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**THE  
REVOLUTION  
OF 1905**

BY  
**V. I. LENIN**

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OF 1905**

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**V. I. LENIN**

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## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

THE present volume contains several articles and a speech by Lenin, which give a comprehensive view of the Revolution of 1905. This revolution was later, in 1917, characterised by the greatest leader of the revolutionary proletariat in the world, as the 'dress rehearsal' of the October Revolution. And in this undoubtedly lies its lasting historical significance. But the 1905 Revolution is not merely of historical interest; it is of immediate interest from the standpoint of the proletarian struggles of our own day throughout the world. One characteristic feature of the development of the world proletarian revolution as a single process is that, simultaneously with the proletarian revolutions that are maturing in the most advanced imperialist countries, bourgeois revolutions are proceeding in the principal colonial countries. For these the 1905 Revolution also represents a 'dress rehearsal', in the strictest sense of the term. We have in mind especially the development of the mighty struggle for emancipation waged by the masses of workers and peasants of China and India, and by the oppressed colonial peoples of the Near East. The struggle of oppressed colonial lands for emancipation from imperialism represents an integral part of the world proletarian revolution, or, to put it more precisely, the proletariat of the world is coming to the fore, in the process of development of the world revolution, as the leader of hundreds of millions of peasants in the colonial countries. Because of this circumstance, the 1905 Revolution may be called the 'dress rehearsal' not only of October, 1917, but of the World October. Surely Lenin had this in mind when he said that the 1905 Revolution was a prelude to the proletarian revolution in Europe, and emphasised the mighty influence it has had throughout Asia.

For these reasons a correct understanding of the revolutionary policy of Marxism-Leninism is essential, and it is necessary to study the character and content of the 1905 Revolution and its driving forces.

The mobilisation of the different classes and parties in the 1905 Revolution, the methods and forms of their struggle against one another, the wave-like course of the revolutionary action, the creative power developed by the millions of exploited people in

town and country as they were brought into the revolutionary swell, the class-consciousness, determination and high degree of organisation of the proletariat as the vanguard of the oppressed peasant masses, the purposeful leadership of the revolutionary working class by the Bolshevik Party—these are the most striking features of the analysis of the struggle between revolution and counter-revolution, which deserve special attention. At this point it is necessary to be clear in regard to the peculiar character of the bourgeois Revolution of 1905: despite the bourgeois character and content of the revolution, the proletariat alone represented the ‘driving force’, the vanguard of the movement, and it applied the weapon of the political and economic strike as the chief means for arousing the peasant masses. Therefore, Lenin says that the Russian Revolution of 1905 was a bourgeois-democratic revolution in social content, but proletarian in driving force and in the means of struggle which were applied.

This fundamental conception of the Bolsheviks regarding the nature and driving force of the revolution, was diametrically opposed to the Mensheviks’ conceptions as well as to Trotsky’s eclectic theory of ‘permanent revolution’. The Mensheviks were of the opinion that the proletariat could only play a secondary rôle in the bourgeois revolution and therefore argued that its task was merely ‘to drive the bourgeoisie forward’ in its hostility to absolutism. Obviously, such tactics must have resulted in the proletariat lagging in the rear; the Mensheviks entirely misunderstood and even overlooked the fundamental task of the revolution, the struggle of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie for the peasantry, and hence disregarded the necessity for stimulating the peasants’ agrarian revolution against feudalism. On the other hand, Trotsky, who had never had a definite conception of the nature of the bourgeois Revolution of 1905, for this reason reached a point, in his theory of ‘permanent revolution’, when he denied the possibility of the revolutionary alliance between proletariat and peasantry and also proclaimed a ‘workers’ government’ to be the immediate aim of the revolutionary uprising. And to this he ‘logically’ attached the conception that ‘without direct and governmental aid from the European proletariat the working class of Russia could not maintain itself in power’ (*Our Revolution*, p. 278, Russian).

In sharp contrast to both these Menshevik conceptions, the Bolsheviks, on the basis of their Marxian analysis, declared the strategic aim of the Revolution of 1905 to be the complete destruction of absolutism, to 'carry the bourgeois revolution to completion', and set up as its formulation the classic slogan of the 'revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry'. Above all, this formula was intended to present with absolute clarity the mutual relations between the proletariat and the peasantry in their united revolutionary struggle against Tsarism and for the democratic republic. It was intended to emphasise the necessity of establishing a truly revolutionary provisional government, excluding the cowardly bourgeoisie with their spirit of compromise. In a very bitter controversy with the Mensheviks, Lenin worked out the conception that instead of the driving force of the revolutionary development being weakened by the desertion of the bourgeoisie to the side of reaction, it would, on the contrary, be strengthened to a considerable degree. The idea that it was possible and necessary for the Social-Democratic Party to take part in the provisional revolutionary government, precisely for the purpose of carrying the bourgeois revolution through to completion, was based on the task of the proletariat, to establish its hegemony over the masses of the peasantry.

