

REVOLUTIONARY BOLSHEVIK CIRCLE

Notes for Circles - 2

LENIN'S PROGRAMME FOR THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION: PASSAGES
FOR DISCUSSION

Introduction

Bolshevism

Up until 1917/ proposed not the programme of the Proletarian dictatorship, but the programme of the Democratic Dictatorship of proletariat and Peasantry. Lenin dismissed the idea of a 'workers' democracy' resulting in Russia out of the revolution as 'impossible'. He, together with practically every other Marxist tendency of that period (Russian Menshevism, European Social-Democracy) accepted that the coming revolution was bourgeois in character, that the tasks of this revolution would first have to be resolved, to one extent or another, before the proletariat could advance its own class programme. As the bourgeoisie of Russia was too weak to carry through this bourgeois revolution, those tasks fell on the shoulders of the proletariat 'in alliance with' the peasantry. The democratic dictatorship was thus a regime of a bourgeois type headed by a coalition government of workers' and peasants' parties.

For Lenin the 'alliance of proletariat and peasantry' was thus the strategic form of the programme of the democratic dictatorship. Between this strategic notion of the 'alliance with the peasantry' and the characterization of the revolution as 'bourgeois' there was a strict and necessary relationship. 'Our revolution is a bourgeois revolution so long as we march with the peasantry as a whole', wrote Lenin. In other words, insofar as Lenin attributed a revolutionary role and character to the peasantry, he did so purely according to the limited aims and tasks of the bourgeois revolution. The historical examples he chose to back up this view of the 'revolutionary role' of the peasantry were all examples of bourgeois revolutions: the Reformation in Germany, the English Revolution of the 17th century, and the French Revolution.

A thorough and precise discussion of Lenin's conception of the programme for the Russian Revolution becomes crucial for us because the ideas which were forged in this period of Bolshevism within the framework of that conception have been reduced by many tendencies to mere formulas repeated by rote. Their original historical content is neither understood nor subjected to critical examination. The Stalinist parties use these formulas as a theoretical support for Menshevik politics ('stages' of revolution, alliance with this or that section of the 'progressive' bourgeoisie), while, to their left, the smaller centrist currents advance these same formulas, on the same confused basis, as a support for their orientation to the peasantry.

The decisive test of the political accuracy of Lenin's early conceptions remains the actual history of the Russian Revolution itself, and the brilliant theoretical prognosis of this history in the theory of Permanent Revolution advanced by Trotsky.

A. COMING BOURGEOIS REVOLUTION AS THE PREMISE OF LENIN'S POLITICS IN 1905 - 1917.

1. Objectively, the historical course of events has now posed before the Russian proletariat precisely the task of carrying through the democratic bourgeois revolution (the whole content of which, for brevity's sake, we sum up in the word Republic); this task confronts the people as a whole, viz, the entire mass of the petty bourgeoisie and the peasantry; without such a revolution the more or less extensive development of an independent class organization for the socialist revolution is unthinkable....

Indeed, is it not clear that as far as the proletariat is concerned the struggle for the Republic is inconceivable without an alliance with the petty bourgeois masses? Is it not clear that without the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry there is not a shadow of hope for the success of this struggle

(Collected Works 8, p.298. April 1905)

2. If Social-Democracy sought to make the socialist revolution its immediate aim, it would assuredly discredit itself. It is precisely such vague and hazy ideas of our 'Socialist Revolutionaries' that Social Democracy has always combated. For this reason Social Democracy has constantly stressed the bourgeois nature of the impending revolution in Russia and insisted on a clear line of demarcation between the democratic minimum programme and the socialist maximum programme. Some Social-Democrats, who are inclined to yield to spontaneity, might forget all this in time of revolution, but not the Party as a whole. The adherents of this erroneous view make an idol of spontaneity in their belief that the march of events will compel the Social-Democratic party in such a position to set about achieving the socialist revolution, despite itself. Were this so, our programme would be incorrect, it would not be in keeping with the "march of events"...

(CW 8 p.294. April 1905)

3. When Feuerbach was asked whether he sanctioned the materialism of Buchner, etc, he said: Backwards I fully agree with the materialists, but not forwards. This is precisely how Social-Democrats sanction the bourgeois system. They have never been afraid of saying, and never will be, that they sanction the republican-democratic bourgeois order in preference to an autocratic serf-owning bourgeois order. But they 'sanction' the bourgeois republic only because it is the last form of class rule, because it offers a most convenient arena for the struggle of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie...

(CW 8 p.300 April 1905).

