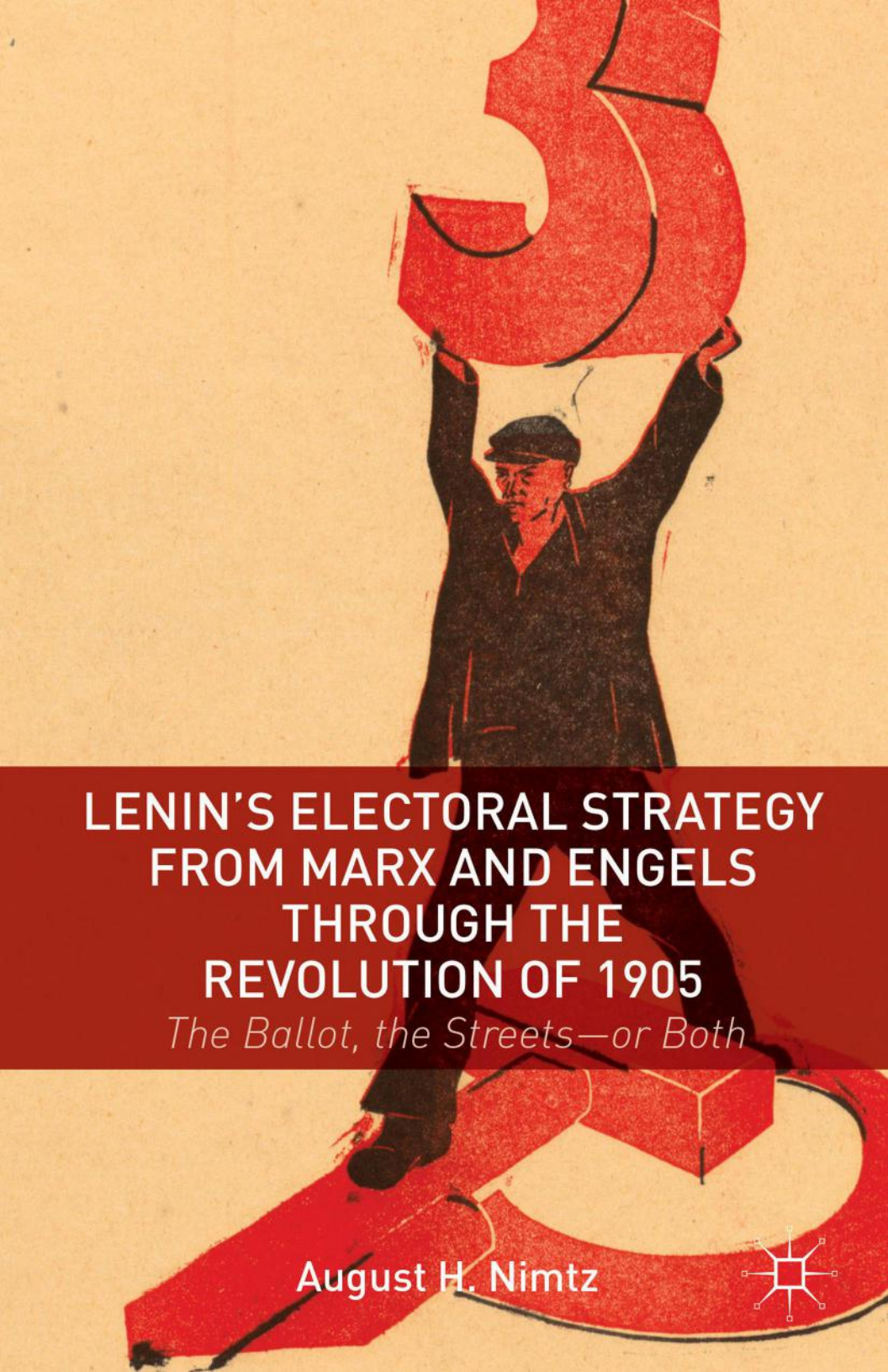

LENIN'S ELECTORAL STRATEGY FROM MARX AND ENGELS THROUGH THE REVOLUTION OF 1905

The Ballot, the Streets—or Both

August H. Nimtz

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Preface

Three years after the Bolshevik-led triumph in Russia in October 1917, Lenin declared that his party's "participation . . . in parliaments . . . was not only useful but indispensable" in its success.[1] If true, this means that the Russian Revolution was the first and only revolution in history to employ the parliamentary arena for working-class ascent to state power. But what exactly did Lenin mean by "participation in parliaments"? This book aims to answer that very question and in the process to understand and sustain the validity of Lenin's claim. The Bolshevik example offers, therefore, potentially rich lessons for today's "protestors" in whatever corner of the globe. Yearning for something (however inchoate) more fundamental than what is often touted as "change" (not just new apps but a new operating system), many are torn between the "streets" and the "ballot box" for its realization. The solution Lenin fought for to this apparent dilemma was what he called "revolutionary parliamentarism"—the subject of this book.

The book, which includes the companion volume, *Lenin's Electoral Strategy from 1907 to the Revolution of October 1917: "The Ballot" or "the Streets"—or Both* (*hereafter, LES1917*), makes four arguments. The first is that no one did more to utilize the electoral and parliamentary arenas for revolutionary ends than Vladimir Ilych Ulyanov—Lenin. The second argument is that Lenin's position on the "streets" versus the "ballot box"—no, it wasn't either/or—was squarely rooted in the politics of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. Third, the historic split in international Marxism between communism and social democracy was long in place before the Guns of August 1914 exploded, owing in large part to two very different conceptions of how Marxists should comport themselves in the electoral/parliamentary arenas—with Lenin on one side and what would become twentieth-century social democracy on the other side. The last claim is that the head-start program the founders of the modern communist movement gave Lenin on electoral politics goes a long way toward explaining why the Bolsheviks, rather than any other political current, were hegemonic in October 1917.