But the question of the nature and driving force of the revolution and of its strategic aim was not the only point of difference between the Mensheviks and Bolsheviks; the problems and tasks of revolutionary tactics and organisation sharply divided them too; and in the heat of the revolutionary struggles Leninism was, for the first time, proven to be right. It is particularly important, therefore, to study correctly and understand Lenin's explanations of the significance of economic and political mass strikes in rousing the masses to revolutionary action, in bringing forward the proletariat as the leader of the exploited peasantry, and in linking up the political general strike with the highest form of proletarian activity, which under certain conditions develops out of it.

The speech on the 1905 Revolution and the article, 'The Lessons of the Moscow Uprising', provide abundant material for studying the questions of organising the revolution, in the strictest sense of the word. In this respect we cannot help admiring the skill with



which Lenin feels the pulse of the revolutionary movement and sums up its most important inner connections. The transition of the different forms of the revolutionary struggle from one into another, the creative achievement of the masses themselves in 'discovering' these new forms as well as in organising the corresponding bodies, especially the Soviets, in order to turn these forms of struggle into real forces, are prime factors of the revolutionary struggle.

The systematic and conscious unification of these activities, of these forms and organs of struggle by the Bolshevik Party, the vanguard of the proletariat, is another vital point; and the Leninist analysis and synthesis transforms all these factors of the revolutionary process into a 'guide for the practical activity' of the proletariat. To have this guide well in hand, in every concrete situation to seize upon the most vital link of the chain, to keep firmly to the course, once the strategic goal is set, and thus to make no leaps into the azure heights of abstract concepts and away from reality—that is the art of Marxism-Leninism. This little volume may serve as a contribution to the study of revolutionary policy, which forms an integral part of historical materialism.

. . . . .

The material in this volume has been compiled not only in chronological order, but also according to the theme. It gives a plain survey of the objective course of the revolutionary events, as well as an account of the theoretical and practical conclusions which the Bolshevik Party drew from them and applied. The unity of theory and practice—revolutionary theory is converted into material power if the masses are inspired by it—this truth can, with full justice, serve as the motto of this little volume on the 1905 Revolution.

# THE BEGINNING OF THE REVOLUTION IN RUSSIA

GENEVA,

*Wednesday, January 25*

MOST important historic events are taking place in Russia. The proletariat has risen against Tsarism. The proletariat has been driven to the uprising by the Government. Now there is hardly room for doubt that the Government deliberately allowed the strike movement to develop and a wide demonstration to be started in order to bring matters to a head, and to have a pretext for calling out the military forces. Its manœuvre was successful! Thousands of killed and wounded—this is the toll of Bloody Sunday, January 22, in Petersburg. The army vanquished unarmed workers, women and children. The army overpowered the enemy by shooting prostrate workers. ‘We have taught them a good lesson!’ cynically say the Tsar’s henchmen and their European flunkys, the conservative bourgeoisie.

Yes, it was a great lesson! The Russian proletariat will not forget this lesson. The most uneducated, the most backward strata of the working class, who had naïvely trusted the Tsar and had sincerely wished to put peacefully before ‘the Tsar himself’ the requests of a tormented nation, were all taught a lesson by the military force led by the Tsar and the Tsar’s uncle, the Grand Duke Vladimir.

The working class had received a great lesson in civil war; the revolutionary education of the proletariat advanced in one day further than it could have advanced in months and years of drab, everyday, stupefied existence. The slogan of the heroic Petersburg proletariat, ‘liberty or death!’ rings like an echo throughout the whole of Russia. Events are developing with marvellous speed. The general strike in Petersburg is spreading. All industrial, social and political life is paralysed. On Monday, January 23, the encounters between the workers and the military become more stubborn. Contrary to the false Government *communiqués*, blood is spilt in many parts of the capital. The Kolpino workers are rising. The proletariat is arming itself and the people. There are

