

Two tactics of Social-democracy in the Democratic Revolution  
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Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1970.

Revolution undoubtedly teaches with a rapidity and thoroughness which appear incredible in peaceful periods of political development. And, what is particularly important, it teaches not only the leaders, but the masses as well. p5

The revolution will confirm the programme and tactics of Social-Democracy in actual practice by demonstrating the true nature of the various classes of society, by demonstrating the bourgeois character of our democracy and the real aspirations of the peasantry, who, while being revolutionary in the bourgeois-democratic sense, carry within themselves not the ideas of 'socialisation', but the seeds of a new class struggle between the peasant bourgeoisie and the rural proletariat. p5

In such a contingency the working class feels an instinctive urge for open revolutionary action, and we must learn to set the aims of this action correctly, and then make these aims as widely known and understood as possible. p6

... in the present revolution the problem amounts to this: which is to be emphasised in the work of educating and organising the working class, the former or the latter?

The outcome of the revolution depends on whether the working class will play the part of a subsidiary to the bourgeoisie, a subsidiary that is powerful in the force of its onslaught against the autocracy, but impotent politically, or whether it will play the part of leader of the people's revolution. p7

3) under the present social and economic order this democratic revolution in Russia will not weaken but strengthen the domination of the bourgeoisie which at a certain juncture will inevitably go to any length to take away from the Russian proletariat as many of the gains of the revolutionary period as possible. p11

c) that an indispensable condition for such participation is strict control of its representatives by the Party, and the constant safeguarding of the independence of Social-Democracy which strives for the complete socialist revolution, and, consequently, is irreconcilably opposed to all the bourgeois parties. p12

Therefore, the proletariat, which is in the van of the struggle for democracy and heads that struggle, must not for a single moment forget the new antagonisms inherent in bourgeois democracy, or the new struggle. p15

We are all convinced that the emancipation of the working classes must be won by the working classes themselves; a socialist revolution is out of the question unless the masses become class-conscious and organised, trained, and educated in an open class struggle against the entire bourgeoisie. p16

In the final analysis force alone settles the great problems of political liberty and the class struggle, and it is our business to prepare and organise this force and to employ it actively, not only for defence but also for attack. p18

To be able to exercise this pressure from below, the proletariat must be armed-for in a revolutionary situation matters develop with exceptional rapidity to the stage of open civil war-and must be led by the Social-Democratic Party. p19

the point is that it is impermissible for a Social-Democrat to cause confusion in workers' minds as to

which is the genuinely revolutionary path. p24

Of course, the new-*Iskrists* have not as yet gone so far as to tone it down. But the degree to which the revolutionary spirit has abandoned them, the degree to which lifeless pedantry has blinded them to the militant tasks of the moment, is most vividly shown by the fact that in their resolution they, of all things, forgot to say a word about the republic. This is incredible but it is a fact. p25

The new-*Iskra* group likes to accuse us of ignoring the danger of the proletariat becoming dissolved in bourgeois democracy. We should like to see the person who would undertake to prove this charge on the basis of the text of the resolutions passed by the Third Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party.

Our reply to our opponents is-a Social-Democratic Party which operates in a bourgeois society cannot take part in politics without marching, in certain cases, side by side with bourgeois democracy. The difference between us in this respect is that we march *side by side* with the revolutionary and republican bourgeoisie, without merging with it, whereas you march side by side with *the liberal and the monarchist bourgeoisie*, without merging with it either. *That is how matters stand.* p33

Since the rule of the bourgeoisie over the working class is inevitable under capitalism, it can well be said that a bourgeois revolution expresses the interests not so much of the proletariat as of the bourgeoisie. But it is quite absurd to think that a bourgeois revolution does not at all express proletarian interests. p36

In countries like Russia the working class suffers not so much from capitalism as from the insufficient development of capitalism. p36

It is of greater advantage to the bourgeoisie for the necessary changes in the direction of bourgeois democracy to take place more slowly, more gradually, more cautiously, less resolutely, by means of reforms and not by means of revolution; p37

The very position the bourgeoisie holds as a class in capitalist society inevitably leads to its inconsistency in a democratic revolution. The very position the proletariat holds as a class compels it to be consistently democratic. The bourgeoisie looks backward in fear of democratic progress which threatens to strengthen the proletariat. The proletariat has nothing to lose but its chains, but with the aid of democratism it has the whole world to win. p38

To remove all misinterpretations and misunderstandings let us first of all note that the danger to which we are referring lies not in the subjective, but in the objective aspect of the matter, not in the formal stand which Social-Democracy will take in the struggle, but in the material outcome of the entire present revolutionary struggle. p41