To make my case I do the following: For the first argument, I extract and summarize from the entire Lenin corpus in print all his electoral activities, especially his leadership of the Bolshevik wing of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (RSDLP) in the four State Dumas from

1906 to the beginning of the First World War. This is no easy task, since it's likely that on no other question apart from than that of the peasantry did Lenin spill so much ink. But it's doable because Lenin often reiterated the same claims for different venues. As for my argument that he was squarely rooted in Marx and Engels, I draw on my two earlier books on their politics. As many forests as have been felled for the Marxological industry, it is telling that this is the first synthesis of Marx and Engels's views on the electoral process. The Leninologists have also been derelict.[2] Particularly striking about their enterprise is the almost complete absence of any sustained or, certainly, book-length discussion of Lenin's political kinship with Marx and Engels despite their frequent denial of such paternity. This book is, thus, a correction of two intellectual deficits. In the process, I show that no one of Lenin's generation understood Marx and Engels as well as he did. As for the argument about the roots of the historic split in international Marxism, I cull in chronological order from Lenin's writings and actions his awareness of the growing disagreements and divide between him and Western European Marxists. The record reveals—admittedly in hindsight—that the formal split that took place when the First World War erupted was the culmination of a decade-long process.

Finally, as for the "so what" question—what difference did it make that Lenin got Marx and Engels right?—this book argues that there is enough circumstantial evidence to show that his electoral/parliamentary strategy was decisive in the Bolshevik-led triumph in 1917, probably the only revolution to have been realized in such fashion. This is, therefore—and surprisingly, given all that's been written about it—the first study to trace the connection between the politics of the two founders of the modern communist movement and the Russian Revolution. Though not a definitive explanation for the Bolshevik success, a tentative case—given what's at stake in politics today—is infinitely superior to none at all. Just ask the protesters in Tahrir Square!

When I'd tell someone what I was working on while researching and writing this book, my words would often be greeted with a look of incredulity. "Lenin's electoral strategy?" That sounded oxymoronic. Such a reaction is not surprising. No figure in modern political history has been as misrepresented as Lenin. The reason is that not only his enemies but also many of his so-called friends are culpable. His enemies can easily justify their disdain simply on the basis of what has been done in Lenin's name for almost a century.[3] The Stalinist counterrevolution that replaced the rule of the proletariat with that of the bureaucracy, and all the accompanying horrors, has indeed enabled his enemies' ever-present campaign

to fault Lenin for what occurred after his death. But that reading of Lenin can only be sustained if there is indeed evidence of a causal link between his actions and Stalin's crimes; that the latter followed the former and employed Lenin's name and corpse to justify what he did is no proof of Lenin's culpability. Lenin's more than decade-long work in electoral/parliamentary politics between 1905 and 1918 is inconvenient for his enemies, and that is why—in almost Stalinist-like fashion—it has been deleted in Leninological accounts.[4]

Lenin's smarter enemies know that *post hoc* explanation is unpersuasive—hence their never-ending quest to find the proverbial smoking gun, some evidence that he parented Stalin. And if that can't be found, it can be invented.[5] Others have been less brazen and mainly impugn Lenin by innuendo. Rather than clutter the text with a discussion of that constant campaign, I confine it largely to the section "A Critical Review of the Relevant Literature." One enemy's effort, though, is worth pointing out here: Richard Pipes's *The Unknown Lenin: From the Secret Archive* (1996). Because he was one of the first Western scholars granted permission to peruse formerly closed archives after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and owing to his renown as a Leninologist, Pipes's book was highly anticipated. If anyone could find the smoking gun, surely he could. But Pipes fired a dud, because the documents he reproduces from before the October Revolution contain no seed of the Stalinist counterrevolution. And one can be sure that if there was anything in that trove of documents that put Lenin, "a thoroughgoing misanthrope," in a positive light, it didn't find its way into the Pipes selection.[6] For different reasons, Lenin's "friends," both real and fictitious—such as the hagiographers in Moscow and their cheerleaders elsewhere—are also complicit in veiling the rich record this book unearths. In the Conclusion to *LES1917*, I discuss what I call a conspiracy of silence by both foe and friend that helps make "Lenin's electoral strategy" sound so incongruous.

Though this book isn't about the Stalinist counterrevolution, it's a matter that can't be ignored. Along with mention of Lenin's unsuccessful fight from his sick bed to arrest the development, I devote a few pages toward an explanation along with relevant facts about the Bolsheviks in power after the October Revolution at the end of Chapter 3 and in the Conclusion in *LES1917*. Leon Trotsky's time-tested theory of Stalinism is what I employ. Lenin's second-in-command in the October Revolution, head of the Red Army in the civil war, a witness to the counterrevolution and eventually one of its many victims, Trotsky argued that political contingency best explains what happened. In other words, the Stalinist outcome was no more preordained than were the counterrevolutions that overthrew

Radical Reconstruction after the US Civil War or the Paris Commune in 1871.[7] There's no smoking gun to be found. I recognize there's no convincing Lenin's *class* enemies, like Pipes, of the truth. But for those who are willing to suspend judgment until learning about this hitherto ignored side of Lenin, I offer this advice: The same kind of historical perspective needed to make judgments about the American Revolution, both phases—the war for national liberation and the social revolution that overthrew slavery (as viewers of Steven Spielberg's *Lincoln* might agree)—is also required for the Russian Revolution.

Lest it be construed that only reactionary forces have disdain for Lenin, let me mention another crowd. The reader will probably be struck by Lenin's unsparing criticism of Russian liberalism and the Cadet Party in particular—the "treachery of liberals," as he called it. At times he vented more anger at them than at the Czarist regime. Inveterate apologists for the latter, the liberals almost always vacillated at critical moments in Russia's democratic quest. Because they tried to inculcate workers and peasants with their antirevolutionary politics, Lenin constantly hammered on the difference between democracy and liberalism and made special use of election campaigns to that end. His scathing denunciation of Russian liberals has earned him no friends in the liberal academy. The forces in Russia they are likely to identify with—despite pretenses of being "objective" in their accounts about the Russian Revolution—proved to be just what Lenin predicted: hand-wringing prevaricators. And that Lenin was so accurate in his predictions about them is even more galling. Lenin, informed by the lessons Marx and Engels drew on the revolutions of 1848–49, read the politics of liberals better than any modern figure, and they've never forgiven him for it.