4. If we promised the Russian proletariat now that we could secure its complete domination immediately, we would fall into the error of the Socialist-Revolutionaries.. We have constantly said that the revolution would strengthen the bourgeoisie, not weaken it, but that it would create for the proletariat the necessary conditions for waging a successful struggle for socialism. (CW 8 p.384 April 1905)

5. Marxists are absolutely convinced of the bourgeois character of the Russian Revolution. What does that mean? It means that the democratic reforms in the political system and the social and economic reforms that have become a necessity for Russia do not in themselves imply the undermining of capitalism, the undermining of bourgeois rule; on the contrary, they will, for the first time, really clear ground for a wide and rapid European, and not Asiatic, development of

capitalism; they will, for the first time, make it possible for the bourgeoisie to rule as a class. The SRs cannot grasp this idea, for they do not know the ABC of the laws of development of commodity and capitalist production; they fail to see that even the complete success of a peasant insurrection, even the redistribution of the whole of the land in favour of the peasants and in accordance with their desires...will not destroy capitalism at all, but will, on the contrary, give an impetus to its development and hasten the class disintegration of the peasantry itself...Insistence on this truth is of enormous importance for Social-Democracy, not only from the standpoint of theory but also from that of practical politics, for it follows therefrom that complete class independence of the party of the proletariat in the present 'general democratic' movement is an indispensable condition.

But it does not by any means follow that a democratic revolution (bourgeois in its social and economic essence) would not be of enormous interests to the proletariat. It does not follow that the democratic revolution could not take place both in a form advantageous mainly to the big capitalists, the financial magnates and the 'enlightened' landlord, and in a form advantageous to the peasant and the worker.

The new-Iskra group completely misunderstands the meaning and significance of bourgeois revolution as a category. The idea that is constantly running through their arguments is that a bourgeois revolution is one that can be advantageous only to the bourgeoisie. And yet nothing can be more erroneous than such an idea. A bourgeois revolution is a revolution that does not depart from the framework of the bourgeois socio-economic system. A bourgeois revolution expresses the needs of capitalist development...This revolution therefore, expresses the interests not only of the working class but of the entire bourgeoisie as well. Since the rule of the bourgeoisie over the working class is inevitable under capitalism, it can be said that a bourgeois revolution expresses the interests not so much of the proletariat as that of the bourgeoisie. But it is quite absurd to think that a bourgeois revolution does not at all express proletarian interests...In countries like Russia the working class suffers not so much from capitalism as from the insufficient development of capitalism...A bourgeois revolution is absolutely necessary in the interests of the proletariat. (CW9 308ff. Oct.1905)

6. In Europe the real political content of Social-Democratic work is to prepare the proletariat for the struggle for power against the bourgeoisie, which already holds full sway in the state. In Russia the question is still only one of creating a modern bourgeois state, which will be similar either to a Junker monarchy (in the event of tsarism being victorious over democracy) or to a bourgeois-democratic republic (in the event of democracy being victorious over tsarism) (CW 16 p.379 April 1911)

7. Equally incorrect, for the same reason, are Parvus' statements that the 'revolutionary provisional government in Russia will be a government of working class democracy'...This is impossible, unless we speak of fortuitous, transient episodes, and not of a revolutionary dictatorship that will be at all durable and capable of leaving its mark in history. This is impossible, because only a revolutionary dictatorship supported by the vast majority of the people can be at all durable...The Russian proletariat, however, is at present a minority of the population in Russia. It can become the great overwhelming majority only if it combines with the mass of semi-proletarians, semi-proprietors i.e., with the mass of the petty-

bourgeois urban and rural poor. ...

If that windbag Trotsky now writes (unfortunately, side by side with Parvus) that "a Father Gapon could appear only once", that "there is no room for a second Gapon", he does so simply because he is a windbag. If there were no room in Russia for a second Gapon, there would be no room for a truly "great", consummated democratic revolution.... (CW 8 p.291 March-April 1905)

8. The bourgeois nature of the democratic revolution does not mean that this revolution can benefit only the bourgeoisie. On the contrary, it is advantageous most of all, to the proletariat and the peasantry. Events are making it increasingly clear that only the proletariat is capable of waging a determined struggle for complete liberty, for the Republic, as against the unreliability and instability of the bourgeoisie....

Social Democracy knows that liberty will bring the workers, not tranquillity and peace, but the new and still greater struggle for socialism, a struggle against the present bourgeois friends of freedom. But in spite of this - indeed, because of this, - freedom is absolutely necessary to the workers, more necessary to them than to anyone else. Only the workers are capable of fighting at the head of the people for complete freedom, for a Democratic Republic. And they will fight for it to the death (CW 8 p.540 July 1905)

