



V. I. LENIN

TWO TACTICS OF
SOCIAL-DEMOCRACY
IN THE
DEMOCRATIC
REVOLUTION

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社会民主党在民主革命中的两种策略

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WORKERS OF ALL COUNTRIES, UNITE!

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Vladimir Lenin

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TWO TACTICS OF SOCIAL-DEMOCRACY IN THE DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION¹

PREFACE

In a revolutionary period it is very difficult to keep abreast of events, which provide an astonishing amount of new material for an evaluation of the tactical slogans of revolutionary parties. The present pamphlet was written before the Odessa events.* We have already pointed out in the *Proletary*² (No. 9 — “Revolution Teaches”)³ that these events have forced even those Social-Democrats who created the “uprising-as-a-process” theory and who rejected propaganda for a provisional revolutionary government actually to pass over, or begin to pass over, to the side of their opponents. 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.

* The reference is to the mutiny on the armoured cruiser *Potemkin*.⁴
[Author's note to the 1907 edition.]

There is not the slightest doubt that the revolution will teach social-democratism to the masses of the workers in Russia. The revolution will confirm the program 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, harbour not the idea of "socialization," but of a new class struggle between the peasant bourgeoisie and the rural proletariat. The old illusions of the old Narodism, which are so clearly visible, for instance, in the draft program of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party on the question of the development of capitalism in Russia, the question of the democratic character of our "society" and the question of the significance of a complete victory of a peasant uprising — all these illusions will be mercilessly and completely blown to the winds by the revolution. For the first time it will give the various classes their real political baptism. These classes will emerge from the revolution with a definite political physiognomy, for they will have revealed themselves, not only in the programs and tactical slogans of their ideologists, but also in the open political action of the masses.

Undoubtedly, the revolution will teach us, and will teach the masses of the people. But the question that now confronts a militant political party is: shall we be able to teach the revolution anything? shall we be able to make use of the correctness of our Social-Democratic doctrine, of our bond with the only thoroughly revolutionary class, the proletariat, to put a proletarian imprint on the revolution, to carry the revolution to a real and decisive victory, not in word but in

deed, and to paralyze the instability, halfheartedness and treachery of the democratic bourgeoisie?

It is to this end that we must direct all our efforts, and the achievement of it will depend, on the one hand, on the accuracy of our appraisal of the political situation, on the correctness of our tactical slogans, and, on the other hand, on whether these slogans will be backed by the real fighting strength of the masses of the workers. All the usual, regular, current work of all the organizations and groups of our Party, the work of propaganda, agitation and organization, is directed towards strengthening and expanding the ties with the masses. This work is always necessary; but in a revolutionary period less than in any other can it be considered sufficient. At such a time 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. It must not be forgotten that the current pessimism about our ties with the masses very often serves as a screen for bourgeois ideas regarding the role of the proletariat in the revolution. Undoubtedly, we still have a great deal to do to educate and organize the working class; but the whole question now is: where should the main political emphasis in this work of education and of organization be placed? On the trade unions and legally existing societies, or on armed insurrection, on the work of creating a revolutionary army and a revolutionary government? Both serve to educate and organize the working class. Both are, of course, necessary. But the whole question now, in the present revolution, amounts to this: what is to be emphasized in the work of educating and organizing 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. The more intelligent representatives of the bourgeoisie are perfectly aware of this. That is precisely why the *Osvobozhdeniye*⁵ praises Akimovism, Economism⁶ in Social-Democracy, the trend, which is *now* placing the trade unions and the legally existing societies in the forefront. That is precisely why Mr. Struve welcomes (in the *Osvobozhdeniye*, No. 72) the Akimovist trends in the principles of the new *Iskra*. That is precisely why he comes down so heavily on the detested revolutionary narrowness of the decisions of the Third Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party.

It is exceptionally important at the present time for Social-Democracy to have correct tactical slogans for leading the masses. There is nothing more dangerous in a revolutionary period than belittling the importance of tactical slogans that are sound in principle. For example, the *Iskra*,⁷ in No. 104, actually passes over to the side of its opponents in the Social-Democratic movement, and yet, at the same time, disparages the importance of slogans and tactical decisions that are in front of the times and indicate the path along which the movement is proceeding, with a number of failures, errors, etc. On the contrary, the working out of correct tactical decisions is of immense importance for a party which, in the spirit of the sound principles of Marxism, desires to lead the proletariat and not merely to drag at the tail of events. In the resolutions of the Third Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party and of the

Conference of the section which has seceded from the Party,* we have the most precise, most carefully thought-out, and most complete expression of tactical views — views not casually expressed by individual writers, but accepted by the responsible representatives of the Social-Democratic proletariat. Our Party is in advance of all the others, for it has a precise program, accepted by all. It must also set the other parties an example of strict adherence to its tactical resolutions, in contradistinction to the opportunism of the democratic bourgeoisie of the *Osvobozhdeniye* and the revolutionary phrasemongering of the Socialist-Revolutionaries, who only during the revolution suddenly thought of coming forward with a “draft” of a program and of investigating for the first time whether it is a bourgeois revolution that is going on in front of their eyes.