I'm not sure I would have written this book had I not read many years ago *Lenin as Election Campaign Manager*, a 23-page pamphlet that, fortunately—because it's still the best introduction to the topic and, thus, to this book—remains in print.[8] Deep in my memory banks, it began to prick my consciousness a few years ago as I was reading a classic by a doyen of the academy that claimed that working-class participation in the electoral/parliamentary arena was inevitably compromising. According to political scientist Adam Przeworski, working-class parties, because they represented a minority of the population, had to enter into coalitions with parties representing other social layers and, thus, had to attenuate their demands and pursue a reformist political course a la Western European social democracy. But I vaguely remembered a different scenario: the Bolshevik experience. I revisited the pamphlet and found what I was trying to recall—Lenin's argument that the Russian movement also heard

the siren call of opportunism but didn't succumb, at least in its revolutionary wing. In a 2010 article, I critiqued Przeworski—mainly for his dishonest treatment of Marx and Engels's views on electoral/parliamentary politics—and concluded that until the Russian case had been looked at closely, his hypothesis must remain no more than that.[9] This book is that examination, and it refutes Przeworski's claim of the inevitability of reformism. In my book *Marx and Engels: Their Contribution to the Democratic Breakthrough* (2000), I told readers that I'd address in a future volume what happened to their project after their deaths.[10] This book also constitutes the first—belated largely because of the rich database I had to mine—down payment on that promise.

The chronological organization of the book, both this and the second volume, is dictated by its four arguments. In this volume, Chapter 1, "What Marx and Engels Bequeathed," provides the necessary evidence for the second argument, that Lenin's electoral/parliamentary strategy was squarely rooted in their politics. It distills and summarizes what the two founders of the modern communist movement said and did about electoral politics from the Revolutions of 1848–49 to the fight against reformism Engels was engaged in at the time of his death in 1895. It ends with their judgments about the revolutionary prospects for Russia—also necessary in making a determination about Lenin's continuity with their program. Chapter 2, "Revolutionary Continuity: Lenin's Politics Prior to 1905," seeks to understand how he responded when the first opportunity for electoral/parliamentary activity in Czarist Russia presented itself. What were his views from the time he entered politics in 1894 to the beginning of the "Russian Spring" in 1905, on democracy in general, parliamentary democracy, constitutional government, and their relation to socialist revolution? And how did the democratic norm inform his views on the working class organizing itself into a party?

Chapters 3 and 4 of this volume, and Chapters 1 and 2 of *LES1917*, constitute the empirical heart of the book: the very rich details about the leadership Lenin provided for the RSDLP for the elections to and participation in the four State Dumas from 1906 to 1914. Issues such as whether to boycott or participate in undemocratic elections, how to conduct election campaigns, whether to enter into electoral blocs and the related (and ever current) "lesser of two evils" dilemma, how to keep deputies accountable to the party, and how to balance electoral politics with armed struggle all had to be addressed. And most important, how could the electoral/parliamentary process be utilized to forge a revolutionary coalition of the majority, the worker-peasant alliance? Throughout the process, the often-contentious issue of internal party politics, specifically

the growing split between the RSDLP's Bolshevik and Menshevik wings, looms large. That conflict, the evidence shows, mirrored the growing divide between revolutionary and reformist social democracy at the international level. This part of the narrative is framed by the Revolution of 1905, its defeat, the revival of revolutionary activity in 1912, and the outbreak of the First World War two years later.

Chapter 3 in *LES1917*, "The 'Great War,' 1917, and Beyond," begins with the Bolshevik Duma deputies' response to the outbreak of the war, their arrest and trial, and the split in international social democracy. The February Revolution in 1917, the overthrow of Czarist rule, allowed Lenin to apply the lessons of decade-long experience in the electoral arena—specifically, how "to count one's forces"—to determine when the Bolsheviks should lead an armed uprising of Russia's proletariat to take state power. There is sufficient evidence, as this chapter reveals, to make a more than credible case that the Bolshevik-led revolution in October, under Lenin's direction, was very much informed by the electoral/parliamentary strategy of modern communism's two founders—the first reading of the October Revolution to show its roots in Marx and Engels. Lenin's October Revolution balance sheets lend credence to this claim.

Last, in the Conclusion in *LES1917*, I begin with a summary of the chapters of each volume and then interrogate the book's four arguments to see if the evidence presented is convincing. I then offer an explanation for the silences in the literatures of foe and friend about Lenin's rich record in electoral/parliamentary politics. I end with a discussion of the potential relevance of Lenin's strategy of "revolutionary parliamentarism" for activists today in a variety of settings around the world.

Lenin's voice is prioritized and not, as is all too frequent in Leninological accounts, the author's. His voice is heard more than my own in these chapters. Readers, I think, will be pleased with that decision as they learn what Lenin actually said as opposed to what is often attributed to him and understand why he is all too often silenced. Lenin's detractors' accounts of him assume the reader has not and will not read him in his own words. Otherwise they would take far more precautions, make more hedges, or be less categorical than any of them have. Here Lenin is allowed to speak for himself. Virtually every word between quotation marks in the text is that of one of the protagonists of this story with the citation usually in reasonable proximity. If quotations come from the same writing, I provide the citation at the last one—to minimize the number of endnotes. To avoid confusion with quoted material, I have refrained as much as possible from the all-too-common practice of employing "scare quotes."

For Lenin's voice, I rely almost exclusively on the 1976 printing of V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, in 45 volumes, the English edition of the slightly more extensive Russian edition, which is now online at http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/cw/index.htm; for that reason I employ its spellings, such as "Cadets" rather than "Kadets." I'm aware that not all that Lenin wrote is in print—and not just the unpublished documents Pipes's aforementioned selection drew on. Lenin's wife Krupskaya reported that much of their archives had to be burned before they fled Finland at the end of 1907, no doubt including many documents related to the Second State Duma.[11] And then there are the gargantuan Cracow archives that Lenin and Krupskaya had to abandon when the First World War broke out, reported to dwarf the *Collected Works* by at least a factor of ten.[12] For some reason they have never found their way into print; they too are no doubt rich in relevant documents, especially about the Third and Fourth State Dumas. That I rely primarily on the *Collected Works* may for some readers raise a red flag. Shouldn't I employ other voices in a more "even-handed" way? First, the aim of this book is to present what Lenin actually said given the silences in other accounts. Relying on his *Collected Works* is the only feasible way to do that. Second, as for differing opinions on significant issues, the reader will see that Lenin, who was writing in real time, often copiously reproduced his opponents' views in his polemics in order to take them on. Unlike today, his audience had access to both sides of the debate, and I assume with some confidence, therefore, Lenin had to be faithful in quoting opponents. What I can't determine, admittedly, is what Lenin didn't quote. Yet as the reader will see, he had to be convincing to be effective, which meant addressing his opponents' arguments in good faith.