9. Those who, in discussing the tasks of the present (ie, bourgeois) revolution in Russia, argue that we must not strengthen the central authority of the bourgeois state, reveal a complete inability to think. The Germans may and should argue in that way because they have before them only a Junker-bourgeois Germany; there can be no other Germany until socialism is established. In our country, on the other hand, the whole content of the revolutionary mass struggle at the present stage is whether Russia is to be a Junker-bourgeois state (as Stolypin and the Cadets desire) or a peasant-bourgeois state (as the peasants and the workers desire). One cannot take part in such a revolution without supporting one section of the bourgeoisie, one type of bourgeois evolution, against the other. Owing to objective economic causes, there is not and cannot be any other "choice" for us in this revolution than that between a bourgeois centralized republic of peasant-farmers and a bourgeois centralized monarchy of Junker-landlords. (CW 13, p.343 November 1907)

10. We cannot get rid of the 'bourgeois state'. Only petty bourgeois philistines can dream of doing so. Our revolution is a bourgeois revolution because the struggle going on in it is not between socialism and capitalism, but between two forms of capitalism, two paths of its development, two forms of bourgeois-democratic institutions. The monarchy of the Octobrists or the Cadets is a "relative" bourgeois "democracy". The proletarian-peasant republic too is a bourgeois-democracy. In our revolution we cannot make a single step...which did not support in one way or another one section of the bourgeoisie or another against the old order. (CW 15 p.175 August 1908)

B. THE 'DEMOCRATIC DICTATORSHIP' AS LENIN'S PROGRAMME FOR THE COMING BOURGEOIS REVOLUTION IN RUSSIA. HIS ARGUMENTS FOR THIS FORMULA.

(a) A BOURGEOIS REVOLUTION DESPITE THE BOURGEOISIE.

11. Is the revolution in Russia a bourgeois or a socialist revolution? This is not the way to put the question, says Kautsky. That is the old stereotyped way of putting it. Of course, the Russian Revolution is not a socialist revolution. The socialist dictatorship of the proletariat is out of the question. But neither is it a bourgeois revolution

for 'the bourgeoisie is not one of the driving forces of the present revolutionary movement in Russia'. 'Wherever the proletariat comes out independently, the bourgeoisie ceases to be a revolutionary class'.

.... The Russian Bolsheviks have always regarded as the main issue in their struggle against the Mensheviks the Right-wing Soc-Democrats' distortion of the concept 'bourgeois revolution'. We have said hundreds of times that to interpret the category 'bourgeois revolution' in the sense of recognizing the leadership and guiding role of the bourgeoisie in the Russian Revolution is to vulgarize Marxism. A bourgeois revolution in spite of the instability of the bourgeoisie, by paralysing the instability of the bourgeoisie - that is how the Bolsheviks formulated the fundamental task of the Social-Democrats in the revolution... (CW 11 372f Dec 1906) (?)

12. A bourgeois revolution, brought about by the proletariat and peasantry in spite of the instability of the bourgeoisie - this fundamental principle of Bolshevik tactics is wholly confirmed by Kautsky.

(CW 11 p.410 Dec 1906)

13. The Bolsheviks ever since the beginning of the revolution in the spring and summer of 1905... clearly pointed to the source of our tactical differences (with Plekhanov and the Mensheviks) by singling out the concept of peasant revolution as one of the varieties of

bourgeois revolution, and by defining the victory of the peasant revolution as "the revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry"... Plekhanov enquired only about the bourgeois nature of the Russian Revolution, without specifying the concept of peasant bourgeois revolution, without going beyond general formulas such as "bourgeois democracy".. In answering Plekhanov Kautsky rectified that mistake by pointing out that the bourgeoisie was not driving force of the Russian Revolution, that in that sense the days of bourgeois revolutions had passed, that "a lasting community of interests during the whole period of the revolutionary struggle exists only between the proletariat and the peasantry" (Kautsky, 'The Driving Forces and Prospects of the Russian Revolution') and that "it (this lasting community of interests) should be made the basis of the whole of the revolutionary tactics of Russian Social-Democracy" (ibid.)...

The Bolsheviks from the outset defined the general and the basic class conditions for the victory of this peasant bourgeois revolution as the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry. Kautsky arrived at substantially the same view in his article... Thus we see that Plekhanov completely evaded the question of the underlying principle of the general Social-Democratic tactics in a bourgeois revolution that can be victorious only as a peasant revolution.. (CW 13 p.353f November 1907)

14. The victory of the bourgeois revolution is impossible in our country as the victory of the bourgeoisie. This sounds paradoxical, but it is a fact. The preponderance of the peasant-population, its terrible oppression by the semi-feudal big landowning system, the strength and characteristics of the proletariat already organized in a socialist party - all these circumstances impart to our bourgeois revolution a specific character. This peculiarity does not eliminate the bourgeois character of the revolution...It only determines the counterrevolutionary character of our bourgeoisie and the necessity of a dictatorship of proletariat and peasantry for victory in such a revolution. For a 'coalition of the proletariat and peasantry' winning victory in a bourgeois revolution happens to be nothing else than the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry (CW 15 p.56 April 1908)

15v (b) THE PEASANTRY HAS A REVOLUTIONARY ROLE IN THIS BOURGEOIS REVOLUTION

15. The new Iskra group likes to accuse us of ignoring the danger of the proletariat being dissolved in bourgeois-democracy..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 monarchist bourgeoisie without merging with it either... The tactical slogans we have formulated in the Third Congress of the R.S.D.L.P coincide with the slogans of the revolutionary and republican bourgeoisie... In Russia this bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie have not yet formed themselves into a big people's party. But only one who is utterly ignorant of what is now taking place in Russia can doubt that elements of such a party exist...

