may say, in parentheses, that there is deeper historical significance in this joke than those who first made it suspected; for the Russian workers, having manifested in 1905 an unusually strong, an unprecedented demand for the best works of the best Social Democratic literature in the world, and having been supplied with translations and editions of these works in quantities unheard of in other countries, thereby transplanted, so to speak, in accelerated fashion the immense experience of a neighboring, more advanced country to the almost virgin soil of our proletarian movement).” 33:104
2. April 1920. Remarks on the Occasion of Lenin’s 50<sup>th</sup> Birthday. Lenin introduces the long citation from Kautsky’s *Slavs and Revolution* with the following words: “I would now like to say a few words about the present position of the Bolshevik party. I was led to these thoughts by a passage of a certain writer, written by him 18 years ago, in 1902. This writer is Karl Kautsky, from whom at the present time we have had to break away and fight in exceptionally sharp form, but who earlier was one of the *vozhd*i of the proletarian party in the fight against German

opportunism, and with whom we once collaborated. There were no Bolsheviks then, but all future Bolsheviks, collaborating with him, valued him highly.” 40:325-6 (For a similar passage introducing the same Kautsky citation in *Left-Wing Communism*, see under *Slavs and Revolution*.)

3. Summer 1920. *Left-Wing Communism*. Kautsky’s role in “teaching Marxist dialectics” is recalled (see full passage under Dialectics). 41:87-8
4. Summer 1920. *Left-Wing Communism*. Why were the Bolsheviks able to achieve the party discipline necessary for victory in the civil war? The answer lies “very simply” (*prosto-naprosto*) in some historical peculiarities of Russia: a. ability to rely on the “latest word” of European experience and b. the many forms of struggle compressed into a short period. Lenin then describes how, in the period from the 1840s to the 1890s, Russia arrived at Marxism through suffering (*vystradala*): “half a century of unparalleled torment and sacrifice, of unprecedented revolutionary heroism, incredible energy, devoted searching, study, practical trial, disillusionment, verification, and comparison with European experience. Thanks to the political emigration caused by tsarism, revolutionary Russia, in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century, acquired a wealth of international links and excellent information on the forms and theories of the world revolutionary movement, such as no other country possessed.” The struggle of the Russian proletariat “matured with exceptional rapidity, and assimilated most eagerly and successfully the appropriate ‘last word’ of American and European political experience.” Thus, “Bolshevism arose in 1903 on the strongest possible basis of Marxist theory” and went through its 15-year pre-revolutionary history “on this granite theoretical base.” (This kind of compliment to the Russian workers can itself be found in Kautsky’s prewar writings.) 41:7-8
5. September 1920. Lenin’s party re-registration form. Among the questions is the following: “What have you read from the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Kautsky and Plekhanov?” Lenin underlined everybody but himself and answered: “Practically everything (of the underlined authors).” 41:468