Every so often in politics a moment occurs that suggests history in the making. Only Minerva's owl and, more encouragingly, students of history can make a definitive judgment. At the risk of sounding tempocentric, the eruption that began at the end of 2010—in Tunis, and then Cairo (where Natalie, my companion, was able to put in a brief appearance), Madison (where she spent a lot of time), New Delhi, Tel Aviv, New York, Oakland, Athens, Madrid, and then back to New Delhi, nearby Dhaka, and later the improbable Nicosia, and now, as this is being written, Istanbul and Rio de Janeiro—appears to be the long-expected (at least by some of us) breakthrough in the more than three-decade-long lull in the global class struggle. And this time the axis had finally shifted from the long-overburdened Third World to the long somnolent advanced capitalist world, especially its capital, the United States. Since it is in essence a response to one of those rare moments in the 250-year history of the

capitalist mode of production, a global economic crisis—the last time the masses have gone in motion on a near-global scale—we can have more confidence that this upsurge, despite its inevitable ebbs and flows, has staying power. Years of resistance, with all the learning opportunities that come with such challenges to business as usual, are on the agenda for the world's toilers. What is needed are those prepared to participate in and distill the lessons of those opportunities, like the 35-year old Lenin in Russia's "dress rehearsal" of 1905. This book, along with all the unseen, unacknowledged efforts in every corner of the world, is offered to aid and abet the future Lenins—to ensure that this moment will one day be the stuff of history.

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accessible to the working class, your forbearance and patience will forever be appreciated. Of course, I am ultimately responsible for what found its way into the book, but without the supportive and ever watchful staff at Palgrave Macmillan, that would not have been possible.

CHAPTER 1

WHAT MARX AND ENGELS BEQUEATHED

IN THE IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH OF THE BOLSHEVIK Revolution in 1917, Lenin engaged in a heated debate with what would be the intellectual forebears of today's social democrats. He accused them—especially Karl Kautsky, the one-time "Pope" of European socialism—of misrepresenting Marx and Engels's politics. Kautsky, he protested, "has turned Marx into a common liberal . . . [he] has beaten the world record in the liberal distortion of Marx."[1] Of particular concern was how, in Lenin's estimation, they portrayed Marx and Engels's views on parliamentary democracy and the related issue of involvement in the electoral arena. These were vital questions, he argued, that went to the very heart of the significance of what the October Revolution had just instituted, the process by which it was achieved, and the potential lessons for aspiring revolutionaries elsewhere.

This chapter provides a synopsis of Marx and Engels's views on both themes from their earliest to final pronouncements.[2] I also include a summary of what they thought about the prospects for revolution in Russia. Knowing what Marx and Engels had to say about parliamentary democracy and the electoral arena allows for a determination whether or not Lenin was justified in his accusations. A review of what they thought about the Russian movement also answers the oft-debated question concerning whether Lenin constituted continuity with the two founders of the modern communist movement—at least for these issues.

"THE EUROPEAN SPRING"

The revolutions of 1848–49 required that Marx and Engels address concretely and substantively for the first time parliamentary democracy and the electoral process. Like the participants in the "Arab Spring,"

they, along with other activists, had to grapple with all the questions that come with the overthrow of despotic regimes—how to do it, what to replace them with, and how to ensure that the previously disenfranchised are actually in power.

Prior to the midcentury upheavals, Marx and Engels had certainly thought and written about the institution of democratic rule. The daily reality of absolutist Prussia, even in its more liberal domains where the two lived, the Rhineland, almost demanded that they do so. Marx's first political writings addressed the irritant of state press censorship he faced as a cub reporter. His realization that the most influential mind for his generation, Georg Hegel, offered no real solutions to Germany's democratic deficit propelled him on the road to communist conclusions. Constitutional monarchy, Hegel's proposal, was far from "true democracy—the sovereignty of the people."[3] Rather than the world of philosophy, the study, he decided, of "actuality" or "the real movement of history" provided better results. And in the world as it existed when he set out to make his inquiries, history and "actuality" offered only two examples of political overturns that resulted in political democracy: France and the United States of America. The American case, I argue, generated the most valuable lessons for Marx.

What was so striking about the US experience for the young Marx was the combination of the most politically liberal society in the world with the grossest social inequalities, not the least of which was chattel slavery.[4] If that was the best that liberal or political democracy had to offer, then clearly something else was required for "true democracy," or "human emancipation." How do we explain this apparent contradiction? In seeking an answer Marx arrived at conclusions that made him a communist. As long as inequalities in wealth, especially property, were allowed and reproduced—political economy—then "real democracy" was impossible. The wealthy minority could and would use their resources to ensure political outcomes that privileged their interests. Then how could "real democracy"—a classless society—be realized, and what segment of society had the interest *and* capability to do so? Political developments in Europe provided the answer—the proletariat. Marx's new partner, Frederick Engels, reached similar conclusions by another route. The task for the two new communists was to link up with Europe's vanguard proletarian fighters. The price for doing so, after winning key German worker-leaders to their views, was to write a document that proclaimed their new world view.

The *Manifesto of the Communist Party* sharply distinguished itself from the programmatic stances of other socialist tendencies in its position that the prerequisite for the socialist revolution was the democratic

revolution—the necessity "to win the battle for democracy." In related pronouncements clarifying their views, they wrote that, like the Chartists in England, the German proletariat "can and must accept the *bourgeois revolution* as a precondition for the *workers' revolution*. However, they cannot for a moment accept it as their *ultimate goal*."[5] In no uncertain terms, the *Manifesto*, in four successive locations, made clear that it would take "force" to "overthrow the bourgeoisie" in order to reach the "ultimate goal." Nevertheless, they maintained to the end that the means to that goal was the conquest of the "bourgeois revolution." When a critic charged in 1892 that they ignored forms of democratic governance, Engels demurred, "Marx and I, for forty years, repeated ad nauseam that for us the democratic republic is the only political form in which the struggle between the working class and the capitalist class can first be universalized and then culminate in the decisive victory of the proletariat."[6]

COMMUNISTS FOR THE BOURGEOIS DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION

The ink was hardly dry on the *Manifesto* when the "European Spring" erupted. On February 22, 1848, street fighting and the erection of barricades began in Paris. The monarch Louis Philippe abdicated after two days and a provisional government was installed, the commencement of the Second Republic. The outcome in Paris inspired protests and uprisings in almost fifty other cities in Europe. A new phase in the age of the bourgeois democratic revolutions had opened—the struggle to institute republican government and parliamentary democracy for the first time in most countries on the continent. In France, the fight was for its reinstitution. Armed with a party, the Communist League, the body that commissioned the writing of the *Manifesto*, Marx and Engels immediately went into action. From Brussels, where they had been in exile, they moved to revolutionary Paris, where they made plans for realizing their new world view in Germany. They had to move quickly for on March 18, after two days of street fighting in Berlin, Frederick IV conceded to the demands of the demonstrators and agreed to grant a constitution.