The Party Congress consciously raises to its own level these elements of revolutionary-democracy that are capable of waging a struggle and not acting as brokers.

Such elements are mostly to be found among the peasants. In classifying the big social groups according to their political tendencies we can, without danger of serious error, identify revolutionary and republican democracy with the mass of the peasants - of course, in the same sense and with the same reservations and implied conditions that we can identify the working class with Social-Democracy...Through its country-wide political slogans the Party Congress raises the mass of the peasants to a revolutionary level.

(CW 9 p.46f June 1905)

16. Which class can help the Social-Democratic proletariat to achieve victory in the present (bourgeois) revolution, can support the proletariat and determine the limits of the immediately realisable changes? In Kautsky's opinion, this class is the peasantry. Only this class has "stable, common economic interests with the proletariat throughout the whole period of the (bourgeois) revolution"..This means not the socialist dictatorship of the proletariat but the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry. (CW 11 373 Dec 1906)

17. The proletariat knows from experience that the peasant masses

are the basis and the only basis of bourgeois democracy as a historical force in Russia...No one at this stage can tell what forms bourgeois democracy in Russia will assume in the future. Possibly, the bankruptcy of the Cadets may lead to the formation of a peasant democratic party, a truly mass party, and not an organization of terrorists such as the Socialist-Revolutionaries have been and still are. It is also possible that the objective difficulties of achieving political unity among the petty bourgeoisie will prevent such a party from being formed and, for a long time to come, will keep the peasant democracy in its present state as a loose, amorphous, jelly-like Trudovik mass. In either case our line is one: to hammer out the democratic forces by merciless criticism of all vacillations... (CW 13 p.121 Oct 1907)

18. "The alliance of the proletariat and the peasantry", let us note in passing, should not in any circumstances be understood as meaning the fusion of various classes, or of the parties of the proletariat and the peasantry. Not only fusion, but any prolonged agreement would be destructive for the socialist party of the working class, and would enfeeble the revolutionary-democratic struggle. That the peasantry inevitably wavers between the liberal bourgeoisie and the proletariat follows from its position as a class...It is not flirtations with the Trudoviks but merciless criticism of their weaknesses and vacillations, propaganda for the idea of a republican-revolutionary peasant party that can give effect to the 'alliance' of the proletariat and the peasantry (CW 15 p.57 April 1908)

19. "The present (bourgeois) revolution in Russia in its effects on the countryside can lead only to the creation of a strong peasantry on the basis of private property in land, and thereby create as wide a gulf between the proletariat and the property-owning section of the rural population as exists already in Western Europe" (Kautsky) "One cannot imagine that the present Russian revolution would lead immediately to the introduction of the socialist mode of production, even if it temporarily gives the reins of government to the Social-Democrats" (Kautsky). It was this passage [writes Lenin] that prompted the following words in

Lenin's Preface: "Needless to say, Kautsky fully agrees with the fundamental thesis of all Russian Social-Democrats that the peasant movement is non-socialist, that socialism cannot arise from small peasant production..." (CW 15 p.375 March 1909)

20. In a country where the proletariat was obliged to assume power with the aid of the peasantry, where it fell to the lot of the proletariat to serve as the agent of a petty-bourgeois revolution, until the organization of the Committees of Poor peasants, ie, down to the summer and even autumn of 1918, our revolution was to a large extent a bourgeois revolution (CW 29 March 1919)

21. The proletariat are fighting to win power, for a Republic, for a confiscation of the lands, ie, to win over the peasantry, make full use of their revolutionary powers, and get the "non-proletarian masses of the people" to take part in liberating bourgeois Russia from military-feudal imperialism (czarism)...