We are not in the least inclined to be unreasonably optimistic on that score; we do not for a moment forget the immense difficulties of this task. but, since we are out to fight, we must desire victory and be able to point out the right road to it. p44

If the revolution gains a decisive victory then we shall settle accounts with tsarism in the Jacobin, or, if you like, in the plebeian way. 'The whole French terrorism,' wrote Marx in 1848 in the famous *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, 'was nothing but a plebeian manner of settling accounts with the enemies of the bourgeoisie, with absolutism, feudalism, and philistinism'. p45

Only the proletariat can be a consistent fighter for democracy. It can become a victorious fighter for democracy only if the peasant masses join its revolutionary struggle. If the proletariat is not strong enough for this the bourgeoisie will be at the head of the democratic revolution and will impart an

inconsistent and self-seeking nature to it. Nothing but a revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry can prevent this. p47

Whoever now refuses to attack the autocracy and reaction, whoever fails to prepare for such an attack, and whoever does not advocate it, has no right to call himself an adherent of revolution. p54

It is pointless to speak of inevitability, in the meaning of absolute certainty with regard to some concrete event, to which Mr. Struve would reduce the matter. What you must speak of, if you would be a partisan of revolution, is whether insurrection is necessary for the victory of the revolution, whether it is necessary to proclaim it vigorously, to advocate it and make immediate and energetic preparations for it. p55

Mr. Struve shows us revealingly what many Social-Democrats turn a blind eye to, namely, that a revolutionary period differs from ordinary, everyday, preparatory periods in history in that the temper, excitement, and convictions of the masses must and do express themselves in action.

Vulgar revolutionism fails to see that words are action, too: this proposition is indisputable when applied to history in general, or to those periods of history when no open political mass action takes place. No putsches of any sort can replace or artificially evoke such action. p56

The desire to "*remain*" with the old methods, i.e., action only "from below", is voiced with pomp and clamour *precisely at a time* when the revolution has confronted us with the necessity, in the event of a victorious insurrection, of acting *from above*. p62

They have failed to understand that when the revolution gets under way, and there is revolution, civil war, insurrectionary outbursts, but still no parliament, terms and concepts of parliamentary struggle undergo a transformation and turn into their opposites. They do not realise that in the conditions under examination amendments are introduced by means of street demonstrations, interpellations are made by means of offensive action by armed citizens, and opposition to the government is affected by the forcible overthrow of that government. p63

No one will deny, of course, that if we lack sufficient forces, if the insurrection is not wholly successful, or if the victory is indecisive, provisional revolutionary governments may possibly be set up in individual localities, in individual cities and the like. p65

A "revolutionary commune", i.e., a revolutionary government, even if only in a single city, will inevitably have to administer (even if provisionally, "partly, episodically") all affairs of state and it is the height of folly to hide one's head under one's wing and refuse to see this. p67

Vperyod stated quite definitely wherein lies the real "possibility of retaining power" - namely, in the revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry; in their joint mass strength, which is capable of outweighing all the forces of counter-revolution; in the inevitable concurrence of their interests in *democratic* reforms. p69

But if it is not hopeless, if the "revolution's decisive victory over tsarism" opens up such a possibility, then we must indicate it, call actively for its transformation into reality, and issue practical slogans not only *for the contingency* of the revolution being brought into Europe, but also for the purpose of taking it there. p70

To forget this would be tantamount to forgetting the character of the democratic revolution as one of the whole people: if it is "of the whole people", that means that there is "singleness of will" precisely in so far as this revolution meets the needs and requirements of the whole people. Beyond the bounds of democratism there can be no question of the proletariat and the peasant bourgeoisie having a single will. p70

A Social-Democrat must never for a moment forget that the proletariat will inevitably have to wage a class struggle for socialism even against the most democratic and republican bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie. This is beyond doubt. Hence, the absolute necessity of a separate, independent, strictly class party of Social-Democracy. Hence, the temporary nature of our tactics of "striking a joint blow" with the bourgeoisie and the duty of keeping a strict watch "over our ally, as over an enemy", etc. All this also leaves no room for doubt. p71

There is no such thing as abstract truth. Truth is always concrete. p72

It is, however, precisely for this very reason that the slogan of "revolutionary communes" is erroneous, because the very mistake made by the communes known to history was that of confusing the democratic revolution with the socialist revolution. On the other hand, our slogan-a revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry-fully safeguards us against this mistake. While recognising the incontestably bourgeois nature of a revolution incapable of directly overstepping the bounds of a mere democratic revolution our slogan advances this particular revolution and strives to give it forms most advantageous to the proletariat; consequently, it strives to make the utmost of the democratic revolution in order to attain the greatest success in the proletariat's further struggle for socialism. p73