The *Manifesto*, they recognized, needed to be supplemented given the new reality. Except perhaps for France, socialist revolution—what the document spoke to—was not on the immediate agenda in most countries, certainly not their homeland. Thus they composed, with the approval of the Central Authority of the League, the much neglected *Demands of the Communist Party of Germany*, effectively the extreme left position of the bourgeois democratic revolution. As a one-page leaflet it was disseminated

much more widely than the *Manifesto*. The first three and thirteenth of the seventeen demands are instructive:

> 1. The whole of Germany shall be declared a single and indivisible republic.
> 2. Every German, having reached the age of 21, shall have the right to vote and to be elected, provided he has not been convicted of a criminal offence.
> 3. Representatives of the people shall receive payment so that workers, too, shall be able to become members of the German parliament . . .
> 13. Complete separation of Church and State. The clergy of every denomination shall be paid only by the voluntary contributions of their congregations.[7]

As well as constituting what they considered to be the essentials of a democratic republic, these were Marx and Engels's first public pronouncements as communists on universal suffrage and representative democracy.

The *Demands* addressed another issue that the *Manifesto* didn't—the peasant question. As the document stated, demands six through nine "are to be adopted in order to reduce the communal and other burdens hitherto imposed upon the peasants and small tenant farmers without curtailing the means available for defraying state expenses and without imperiling production."[8] Other demands indicated that the document did indeed have a multiclass audience in mind: "It is to the interest of the German proletariat, the petty bourgeoisie and the small peasants to support these demands with all possible energy. Only by the realization of these demands will the millions in Germany, who have hitherto been exploited by a handful of persons and whom the exploiters would like to keep in further subjection, win the rights and attain to that power to which they are entitled as the producers of all wealth." In other words, an alliance of the proletariat, petit bourgeoisie, and small peasant—what Engels referred to in earlier writings as the alliance of "the people"—was the coalition Marx and Engels envisioned "to win the battle for democracy," the bourgeois democratic revolution.

Once back in Germany, the Rhineland in particular, Marx and Engels sought to implement their vision. The subhead of their new newspaper the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* [*New Rhineland Newspaper*] or *NRZ*, the *Organ der Demokratie* [*Organ of Democracy*], said it all. But not all Communist League members and contacts were in agreement with the perspective of the *Demands*. Regarding, first, the demand for a unified republic, Andreas Gottschalk, the League's leader in Cologne, objected on the grounds that such a call would frighten the bourgeoisie. A constitutional monarchy was less threatening, he argued. He also complained about the elections to the All-German Frankfurt Parliament and the Prussian Constitutional

Assembly in Berlin because workers would be required to vote for electors and have, thus, only an indirect vote. The elections, he urged, should be boycotted. Marx and Engels and the rest of the League leadership disagreed and argued for active participation in the elections.

Another difference of opinion concerned the coalition of class forces for instituting the democratic revolution, an issue that had implications (to be seen shortly) for Marx and Engels's electoral strategy. Not only Gottschalk but another key figure in the workers' movement, Stephen Born, thought that priority should be given to issues that directly affected the working class and looked skeptically on an alliance with the petit bourgeoisie and peasantry. This stance, which Marx and Engels criticized, betrayed the tendency on the part of craft workers still saddled with a guild or *straubinger* mentality to dismiss the importance of the democratic revolution—a kind of working-class provincialism. To be sectarian toward these other social classes threatened the realization of that revolution, given that workers constituted a minority of society. Such a posture meant effectively conceding the franchise for that fight to the bourgeoisie, who, as Marx and Engels had already begun to point out, would increasingly vacillate on the issue of democracy.

The differences of opinion that surfaced in the League pose the related question of democratic decision making within the organizations that Marx led—an issue that can only be briefly treated here. Suffice it to say that in Gottschalk's case, owing to his disagreement with the League's leadership about its electoral strategy, he was asked to tender his resignation. One of its rules stipulated that "subordination to the decisions of the League" was one of the "conditions of membership." He told Marx that he disagreed with the rule and would indeed resign because "his personal freedom was in jeopardy." What transpired gives credence to the argument that the League's norms anticipated those that Lenin is most associated with: democratic centralism.[9] Many years later Engels told a supporter in Denmark that the "labor movement depends on mercilessly criticizing existing society . . . so how can it itself avoid being criticized or try and forbid discussion? Are we then asking that others concede us the right of free speech merely so that we may abolish it again within our own ranks?"[10] There is no evidence that he and Marx ever acted contrary to this stance, including in the case of Gottschalk. It was his actions—opposition to the League's electoral strategy—and not his right to voice disagreement that were curtailed.

It is not entirely clear from the extant historical record how the League participated (if it did so) in the initial elections to the Frankfurt and Berlin parliamentary/constituent assembly bodies in May 1848.[11] What is

known is that sometime in June, Marx, acting in his capacity as the organization's leader, decided to suspend activities in its name owing mainly to perceived political realities—an issue to be revisited shortly. In its place, the editorial board of the *NRZ*, with Marx in the lead, served as the effective body to carry out its perspective and organize its work. The axis of its activities—at times quite successful—was the effort to realize the alliance of "the people"—that is, the coalition of the proletariat, the peasantry, and urban petit bourgeoisie—and the popularization of the *Demands*.