(CW 21 p.420 November 1915)

(c) THE BOURGEOIS REVOLUTION AS A NECESSARY STAGE WHICH MUST RESULT BEFORE THE QUESTION OF SOCIALISM CAN BE POSED

22. The democratic revolution is bourgeois in nature. The slogan of a general redistribution of 'land and freedom' - that most widespread slogan of the peasant masses, downtrodden and ignorant, yet passionately yearning for light and happiness - is a bourgeois slogan. But we Marxists should know that there is not, nor can there be, any other path to real freedom for the proletariat and the peasantry than the path of bourgeois freedom and bourgeois progress. We must not forget that there is not, nor can there be at the present time, any other means of bringing socialism nearer than complete political liberty, than a democratic republic, than the revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry

(CW 9 p.112 July-1905)

23. The working class is most certainly interested in the broadest, freest and most rapid development of capitalism. The removal of all the remnants of the old order which hamper the broad, free and rapid development of capitalism is of absolute advantage to the proletariat. The bourgeois revolution is precisely an upheaval that most resolutely sweeps away survivals of the past, survivals of the serf-owning system, and most fully guarantees the broadest, freest and most rapid development of capitalism.

This is why a bourgeois revolution is in the highest degree advantageous to the proletariat. A bourgeois revolution is absolutely necessary in the interests of the proletariat. The more complete, determined and consistent the bourgeois revolution, the more assured will the proletariat's struggle be against the bourgeoisie and for socialism

(CW 9 Oct 1905)

24. Stolypin is 'putting his stake on the powder' and asks for "20 years of peace and tranquillity". The proletariat must put its stake on democracy, without exaggerating the latter's strength and without limiting itself to merely "pinning hopes" on it, but steadily developing the work of propaganda, agitation and organization, mobilising all the democratic forces - the peasants above all ~~and before~~ ^{leading} all - calling upon them to ally themselves with the ~~working~~ ^{leading} class, to achieve the "dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry" for the purpose of a full democratic victory and the creation of the best conditions for the quickest and freest development of capitalism.

(CW 16 Nov 1909)

25. In this revolution (democratic revolution) the revolutionary proletariat will participate with the utmost energy, sweeping aside the miserable tailism of some and the revolutionary phrases of others. It will bring class definiteness and consciousness into the dizzying whirlwind of events, and march on intrepidly and unswervingly, not fearing, but fervently desiring, the revolutionary democratic dictatorship, fighting for the republic, and for complete republican liberties, fighting for substantial economic reforms, in order to create for itself a truly large arena, an arena worthy of the twentieth century, in which to carry on the struggle for socialism (CW 8 p.292 April 1905)

(d) THE PEASANT STRUGGLE FOR LAND AS A COMPONENT OF THE BOURGEOIS REVOLUTION, AND ONE WHOSE SUCCESS RENOVATES CAPITALISM

26. To the Marxist the peasant movement is democratic and not a socialist movement. In Russia, just as was the case in other countries, it is a necessary concomitant of the democratic revolution, which is bourgeois in its social and economic content. It is not in the least directed against the foundations of the bourgeois order, against commodity production or against capital. On the contrary, it is directed against the old serf, pre-capitalist relationships in the rural districts and against landlordism.. Consequently, full victory of the peasant movement will not abolish capitalism; on the contrary, it will create a broader foundation for its development, and will hasten and intensify purely capitalist development. Full victory of the peasant uprising can only create a stronghold for a bourgeois-democratic republic, within which a proletarian struggle against the bourgeoisie will for the first time develop in its purest form. (CW 9 p.440 Nov 1905)

27. To accept the demand for the confiscation of the landlord estates means admitting the possibility and the necessity of the renovation of small farming under capitalism. Is that admissible? Is it not a gamble to support small farming under capitalism? Is not the renovation of small farming a vain dream?...That undoubtedly was what many comrades thought. But they were wrong. The renovation of small farming is possible even under capitalism if the historical aim is to fight the pre-capitalist order..In the Russian Revolution the struggle for the land is nothing else than a struggle for the renovated path of capitalist development. (CW 13 p.293 Nov 1907)

(e) LENIN ON TROTSKY'S CRITICISMS OF THE 'DEMOCRATIC DICTATORSHIP' 1

28. By just touching upon Trotsky's mistaken views and quoting scraps of them, Gde Martov only sows confusion in the mind of the reader, for scraps of quotations do not explain but confuse matters. Trotsky's major mistake is that he ignores the bourgeois

1 It should be noted that Lenin never read Results and Prospects and knew of Trotsky's positions mainly through 'scraps of quotations' in the writings of such Mensheviks as Martov. Therefore, in discussing quotation 28. it is essential to be familiar with Trotsky's positions as advanced in that work.