That is why we think it a most urgent task of the revolutionary Social-Democrats to study carefully the tactical resolutions of the Third Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party and of the Conference, to define what deviations there are in them from the principles of Marxism, and to get a clear understanding of the concrete tasks of the Social-Democratic proletariat in a democratic revolution. It is to this task that the present pamphlet is devoted. The testing of our tactics from the standpoint of

* The Third Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (held in London in May 1905) was attended only by Bolsheviks, while in the “Conference” (held in Geneva at the same time) only Mensheviks participated. In the present pamphlet the latter are frequently referred to as “new *Iskra*-ists” because while continuing to publish the *Iskra* they declared, through their then adherent, Trotsky, that there was a gulf between the old and the new *Iskra*. [Author’s note to the 1907 edition.]

the principles of Marxism and of the lessons of the revolution is also necessary for those who really desire to pave the way for unity of tactics as a basis for the future complete unity of the whole Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, and not to confine themselves solely to verbal admonitions.

N. Lenin

July 1905

1. AN URGENT POLITICAL QUESTION

At the present revolutionary juncture the question of the convocation of a popular constituent assembly is on the order of the day. Opinions are divided on the point as to how this question should be settled. Three political trends are to be observed. The tsarist government admits the necessity of convening representatives of the people, but it does not want under any circumstances to permit their assembly to be a popular and a constituent assembly. It seems willing to agree, if we are to believe the newspaper reports on the work of the Bulygin Commission,⁸ to an advisory assembly, to be elected without freedom to conduct agitation, and on the basis of restricted qualifications or a restricted class system. The revolutionary proletariat, inasmuch as it is led by the Social-Democratic Party, demands complete transfer of power to a constituent assembly, and for this purpose strives to obtain not only universal suffrage and complete freedom to conduct agitation, but also the immediate overthrow of the tsarist government and its replacement by a provisional revolutionary government. Finally, the liberal bourgeoisie, expressing its wishes through the leaders of the so-called Constitutional-Democratic Party,"⁹ does not demand the

overthrow of the tsarist government, does not advance the slogan of a provisional government and does not insist on real guarantees that the elections will be absolutely free and fair and that the assembly of representatives will be a genuinely popular and a genuinely constituent assembly. As a matter of fact, the liberal bourgeoisie, which is the only serious social support of the *Osvobozhdeniye* trend, is striving to effect as peaceful a deal as possible between the tsar and the revolutionary people, a deal, moreover, that would give a maximum of power to itself, the bourgeoisie, and a minimum to the revolutionary people — the proletariat and the peasantry.

Such is the political situation at the present time. Such are the three main political trends, corresponding to the three main social forces in contemporary Russia. We have already shown on more than one occasion (in the *Proletary*, Nos. 3, 4, 5)¹⁰ how the *Osvobozhdentsi* use pseudodemocratic phrases to cover up their halfhearted, or, to put it more bluntly and plainly, their treacherous, perfidious policy towards the revolution. Let us now see how the Social-Democrats appraise the tasks of the moment. Excellent material for this purpose is provided by the two resolutions that were passed quite recently by the Third Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party and by the "Conference" of the section which has seceded from the Party. The question as to which of these resolutions more correctly appraises the political situation and more correctly defines the tactics of the revolutionary proletariat is of enormous importance, and every Social-Democrat who is anxious to fulfil his duties as a propagandist, agitator and organizer intelligently, must study this question with the closest attention, leaving all irrelevant considerations entirely aside.

By the Party's tactics we mean the Party's political conduct, or the character, the direction and methods of its political activity. Tactical resolutions are adopted by Party congresses in order precisely to define the political conduct of the Party as a whole with regard to new tasks, or in view of a new political situation. Such a new situation has been created by the revolution that has started in Russia, i.e., the complete, resolute and open rupture between the overwhelming majority of the people and the tsarist government. The new question concerns the practical methods to be adopted in convening a genuinely popular and genuinely constituent assembly (the theoretical question concerning such an assembly was officially settled by Social-Democracy long ago, before all other parties, in its Party program). Since the people have broken with the government, and the masses realize the necessity of setting up a new order, the party which set itself the object of overthrowing the government must necessarily consider what government to put up in place of the old, deposed government. A *new* question concerning a provisional revolutionary government arises. In order to give a complete answer to this question the Party of the class-conscious proletariat must make clear: 1) the *significance* of a provisional revolutionary government in the revolution that is now going on and in the entire struggle of the proletariat in general; 2) its *attitude* towards a provisional revolutionary government; 3) the precise conditions of Social-Democratic *participation* in this government; 4) the conditions under which pressure is to be brought to bear on this government from *below*, i.e., in the event of there being no Social-Democrats in it. Only after all these questions are made clear, will the political conduct of the Party in this sphere be principled, clear and firm.