What is needed for "genuine consolidation of all the social forces interested in democratic change" is not the "points" over which the Conference laboured so assiduously and so vainly, but the ability to put forward genuinely revolutionary slogans. For these slogans are needed that will raise the revolutionary and republican bourgeoisie to the level of the proletariat, and not lower the aims of the proletariat to the level of the monarchist bourgeoisie. What is needed for this is the most energetic participation in the insurrection, not sophisticated evasion of the urgent task of an insurrection. p78

These vulgarisers of Marxism have never given thought to what Marx said about the need to replace the weapon of criticism by the criticism of weapons. p81

Without thereby becoming socialist, or ceasing to be petty-bourgeois, the peasantry is capable of becoming a wholehearted and most radical adherent of the democratic revolution. The peasantry will inevitably become such if only the course of revolutionary events, which brings it enlightenment, is not prematurely cut short by the treachery of the bourgeoisie and the defeat of the proletariat. Subject to this condition the peasantry will inevitably become a bulwark of the revolution and the republic, for only a completely victorious revolution can give the peasantry everything in the sphere of agrarian reforms-everything that the peasants desire, dream of, and truly need (not for the abolition of capitalism as the "Socialist-Revolutionaries" imagine, but) in order to emerge from the mire of semi-serfdom, from the gloom of oppression and servitude, in order to improve their living conditions, as much as they can be improved within the system of commodity production. p84

*The proletariat must carry the democratic revolution to completion, allying to itself the mass of the peasantry in order to crush the autocracy's resistance by force and paralyse the bourgeoisie's instability. The proletariat must accomplish the socialist revolution, allying to itself the mass of the semi-proletarian elements of the population, so as to crush the bourgeoisie's resistance by force and paralyse the instability of the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie. pp85-86*

It would be unforgivable optimism to forget the difficulties involved in drawing into the movement the masses not only of the working class, but also of the peasantry. These difficulties have more than once wrecked efforts to carry through a democratic revolution to completion, the inconsistent and self-seeking bourgeoisie triumphing most of all, because it has "made capital" in the shape of monarchist protection against the people, at the same time "preserving the virginity" of liberalism ...

or of the Osuobozhdeniye trend. p86

The fact is that, far from displaying excessive zeal with regard to the tasks of insurrection, to general political slogans and to giving leadership to the entire popular revolution, we, on the contrary, display a most striking backwardness in this very respect, a backwardness which constitutes our greatest weakness and is a real danger to the movement, which may degenerate, and in some places is degenerating, from one that is revolutionary in deed into one that is revolutionary in word. p89

We have incredibly fallen behind our progressive and genuinely revolutionary tasks; in very many instances we have not even become aware of them; here and there we have failed to notice that revolutionary-bourgeois democracy has gained strength owing to our backwardness in this respect. p89

All they demanded was a clear understanding of the ultimate aim, a clear presentation of the revolutionary tasks; p91

German Social-Democracy is not yet so near to killing its bear (carrying out a socialist revolution), but the dispute as to whether we "dare" kill the bear has been of enormous importance from the point of view of principles and of practical politics. Russian Social-Democrats are not yet so close to being able to "kill their bear" (carry out a democratic revolution), but the question as to whether we "dare" kill it is of extreme importance to the whole future of Russia and that of Russian Social-Democracy. An army cannot be energetically and successfully mustered and led unless we are sure that we "dare" win. p92

In its social and economic essence, the democratic revolution in Russia is a bourgeois revolution. It is, however, not enough merely to repeat this correct Marxist proposition. It has to be properly understood and properly applied to political slogans. In general, a political liberty founded on present-day, i.e., capitalist, relations of production, is bourgeois liberty. The demand for liberty expresses primarily the interests of the bourgeoisie. Its representatives were the first to raise this demand. Its supporters have everywhere used like masters the liberty they acquired, reducing it to moderate and meticulous bourgeois doses, combining it with the most subtle suppression of the revolutionary proletariat in peaceful times, and with savage suppression in times of storm. p94

The difficulties that lie on the road to complete victory of the revolution are very great. No one will be able to blame the proletariat's representatives if, when they have done everything in their power, their efforts are defeated by the resistance of reaction, the treachery of the bourgeoisie, and the ignorance of the masses. But everybody, and, above all, the class-conscious proletariat will condemn Social-Democracy if it curtails the revolutionary energy of the democratic revolution and dampens revolutionary ardour because it is afraid to win, because it is actuated by the consideration: lest the bourgeoisie recoil.