character of the revolution and has no clear conception of the transition to the socialist revolution. ..(According to Trotsky) "a coalition of the proletariat and the peasantry presupposes either that the peasantry will come under the sway of one of the existing bourgeois parties, or that it will form a powerful independent party". This is obviously untrue both from the standpoint of general theory and from that of the experience of the Russian Revolution. A "coalition" of classes does not at all presuppose either the existence of any particular powerful party, or parties in general. This is only confusing classes with parties. A "coalition" of classes does not at all presuppose either that one of the existing bourgeois parties will establish its sway over the peasantry or that the peasants should form a powerful independent party! ¹ Theoretically this is clear because first the peasants do not lend themselves very well to party organization; and because, secondly, the formation of peasant parties is an extremely difficult and lengthy process in a bourgeois revolution, so that a "powerful independent" party may emerge only towards the end of the revolution. The experience of the Russian revolution shows that "coalitions" of the proletariat and peasantry were formed scores and hundreds of times, in the most diverse forms, without any "powerful independent party" of the peasantry. Such a coalition was formed when there was "joint action" between, say, a Soviet of Workers' Deputies and a Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies, or a Railwaymen's Strike Committee, or Peasants' Deputies, etc. All these organizations were mainly non-party; nevertheless, every joint action between them undoubtedly represented a "coalition" of classes. In the course of this a peasant party took shape as an idea, in germ, coming into being in the form of the Peasant Union of 1905, or the Trudovik group of 1906, and as such a party grew, developed and constituted itself, the coalition of classes assumed different forms, from the vague and unofficial to definite and official political agreements.... The idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry has found its practical expression throughout our revolution, in a thousand forms, from the signing of the manifesto calling upon the people to pay no taxes and to withdraw their deposits from the savings banks (Dec 1905), or the signing of calls to insurrection (July 1906) to voting in the Second and Third Dumas in 1907-08.

Trotsky's second statement quoted by Gde Martov is wrong too. It is not true that the "whole question is who will determine the government's policy, who will constitute a homogeneous majority in it", and so on. And it is particularly untrue when Gde Martov uses it as an argument against the dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry. Trotsky himself, in the course of his argument, concedes

1 But see Lenin's own position, quotation 18 above, where he calls for a revolutionary-republican peasant party "to give effect to the alliance".

that "representatives of the democratic population will take part" in the "workers' government", ie, concedes that there will be a government consisting of representatives of the proletariat and the peasantry. On what terms the proletariat will take part in the government of the revolution ¹ is quite another question, and it is quite likely that on this question the Bolsheviks will disagree ~~with~~ not only with Trotsky, but also with the Polish Social-Democrats. The question of the dictatorship of the revolutionary classes, however, cannot be reduced to a question of the 'majority' in any particular ^{revolutionary} government, or of the terms on which the participation of the Social-Democrats in such a government is admissible.

Lastly, the most fallacious of Trotsky's opinions that ~~gde~~ Martov quotes and considers to be "just" is the third, viz, "even if they (the peasantry) do this (support the regime of working class democracy) with no more political understanding than they usually support a bourgeois regime". The proletariat cannot count on the ignorance and prejudices of the peasantry as the powers that be under a bourgeois regime depend and count on them, nor can it assume that in time of revolution the peasantry will remain in their usual state of political ignorance and passivity. The history of the Russian Revolution shows that the very first wave of the upsurge at the end of 1905, at once stimulated the peasantry to form a political organization (the All Russian Peasant Union) which was undoubtedly the embryo of a distinct peasant party... In these embryos and rudiments there was much that was unstable, vague and vacillating; that is beyond doubt. But if political groups like this could spring up at the beginning of the Revolution, there cannot be the slightest doubt that a revolution carried to such a 'conclusion', or rather to such a high stage of development as a revolutionary dictatorship will produce a more definitely constituted and stronger revolutionary peasant party.

(CW 15 p.370ff. March 1909)

29. Both Martov and Trotsky mix up different historical periods and compare Russia, which is going through her bourgeois revolution with Europe, where these revolutions were completed long ago... In Russia, the question is still only one of creating a modern bourgeois state

(CW 16 p.379 Nov 1910)

1 But this question, which Lenin poses, simply did not arise for Trotsky, who had made his position quite plain in Results and Prospects, chapter 5: "When we speak of a workers' government we have in view a government in which the working class representatives dominate and lead", ie, the question of "participation" was irrelevant. As Trotsky stated, "It is one thing when representatives of the democratic strata of the population enter a government with a workers' majority, but it is quite another thing when representatives of the proletariat participate in a definitely bourgeois-democratic government in the capacity of more or less honoured hostages".