rumours that the workers have seized the Sestroretsk Arsenal. The workers are supplying themselves with revolvers, they are forging their tools into weapons, they are procuring bombs for a desperate fight for freedom. The general strike is spreading to the provinces. In Moscow 10,000 people have already ceased work. A general strike is to be called in Moscow to-morrow (Thursday, January 26). A revolt has broken out in Riga. The workers in Lodz are demonstrating, an uprising is being prepared in Warsaw, demonstrations of the proletariat are taking place in Helsingfors. In Baku, Odessa, Kiev, Kharkov, Kovno and Vilno, there is growing ferment among the workers and the strike is spreading. In Sebastopol the stores and arsenals of the navy department are ablaze, and the troops refuse to shoot on the rebellious sailors. There are strikes in Reval and in Saratov. In Radom, an armed encounter occurred between the workers and a detachment of reserves which had been called out.

The revolution is spreading. The Government is already beginning to waver. From a policy of bloody repression it is trying to pass to economic concessions and to save itself by throwing a sop, by promising the nine-hour day. But the lesson of Bloody Sunday must not be forgotten. The demand of the rebellious Petersburg workers—the immediate convocation of a Constituent Assembly on the basis of universal, direct, equal and secret suffrage—must become the demand of all the striking workers. The immediate overthrow of the Government—such was the slogan raised in answer to the massacre of January 9, even by those Petersburg workers who believed in the Tsar; they raised this slogan through their leader, George Gapon,<sup>1</sup> who said after that bloody day: ‘We no longer have a Tsar. A river of blood separates the Tsar from the nation. Long live the fight for freedom!’

<sup>1</sup> Father Gapon (1870–1906), at the suggestion of Zubatov, chief of the political police, formed reactionary workers’ circles (1902–1903). With Plehve’s aid he obtained permission to organise the St. Petersburg Association of Russian Factory Workers, subsidised by the secret police. With the idea of presenting a workers’ petition to the Tsar, Gapon became involved on the side of the workers against the management of the Putilov works; these workers were at the head of the St. Petersburg general strike. A favourable opportunity for a mass movement and a workers’ demonstration in the streets presented itself, and this led to the events of January 22.

After ‘Bloody Sunday’ Gapon fled abroad, and, attempting to identify

Long live the revolutionary proletariat! say we. The general strike is rousing and mobilising larger and larger masses of the working class and of the city poor. The arming of the people is becoming one of the immediate problems of the revolutionary moment.

Only an armed people can be a real stronghold of national freedom. And the sooner the proletariat succeeds in arming itself, and the longer it maintains its martial position of striker and revolutionary, the sooner will the army begin to waver, the soldiers will at last begin to understand what they are doing, they will go over to the side of the people against the monsters, against the tyrants, against the murderers of defenceless workers and of their wives and children. No matter what the outcome of the present uprising in Petersburg will be, it will, in any case, be the first step to a wider, more conscious, better prepared uprising. The Government may, perhaps, succeed in putting off the day of reckoning, but the postponement will only make the next step of the revolutionary attack more powerful. Social-Democracy will take advantage of this postponement in order to close the ranks of the organised fighters, and to spread the news about the start made by the Petersburg workers. The proletariat will join in the fight, will desert mill and factory, and prepare arms for itself. Into the midst of the city poor, to the millions of peasants, the slogans of the struggle for freedom will be carried more and more effectively. Revolutionary committees will be formed in every factory, in every section of the city, in every village. The people in revolt will overthrow all the Government institutions of the Tsarist autocracy and proclaim the immediate convocation of the Constituent Assembly.

The immediate arming of the workers and of all citizens in general, the preparation and organisation of the revolutionary forces for annihilating the Government authorities and institutions—this is the practical basis on which all revolutionaries can, and must unite, to strike a common blow. The proletariat

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himself with one of the political parties, carried on negotiations with Lenin, Plekhanov, the Social-Revolutionaries, and others. On his return to Russia he renewed his connection with the police department, but after his treacherous rôle became apparent he was killed by Social-Revolutionaries in April, 1906.—Ed.

must always go its independent way in close contact with the Social-Democratic Party, always bearing in mind its great final goal, the goal of ridding mankind of all exploitation. But this independence of the Social-Democratic proletarian party will never cause us to forget the importance of a common revolutionary attack at the moment of actual revolution. We Social-Democrats can and must proceed independently of the revolutionaries of the bourgeois democracy, and guard the class independence of the proletariat. But we must go hand-in-hand with them in an uprising when direct blows are being struck at Tsarism, when resisting the troops, when attacking the Bastille of the accursed enemy of the entire Russian people.