Revolutions are the locomotives of history, said Marx. Revolutions are festivals of the oppressed and the exploited. At no other time are the mass of the people in a position to come forward so actively as creators of a new social order, as at a time of revolution. At such times the people are capable of performing miracles, if judged by the limited, philistine yardstick of gradualist progress. But it is essential that leaders of the revolutionary parties, too, should advance their aims more comprehensively and boldly at such a time, so that their slogans shall always be in advance of the revolutionary initiative of the masses, serve as a beacon, reveal to them our democratic and socialist ideal in all its magnitude and splendour, and show them the shortest and most direct route to complete, absolute and decisive victory. p96

Of course, in stormy times greater dangers threaten the ship of our Party than in periods of the smooth "sailing" of liberal progress, which means the painfully steady sucking of the working

class's lifeblood by its exploiters. Of course, the tasks of the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship are infinitely more difficult and more complex than the tasks of an "extreme opposition", or of an exclusively parliamentary struggle. But whoever is consciously capable of preferring smooth sailing and the course of safe "opposition" in the present revolutionary situation had better abandon Social-Democratic work for a while, had better wait until the revolution is over, until the festive days have passed, when humdrum, everyday life starts again, and his narrow routine standards no longer strike such an abominably discordant note, or constitute such an ugly distortion of the tasks of the advanced class. p97

As ideologists of the bourgeoisie the liberals understand perfectly well that the bourgeoisie stands to gain by the "practicalness, sober-mindedness, and soundness" of the working class, by actually restricting its field of activity within the framework of capitalism, reforms, the trade union struggle, etc. p101

Abuse of terms is a most common practice in politics. p110

Indeed, what is revolution from the Marxist point of view? The forcible demolition of the obsolete political superstructure, the contradiction between which and the new relations of production have caused its collapse at a certain moment. p110

At a certain stage of development, the uselessness of the old superstructure becomes obvious to all; the revolution is recognised by all. The task now is to define which classes must build the new superstructure, and how they are to build it. p111

The complete victory of the present revolution will mark the end of the democratic revolution and the beginning of a determined struggle for a socialist revolution. Satisfaction of the present day demands of the peasantry, the utter rout of reaction and the achievement of a democratic republic will mark the utter limit of the revolutionism of the bourgeoisie, and even that of the petty bourgeoisie, and the beginning of the proletariat's real struggle for socialism. The more complete the democratic revolution, the sooner, the more widespread, the cleaner, and the more determined will the development of this new struggle be. p112

Failing to understand the theory of class struggle and accustomed to seeing in the political arena the petty squabbling of the various bourgeois circles and coteries, the bourgeois understands by dictatorship the annulment of all liberties and guarantees of democracy, arbitrariness of every kind, and every sort of abuse of power in a dictator's personal interests. p113

Major questions in the life of nations are settled only by force. The reactionary classes themselves are usually the first to resort to violence, to civil war; they are the first to "place the boycott on the agenda", as the Russian autocracy has systematically and unswervingly been doing everywhere. p115

On the question of the tasks of this dictatorship Marx wrote in the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*: "The National Assembly should have acted dictatorially against the reactionary attempts of the obsolete governments; and thus gain for itself the power of public opinion against which all bayonets and rifle butts would be shattered .... But this Assembly bores the German people instead of carrying them with it or being carried away by them." In Marx's opinion, the National Assembly should have "eliminated from the regime actually existing in Germany everything that contradicted the principle of the sovereignty of the people," and then it should have "established the revolutionary ground on which it stands in order to make the sovereignty of the people, won by the revolution, secure against all attacks." p115

This is a very instructive passage, which provides us with four important propositions: 1) The uncompleted German revolution differs from the completed French revolution in that the German

bourgeoisie betrayed not only democracy in general, but also the peasantry in particular. 2) The creation of a free class of peasants is the foundation for the consummation of a democratic revolution. 3) The creation of such a class means the abolition of feudal services, the destruction of feudalism, but does not yet mean a socialist revolution. 4) The peasants are the "most natural" allies of the bourgeoisie, that is to say, of the democratic bourgeoisie, which without them is "powerless" against reaction. p118

The success of the peasant insurrection, the victory of the democratic revolution will merely clear the way for a genuine and decisive struggle for socialism, on the basis of a democratic republic. In this struggle the peasantry, as a landowning class will play the same treacherous, unstable part as is now being played by the bourgeoisie in the struggle for democracy. To forget this is to forget socialism, to deceive oneself and others, regarding the real interests and tasks of the proletariat. pp118-119