C THE BOURGEOIS REVOLUTION IN RUSSIA AS A PRELUDE TO THE
SOCIALIST REVOLUTION IN EUROPE

30. We shall succeed in ensuring that the Russian Revolution is not a movement of a few months, but a movement of many years; that it leads, not merely to a few paltry concessions from the powers that be, but to the complete overthrow of those powers. And if we succeed in achieving this, then...the revolutionary conflagration will spread to Europe; the European worker, languishing under bourgeois reaction, will rise in his turn and show us "how it is done"; then the revolutionary upsurge in Europe will have a repercussive effect upon Russia and will convert an epoch of a few revolutionary years into an era of several revolutionary decades... (CW 8 p.287-88 March 1905)

31.Given the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship, we will mobilise scores of millions of the urban and rural poor and we will make the Russian political revolution the prelude to the socialist revolution in Europe. (CW 8 p.303 April 1905)

32. Our victory in the coming democratic revolution will be a giant stride forward towards our socialist goal; we shall deliver all Europe from the oppressive yoke of a reactionary military power and help our brothers, the class-conscious workers of the whole world ..to advance to socialism more quickly, boldly, and decisively. With the help of the socialist proletariat of Europe we shall be able, not only to defend the democratic republic, but to advance with giant strides towards socialism...Long live the revolution! Long live international revolutionary Social-democracy! (CW 8 p.439 May 1905)

33. The complete victory of the proletariat and peasantry in this democratic revolution is no idle thought. And what great perspectives such a victory would open before the European proletariat...The victory of the democratic revolution in Russia will be the signal for the beginning of the socialist revolution, for a new victory of our brothers, the class-conscious proletarians of all countries.... (CW 8 p.541 June 1905)

34. "The Stages, the Trend and the Prospects of the Revolution"

1. The working class movement rouses the proletariat from the beginning under the leadership of the RSDLP and awakens the liberal bourgeoisie 1895 - 1901-2.

2. The working class movement passes to open political struggle and enlists the politically awakened strata of the liberal and radical bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie: 1901-2 - 1905.

3. The working class movement flares up into a direct revolution, while the liberal bourgeoisie has already formed itself into the Kadet party and thinks of stopping the revolution by compromising with czarism; but the radical elements of the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie are inclined to enter into an alliance with the proletariat for the continuation of the revolution. 1905 (especially the end of that year).

4. The working class achieves victory in the democratic revolution, the liberals passively waiting to see how things go and the peasants actively assisting. Plus the radical, republican intelligentsia and the corresponding strata of the petty bourgeoisie in the towns. The rising of the peasants is victorious, the power of the landlords is broken. ("The revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry")

5. The liberal bourgeoisie, temporising in the third period, passive in the fourth, becomes downright counterrevolutionary, and organizes itself in order to take away from the proletariat the gains of the revolution. Among the peasantry, the whole of the well-to-do section, and a fairly large part of the middle peasantry, also grow "wiser", and quieten down and turn to the side of the counter-revolution in order to wrest power from the proletariat and the rural poor, who sympathise with the proletariat.

6. On the basis of the relations established during the fifth period, ~~and~~ a new crisis and a new struggle develop and blaze forth, with the proletariat now fighting to preserve its democratic gains for the sake of a socialist revolution. . This struggle would have been almost hopeless for the Russian proletariat alone and its defeat would have been as inevitable as the defeat of the German revolutionary party in 1849-50 or of the French proletariat in 1871, had the European socialist proletariat not come to the assistance of the Russian proletariat.

Thus at this stage, the liberal bourgeoisie and the well-to-do peasantry (plus partly the middle peasantry) organize counter-revolution. The Russian proletariat plus the European proletariat organize revolution.

In such conditions the Russian proletariat can win a second victory. The cause is no longer hopeless. The second victory will be the socialist revolution in Europe.

The European workers will show us "how to do it", and then together with them we shall bring about the socialist revolution.

(CW 10 pp.91-92 Early 1906)

35. What is restoration? It is the reversion of state power to the political representatives of the old order. Can there be any guarantee against such a restoration? No, there cannot.¹ We are not in a position to call forth at our own will a socialist revolution in the West, which is the only absolute guarantee against restoration in Russia.

(CW 13 p.327 Nov 1907)

36. The only absolute "guarantee against restoration" is a socialist revolution in the West, while a relative guarantee would be to carry the (democratic) revolution through to its conclusion. .

(CW 15 p.172 August 1908)

¹ So far Lenin has been summarising Plekhanov's argument.

At the Stockholm Congress held in early 1906, the Mensheviks' programme of municipalisation of the land was accepted as the RSDLP's agrarian programme against the Bolshevik demand for nationalization. Maslov argued that nationalization would antagonize the peasantry, and was anyway "utopian". Plekhanov, supporting Maslov, saw in municipalization a "guarantee against restoration", as land would now be decreed, in law, the property of various regional bodies, whereas nationalization would leave the economic basis of Czarism untouched, and facilitate a reversion to "Asiatic despotism", under which land is state property

37. The business of the party of the proletariat is to spread most widely this watchword of a most consistent and most radical bourgeois agrarian revolution. And when we have done that, we shall see what are the further prospects; we shall see whether such a revolution is only the basis for a development of the productive forces under capitalism at an American speed, or whether it will become the prologue to a socialist revolution in the West.