Virgin Steps into the Electoral Arena

Just as in the "Arab Spring," the course of the "European Spring" was impacted by developments in the neighborhood, and no country was more important in this regard than France—the Egypt of the revolutions of 1848–49. In hindsight, the bloody defeat of the working-class insurgents in Paris in June 1848 was the beginning of the end of the continental-wide upsurge—though, also in hindsight, it signaled the inauguration of the age of socialist revolution. The routing of the democratic forces in Vienna in October was the final nail in the coffin but, again, only in retrospect, since it would be another half year before it was clear that the democratic revolutions had been stillborn. Basically, what happened, Marx and Engels argued, is that the cowardly behavior of the bourgeoisie emboldened the reactionary forces. Ignoring whatever progress the deputies to the Prussian body had made in the constitution they were writing, Frederick IV decided to impose his own on December 5. It provided for a constitutional monarchy—granting him, thus, ultimate power. His coup d'état presented revolutionary forces with a dilemma, because his imposed constitution authorized elections for the new Prussian Assembly. To participate or not to participate in the elections, and if so, how?

For Marx, participation in the elections was obligatory. The only question was whether to vote for liberal bourgeois democrats who would oppose the constitution, or put forward candidates representing the "people's alliance" of workers, peasants, and the urban petit bourgeoisie, or abstain. He advocated for the first option. The "party of the people," in his opinion, was not strong enough to run its own candidates (a position that would undergo self-criticism the next year); it "exists in Germany as yet only in an elementary form."[12] The principled stance, as he argued at a meeting of the proletarian component of the alliance, was opposition to feudal absolutism—that is, the imposed constitution. "We are certainly the last people to desire the rule of the bourgeoisie . . . But we say to the workers and the petty bourgeoisie: it is better to suffer

in modern bourgeois society, which by its industry creates the material means for the foundation of a new society that will liberate you all." Thus it was necessary to "unite with another party [at least that wing of the bourgeoisie] also in opposition, so as not to allow our common enemy, the absolute monarchy, to win."[13]

Even though opponents of the constitution won overwhelmingly in the Rhineland, its proponents in the rest of Prussia, with the backing of the bourgeoisie, were successful. The fact that big capital supported a document objectively against its interests confirmed unambiguously for Marx that the German bourgeoisie was incapable of acting in a revolutionary way. The opposition Rhineland vote, however, which was mobilized by the joint efforts of the working class and urban petit bourgeoisie organizations of the province, convinced the *NRZ* party that the potential for building the "people's party" was better than ever. In the elections "the petty bourgeoisie, peasants and proletarians ['the specifically *red* class'] emancipated themselves from the big bourgeoisie, the upper nobility and the higher bureaucracy."[14]

About three weeks after the January elections, an opponent newspaper accused the *NRZ* tendency of having been duped by the liberal democrats, whom it supported on the expectation that they would oppose the constitution—a hope that was quickly dashed. Marx's reply is instructive because it provides perhaps the first glimpse of his and Engels' approach to electoral politics in a concrete setting. After explaining why "we put *our* own views into the background" during the elections, he declared, "Now, *after* the elections, we are again asserting our old ruthless point of view in relation not only to the Government, but also to the official opposition."[15] As for the charge of having been duped by the liberal democrats, "It could be foreseen that these gentlemen, in order to be re-elected, would now recognize the imposed Constitution. It is characteristic of the standpoint of these gentlemen that *after* the elections they are disavowing in the democratic clubs what *before* the elections they assented to at meetings of the electors. This petty, crafty liberal slyness was never the diplomacy of revolutionaries."[16]

Thus the "party of the people"—while obligated, owing to the particular setting of mid-nineteenth century Germany, to ally with the liberal democrats in the elections—should entertain no illusions about the latter and should take political distance from them as soon as the elections are concluded. A year later, to be seen shortly, Marx and Engels would distill and codify the revolutionary implications of this position by calling for complete working-class political independence from liberal democrats, specifically by running workers' candidates in future elections.

LESSONS OF STRUGGLE

With the "European Spring" in full retreat and thus diminished political space, Marx and Engels withdrew from the battlefield. In London, they, along with other League members, sought to regroup and to plan their next moves. History would reveal that their most important work were the balance sheets that they drew on the preceding two years—the lessons of struggle. Three documents/writings proved to have long shelf life.

The Address of March 1850

The first and most immediate task was to assess the performance of the League itself. As its reelected head, Marx, with the assistance of Engels, wrote on behalf of the other leaders what has come to be known as the "Address of the Central Authority to the League, March, 1850." A ten-page document (see Appendix A), it is a concise distillation of many of the conclusions they had already reached based on what they had witnessed. What makes the document so significant for present purposes is that "Lenin, who knew them [it and the "Address . . . June, 1850"] by heart," according to the Bolshevik archivist David Riazanov, "used to delight in quoting them."[17] Employing them and the other balance sheets in the heat of Russia's 1905 Revolution—a veritable laboratory of the class struggle—allowed Lenin to rightly see that "in the activities of Marx and Engels . . . the period of their participation in the mass revolutionary struggle of 1848–49 stands out as the central point. This was their point of departure when determining the future pattern of the workers' movement and democracy in different countries."[18]

The central theme of the "Address"—again, based on the experience of the two preceding years—is that the working class had to be organized independently in the expected revival of the German revolution; "independently" or some variant appears on nine of the ten pages, sometimes more than once. The suspension of the League—here Marx made an implicit self-criticism—led its members to dissolve themselves into the work of the broader democratic movement and thus conceded unnecessarily leadership in the democratic revolution to urban middle-class democrats. But the bourgeoisie's betrayal of the antifeudal cause (the *Manifesto* held open the possibility of a worker-bourgeois alliance) meant that in the revived revolution it was precisely those democrats that the working class would have to ally with—a class, however, whose track record in the two-year fight for democracy left much to be desired. Much of the document is about how to avoid another betrayal and what to do next following the successful overthrow of the feudal order, including preparation for armed struggle. The document stated repeatedly that a working-class

alliance with the "petit bourgeois democracy" was just that—an alliance and not unity. Only the working class, independently organized, could provide the leadership needed to consummate the democratic revolution. And only then could the "revolution in permanence" be assured—that is, socialist revolution.