The eyes of the proletariat of the whole world are anxiously turned towards the proletariat of all Russia. The overthrow of Tsarism in Russia, started so valiantly by our working class, will be the turning-point in the history of all countries, will make easier the task of the workers of all nations, in all states, in all parts of the globe. Therefore, let every Social-Democrat, let every class-conscious worker remember the great tasks of the all-national struggle that now rest on his shoulders. Let him not forget that he represents the needs and the interests of the entire peasantry too, of the entire mass of the toiling and exploited, of the entire people against the all-national enemy. The whole world is watching the example of the heroic proletarians of St. Petersburg.

Long live the Revolution!

Long live the proletariat in revolt!

*Vperyod*, No. 4, January 31, 1905.<sup>1</sup>

## II

### THE REVOLUTIONARY-DEMOCRATIC DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT AND THE PEASANTRY

THE question as to whether Social-Democracy should take part in a provisional revolutionary government has been brought up, not so much by the actual course of events, as by the theoretical

<sup>1</sup> The *Vperyod* (*Forward*) was the first Bolshevik paper. It appeared weekly in Geneva, 1905. Lenin was the chief editor.—ED.

arguments of the Social-Democrats of a certain tendency. In two pamphlets (Nos. 13 and 14) we have dealt with the reflections advanced by Martynov,<sup>1</sup> the first to bring up this question. It appears, however, that the interest in it is so great and the misunderstandings to which these arguments have given birth are so tremendous (see especially No. 93 of *Iskra*<sup>2</sup>) that it is essential to pause once more over this question. No matter how Social-Democrats may appraise the probability of our having to solve this question in the near future and not merely in a theoretical way, in any case, clarity on its immediate purposes is essential to the Party. Without a plain answer to this question it is impossible to have, even now, a thorough-going propaganda and agitation, free of waverings and reservations.

Let us try to get back to the essence of the question in dispute. If we wish not only concessions on the part of the autocracy, but its actual downfall, then we must strive to have the imperial Government replaced by a provisional revolutionary Government which should summon a Constituent Assembly on the basis of truly universal, direct and equal suffrage, with secret ballot, and which should be capable of maintaining complete liberty during the period of elections. And at this point we are asked whether it is permissible for the Social Democratic Labour Party to participate in a provisional revolutionary Government of this sort? This question was first raised by the representatives of the opportunist wing of our party, namely, by Martynov, even before the 9th of January; Martynov, and after him *Iskra*, gave a negative answer to the question. Martynov tried to reduce to an absurdity the views of the revolutionary Social-Democrats, by attempting to frighten them with the idea that in case of successful work in organising the revolution, in case an armed popular insurrection should be conducted by our party, we should *have* to participate in the provisional revolutionary government. But such participation

<sup>1</sup> Martynov (born 1865) participated in the revolutionary movement from the late 'eighties, was a leader of the tendency known as 'economism' at the end of the century, and then one of the leaders of the Mensheviks. He joined the Communist Party in 1922.—ED.

<sup>2</sup> The *Iskra* (*Spark*) was in 1900–1903 the organ of Russian Social-Democracy, under Lenin's direction. After the Second Congress (1903) it passed into the hands of the Mensheviks.—ED.

is an inadmissible 'seizure of power', it is, for a Social-Democratic class party, inadmissible 'vulgar Jaurèsism'.<sup>1</sup>

Let us pause a moment over the arguments of those who uphold this view. If it is in the provisional government, they tell us, Social-Democracy will hold power in its hands; but Social-Democracy as the party of the proletariat, cannot keep power in its hands without attempting to realise our maximum programme, that is, without trying to bring about the Socialist revolution. But in such an enterprise it is bound at the present time to suffer defeat and would only cover itself with shame, and play into the hands of the reaction. Therefore, they say the participation of Social-Democracy in the provisional revolutionary government is inadmissible.

This argument is based on the confusion of the democratic and the Socialist revolutions—of the struggle for the republic (including in this our minimum programme in its entirety) and the struggle for Socialism. If it attempted to set as its immediate aim the Socialist revolution, Social-Democracy would in fact simply cover itself with shame. It is just against such obscure and confused ideas among our 'Socialist Revolutionaries' that Social-Democracy has always fought. And it is for that very reason that it has always insisted on the bourgeois character of the revolution which Russia is now facing, and sternly demanded the separation of the democratic minimum programme from the Socialist maximum programme. This may be forgotten at the time of the revolution by various Social-Democrats, inclined to yield to the elemental force of the movement, but not by the party as a whole. The partisans of this mistaken opinion tend to worship elemental force, to believe that the march of things would compel Social-Democracy, under such circumstances, against its will to set about realising the Socialist revolution. If that were so, then it would mean that our programme was wrong, that it would no longer be adequate for the 'march of things': this is just what these worshippers of elemental force are afraid of, they are afraid our programme is correct. But their fear (the psychological explanation of which we have tried to sketch in our pamphlets) is groundless to the last degree. Our programme is right. And it is the march