(CW 15 p.180 July 1908)

D. BECAUSE THE SOCIALIST REVOLUTION IS OUR CENTRAL TASK WE MUST REMAIN AN "INDEPENDENT, PURELY PROLETARIAN PARTY"

38. It goes without saying that if the Social-Democrats were to forget, even for a moment, the class distinctiveness of the proletariat vis-a-vis the petty-bourgeoisie, if they were to form an ill-timed and unprofitable alliance with one or another untrustworthy petty-bourgeois party of the intelligentsia, if the Social-Democrats were to lose sight, even for a moment, of their own independent aims and the need for attaching paramount importance to developing the class-consciousness of the proletariat and its independent political organization, then participation in the provisional revolutionary government would be extremely dangerous

(CW 8 p.301 April 1905)

39. Social-Democracy, the party of the proletariat, does not in any way link the destiny of socialism with either of the possible outcomes of the bourgeois revolution. Either outcome implies the development of capitalism and the oppression of the proletariat, whether under a landlord monarchy with private ownership of land, or under a farmers' republic, even with the nationalization of the land. Therefore, only an absolutely independent and purely proletarian party is able to defend the cause of socialism "whatever the situation of democratic agrarian reforms may be"...

(CW 13p.347 Nov 1907)

40. Social-Democracy, as the party of the international proletariat, the party which has set itself world-wide socialist aims, cannot, of course, identify itself with any epoch of any bourgeois revolution, nor can it tie its destiny to this or that bourgeois revolution. Whatever the outcome, we must remain an independent, purely proletarian party, which steadfastly leads the working masses to their great socialist goal. We cannot, therefore, undertake to guarantee that any of the gains of the bourgeois revolution will be permanent...We have but one task; to rally the proletariat for the socialist revolution, to support every fight against the old order in the most resolute way, to fight for the best possible conditions for the proletariat in the developing bourgeois society

(CW 13 p.426 Nov 1907)

A Summary of Lenin's Early Position

The 'democratic dictatorship of proletariat and peasantry' was Lenin's programme for the coming bourgeois revolution in Russia. But in this bourgeois revolution, the bourgeoisie itself would play a counterrevolutionary role. The working class, 'allied with' the peasantry, or 'relying upon' it, or 'assisted by' it, would carry through this revolution despite the bourgeoisie, by 'paralysing its instability'. It would thus ensure that the Russian bourgeois revolution would be the most 'radical' and 'thoroughgoing' bourgeois revolution, one resulting in a 'peasant-bourgeois' state or 'proletarian-peasant' republic, allowing the best conditions for the 'quickest and freest development of capitalism'.

The revolution was thus characterized as 'bourgeois' purely in its social and economic content, and not in the sense of recognizing the leadership of the bourgeoisie. This distinction Lenin regarded as the cardinal difference between the Bolshevik and Menshevik programmes.

In Lenin's conceptions, the bourgeois nature of the coming revolution sprang basically from three features of Russia's historical development: first, the political dominance of Russian Absolutism in the form of the czarist autocracy, hence the complete absence of political freedom; second, the persistence of a landlord or serf-owning economy over large areas of the country, and the massive obstacle which this posed to an unfettered development of the class struggle in the countryside; third, the social preponderance of an immense peasant and petty bourgeois population, which, according to Lenin, was "at present incapable of supporting the socialist revolution" (CW 8, p.284).

Starting from the premise that the bourgeois revolution was a necessary stage ("we cannot get rid of the bourgeois state", "the question is still only one of creating a modern bourgeois state"), the major problem posed by this revolution was that of its specific form, of the form of capitalism resulting from it: either a bourgeois monarchy of Junker-landlords, according to the historical example of Prussia, or a bourgeois republic of peasant-farmers closer to capitalism in America. The success of the working class and peasantry in the bourgeois revolution, ie, the 'democratic dictatorship', would ensure the latter development in breaking the power of absolutism and the nobility.

At the same time, this form of bourgeois revolution would inevitably hasten the socialist revolution in Europe. Only in these conditions - with the triumph of 'democracy' over czarism and the securing of political freedom on the one hand, the spread of the socialist revolution in Europe on the other - would the socialist revolution become the 'immediate aim' of Russian Social-Democracy. The socialist revolution in Europe would affect the Russian working class as profoundly as the radical bourgeois revolution in Russia had affected the workers in Europe. At this stage, with socialist tasks predominating, the liberal bourgeoisie and upper strata of the peasantry which had supported the working class in the democratic revolution, would swing away to form a counterrevolutionary bloc. The success of the socialist revolution in Russia would then depend on the European working class as much as on the workers of Russia (CW 10 p.92).

In our next document we propose to examine Lenin's positions in 1917 itself, to take up the question of whether, and how far, the 'democratic dictatorship' was realized, and to discuss the positions of Trotsky.