The "Address" proposed an electoral strategy—Marx and Engels's first detailed statement. In another implicit self-criticism—of the stance that Marx took regarding the aforementioned elections to the Prussian Constituent Assembly in January 1850—Marx and Engels laid out a perspective designed to avoid the kind of betrayal that the liberal bourgeoisie had committed in the electoral arena. In the next elections to the national assembly, workers had to pursue a course completely independent of not only the liberal bourgeoisie but the petit bourgeoisie as well. To be clear, what they outlined was a strategy for the postfeudal period where a degree of political democracy existed for the working class to contest elections. Most relevant are the instructions for the working-class party:

> [T]hat everywhere worker's candidates are put up alongside the bourgeois-democratic candidates, that they are as far as possible members of the League, and that their election is promoted by all means possible. *Even when there is no prospect whatever of their being elected, the workers must put up their own candidates in order to preserve their independence, to count their forces and to lay before the public their revolutionary attitude and party standpoint*. In this connection they must not allow themselves to be bribed by such arguments of the democrats as, for example, that by so doing they are splitting the democratic party and giving the reactionaries the possibility of victory. The ultimate purpose of all such phrases is to dupe the proletariat. *The advance which the proletariat party is bound to make by such independent action is infinitely more important than the disadvantage that might be incurred by the presence of a few reactionaries in the representative body*. If from the outset the democrats come out resolutely and terroristically against the reactionaries, the influence of the latter in the elections will be destroyed in advance.[19]

The first sentence I've italicized makes clear, in no uncertain terms, that for Marx and Engels electoral victories were subordinate to independent working-class political action. Rather than the number of seats won, the test of an election for the working-class party was how much it revealed its real strength—"their forces." Implicit here is an unarticulated way of how "to count" other than "being elected." Related and just as important is how well the party conducted itself in the election. Did it truly "lay before the public their revolutionary attitude and party standpoint"? Also significant are the subsequent sentences, because they address the conundrum

that would bedevil many a progressive and working-class party in the next century and afterward—the "wasted vote" and "lesser of two evils" dilemmas in the electoral arena. Marx and Engels asserted, again unequivocally, that the potential gains from independent working-class political action outweighed the risks of "reactionaries" being elected. As for what they meant by "terroristically," one can only speculate, because nothing here or in subsequent pronouncements provides clarification.

Three Notable Balance Sheets

Marx and Engels produced three other assessments of the 1848–49 events that make points relevant to this discussion. One has to do with how they saw universal suffrage: what it could and could not do. In a series of articles written in 1850 that came to be called *Class Struggles in France*, Marx drew a balance sheet on the French revolution. He noted the "fundamental contradiction" of the political arrangements that came with the new provisional government and the constitution under which it governed:

> The fundamental contradiction of this constitution, however, consists in the following: The classes whose social slavery the constitution is to perpetuate—proletariat, peasantry, petty bourgeoisie—it puts in possession of political power through universal suffrage. And from the class whose old social power it sanctions, the bourgeoisie, it withdraws the political guarantees of this power. It forces the political rule of the bourgeoisie into democratic conditions, which at every moment help the hostile classes to victory and jeopardize the very foundations of bourgeois society. From the ones [first group] it demands that they should not go forward from political to social emancipation; from the others that they should not go back from social to political restoration.[20]

The granting of universal manhood suffrage created an inherently unstable situation for the bourgeoisie that could "jeopardize" its interests. The fundamental incompatibility between the interests of labor and capital was aggravated by the newly obtained political rights of the working classes. But even with universal suffrage, the bourgeois character of the constitution prevented the working class from going "forward from political to social emancipation."[21]

Implicit in Marx's argument is a crucially important distinction. The "possession of political power through universal suffrage" for the working class and its allies was not to be conflated with the actual exercising of that power for "social emancipation." The latter would require inroads on the "very foundations of bourgeois society"—that is, private property—exactly what the constitution prohibited. The "fundamental contradiction," Marx

argued, was resolved in May 1850 when the National Assembly, representing the interests of the bourgeoisie, abolished universal suffrage. Alexis de Tocqueville, one of the body's leading lights, had characterized its rule, after the crushing of the Parisian proletariat in June 1848, as a "parliamentary dictatorship." For Marx, it was the "bourgeois dictatorship."[22]

Marx put the actions of the Assembly in perspective. "Universal suffrage had fulfilled its mission. The majority of the people had passed through the school of development, which is all that universal suffrage can serve for in a revolutionary period. It had to be set aside by a revolution or by the reaction."[23] For the revolutionary process, universal suffrage was means to an end, not an end in itself.

The end of universal suffrage emboldened, as Marx had anticipated, Louis Bonaparte to end the Second Republic with his coup d'état in December 1851. In his well-known analysis of the coup written in 1852, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Marx pointed out that any assessment of bourgeois democracy had to take context into account both in space and time, specifically continental Europe on the one hand and America on the other. In Europe in the middle of the nineteenth century, where capitalist relations of production were rapidly expanding along with the necessary class differentiation within feudal governmental forms, the republic was the governmental form that an insurgent bourgeoisie needed. In the United States, which lacked a feudal background and where class relations and thus the class struggle were still fluid and not fixed, the republic by the middle of the nineteenth century had come to embody the conservative form of bourgeois rule.

Engels drew a balance sheet on the German revolution also in a series of articles titled *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Germany*. Although important gains, following mass working-class revolts in Berlin and Vienna in March 1848, were made in the convening (based on a limited franchise) of both a Prussian and all-German constituent assembly, respectively in Berlin and Frankfort, both proved incapable of leading a fight to advance and thus save the revolution. As was true with the National Assembly in Paris, the middle-class reformers in the two bodies (almost a fourth in Frankfort were professors on the state payroll) were more afraid of the masses in motion than the threat of the Prussian monarchy to end this brief democratic opening. Those in Frankfort honestly but tragically believed that the writing of a democratic constitution, more liberal than what was produced in Paris, would be sufficient for instituting liberal democracy in Germany for the first time. Engels is unsparing in his criticism of them:

> These poor, weak-minded men, during the course of their generally very obscure lives, had been so little accustomed to anything like success, that