<sup>1</sup> An expression used by Martov, a Menshevik leader, referring to the policy supported by Jaurès, the French Socialist leader of Socialists joining capitalist governments. At the end of last century Millerand, at that time a Socialist, entered the Waldeck-Rousseau cabinet.—ED.

of things that will certainly confirm it, and the farther they march, the more they will confirm it. And the course of events binds on us the absolute necessity of fighting desperately for the republic; in the practical sense it is directing our forces to that aim, the forces of the politically active proletariat. It is precisely the course of things which, in case of the democratic revolution, will inevitably bind upon us such a mass of allies from among the lower bourgeoisie and peasantry, whose real needs will demand merely the execution of the minimum programme, that fears of too quick a transition to our maximum programme are quite ridiculous.

But, on the other hand, it is just these allies from the lower middle-class democratic elements who inspire new fears among the Social-Democrats of a certain tendency, namely, fears as to 'vulgar Jaurèsism'. Participation in the government, together with bourgeois democracy, is forbidden by a resolution of the Amsterdam Congress;<sup>1</sup> that is Jaurèsism, that is, un-class-conscious betrayal of the interests of the proletariat, corruption of the proletariat into a mere hanger-on of the bourgeoisie, debauchment of it by the tinsel show of power, which, in fact, remains absolutely unattainable for it under bourgeois society.

This argument is not less mistaken. It shows that its authors have learned by rote some good resolutions, but have not grasped their meaning; they have crammed several clear expressions directed against the Jaurèsists, but they have not thought them over and therefore apply them quite inappropriately; they have taken the word but not the spirit of the latest teachings of international revolutionary Social-Democracy. Anyone who wishes to appraise Jaurèsism, from the point of view of dialectic materialism, must separate strictly the subjective motives and the objective historical conditions. Subjectively speaking, Jaurès wished to save the republic by entering for this purpose into alliance with bourgeois democracy. The objective conditions of this 'experiment' were that the republic in France was already a fact and was not threatened by any serious danger; that the working class was fully able to develop its own independent class political organisation and failed to take sufficient advantage of this possibility, partly under the influence of the abundance of its

<sup>1</sup> This refers to a resolution of the Amsterdam Congress of the Second International (1904).—ED.



leaders' tinselly parliamentary exercises; that, in fact, history had already faced the working class with the tasks of the Socialist revolution, from which the proletariat was *lured away* by the Millerands through the promise of tiny social reforms.

Now, take Russia, for example. Subjectively speaking, the revolutionary Social-Democrats, like the *Vperyod* group or Parvus,<sup>1</sup> want to fight to the last ditch for the republic, with this purpose entering into alliance with revolutionary bourgeois democracy. The objective conditions are as different from the French ones as heaven from earth. Objectively speaking, the historical course of things has now set the Russian proletariat the task of securing the democratic bourgeois revolution (all its contents we denote for brevity by the word 'republic'); this task faces the entire people, that is, the entire mass of lower bourgeoisie and peasantry; without this revolution it is useless to think about any sweeping development whatever of an independent class organisation in preparation for the Socialist revolution.

Just imagine all the difference in objective circumstances and say: what must we think of people who forget this difference, and let themselves be fascinated by the resemblance of a few words, the likeness of a few letters, the identity of the subjective motivation?

Since Jaurès in France bowed down to worship bourgeois social reform, incorrectly covering up his true self by the subjective purpose of the struggle for the republic, then we Russian Social-Democrats must renounce serious struggle for the republic! But it is this, and only this that the wisdom of the new *Iskra* group amounts to.

As a matter of fact, is it not clear that the fight for the republic is unthinkable for the proletariat without its being allied with the petty bourgeois mass of the people? Is it not clear that without the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry

<sup>1</sup> Parvus (Helphand, 1869–1924), at first an outstanding Social-Democrat and Marxist theoretician, as an emigré was active in the 'nineties in the German Social Democracy, returned to Russia in 1905, and took part in the revolution. He held with Trotsky the theory of 'permanent revolution'. During the World War became an extreme chauvinist and a direct agent of German imperialism.—ED.