> they actually believed their paltry amendments, passed with two or three votes' majority, would change the face of Europe. They had, from the beginning of their legislative career, been more imbued than any other faction of the Assembly with that incurable malady, *parliamentary cretinism*, a disorder which penetrates its unfortunate victims with the solemn conviction that the whole world, its history and future, are governed and determined by a majority of votes in that particular representative body which has the honor to count them among its members, and that all and everything going on outside the walls of their house—wars, revolutions, railway-constructing, colonizing of whole new continents, California gold discoveries, Central American canals, Russian armies, and whatever else may have some little claim to influence upon the destinies of mankind—is nothing compared with the incommensurable events hinging upon the important question, whatever it may be, just at that moment occupying the attention of their honorable house.[24]

Engels's biting sarcasm gets to the heart of his and Marx's view of the legislative arena. While the parliamentary process was not to be ignored and could be of benefit for the revolutionary process, the developments that were decisive in understanding the course of history took place not within but rather outside its apparently hermetic walls—not the least important being revolutions. Marx's previously quoted comment about the fate of universal suffrage in the French upheaval—"It had to be set aside by a revolution or by the reaction"—is an instantiation of his claim. What's decisive, in other words, in the fate of the electoral process itself takes place outside its very parameters. No one, as we'll see, identified as much with this position as did Lenin. "Parliamentary cretinism" came to be his favorite label for those who failed to understand this basic political truth.

"A New Era" in the Class Struggle

The end of the "European Spring" in 1849 resulted in a more than decade-long lull in revolutionary politics in that part of the world. While Marx and Engels, in their new residence, closely watched British politics and made occasional comments about its electoral arena, it was only in 1863, when Marx declared that "the ERA OF REVOLUTION has now FAIRLY OPENED IN EUROPE once more," that they would not only engage in a sustained discussion about the electoral arena but actually act to shape it in the interest of the working class.[25] Presciently, Marx, speculating on the outcome of the German revolution, said at the end of 1848 that its fate was tied to the successful outcome of the worldwide revolutionary process that combined national liberation and antifeudal and

anticapitalist struggles "waged in Canada as in Italy, in East Indies as in Prussia, in Africa as on the Danube."[26] Armed with a global perspective, he accurately recognized in 1860 the importance of two developments that foreshadowed a resurgence of the class struggle in Europe—the attack of the abolitionist John Brown on Harper's Ferry, Virginia, and the abolishment of servitude by the Russian Czar. Ending slavery and other precapitalist modes of exploitation was essential for the democratic revolution, a prerequisite for labor's struggle against capital.

THE INTERNATIONAL WORKING MEN'S ASSOCIATION

If there is one thing Europe's working classes learned once the US Civil War was under way, it was that *their* governments did not represent their interests, particularly when it came to foreign policy. This was especially true for British workers. London, beckoning to the call of the textile barons and their need for Southern cotton, took the side of the slave owners and threatened to intervene on their behalf. Despite the fact that textile workers in their thousands lost their jobs owing to the Northern blockade of ships taking Southern cotton across the Atlantic, they instinctively and consciously mobilized to support the antislavery cause and oppose London's threats. Workers increasingly recognized that they had to have their own foreign policy. This exigency was one of the factors that led to the founding in 1864 of the International Working Men's Association (IWMA), the First International.

From the beginning, Marx, who had already lobbied in the press on behalf of the Northern cause, played a key role in the new organization as the representative of the German workers and soon emerged as its effective leader. The central message of the founding document he wrote, *Inaugural Address*, was that while a reform such as the British Parliament's limiting (in law at least) the work day to ten hours was a victory for the working class, "the lords of land and the lords of capital will always use their political privileges for the defence and perpetuation of their economic monopolies . . . they will continue to lay every possible impediment in the way of the emancipation of labour . . . *To conquer political power has therefore become the duty of the working classes*."[27] What this meant and how it would be implemented would take another seven years before it was concretized. In the meantime, the main task was to ensure the survival of the organization. Instrumental in doing so, it earned for Marx the moral authority needed for that moment.

In the second foundational document of the IWMA, also written by Marx, *Provisional Rules of the Association*, the other central message that

guided its work was stated at the very beginning: "[T]he emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves."[28] The key lesson of the 1848 revolutions weighed heavily on Marx's brain when he wrote this. Unlike that of the *Inaugural Address*, this message was given force and executed within weeks of the organization's founding. After more than a month of working with some of the petit-bourgeois figures on the General Council (GC), the executive committee of the IWMA, Marx told Engels that "one has to be all the more careful the moment men of letters, members of the bourgeoisie or semi-literary people become involved in the organization."[29] To address that concern, Marx initiated organizational norms that severely limited middle-class participation in the IWMA leadership. When a prominent lawyer who had collaborated with it sought a seat on the GC, Marx convinced other members to reject his request. "I believe him an honest and sincere man; at the same time, he is nothing and can be nothing save a Bourgeois politician." Exactly because the lawyer aspired to a seat in Parliament, "he ought to be excluded from entering our committee. We cannot become *le piedestal* for small parliamentary ambitions . . . [Otherwise] others of his class will follow, and our efforts, till now successful at freeing the English working class movement from all middle class or aristocratic patronage, will have been in vain."[30] From its commencement, therefore, Marx opposed any attempts to turn the International into an electoral conduit for, certainly, the petit bourgeoisie and bourgeoisie itself. Whether and how to make it into such a vehicle for the proletariat was a discussion and debate that eventually would take place.

With its headquarters in London, the IWMA could not avoid the electoral arena. Six months after its founding, the GC, with Marx's support, helped to found the Reform League, the working-class organization that played a key role in pressuring Parliament to enact the 1867 Reform Act, which extended the suffrage to the middle class and parts of the better-off workers. At Marx's urging, the GC had agreed that it would only support the demand of universal manhood suffrage. A year later, however, he reported that two of the GC's trade unionists "[W. R.] Cremer and [George] Odger have both *betrayed* us in the Reform League, where they came to a *compromise with the bourgeoisie* against our wishes."[31] The two gave in to the liberal bourgeois elements in the League who would only support household and not universal suffrage. Not only was the GC's perspective compromised by Cremer and Odger, but the fledgling organization's own agenda suffered as a result of the time and energy that its members devoted to League activities (one of the main reasons why the IWMA did not hold a congress in its first year). At the beginning of 1871,

Marx wrote to a former Chartist leader who he still had relations with, "I regret saying, most of the workmen's representatives use their position in our council only as a means of furthering their own petty personal aims. To get into the House of Commons by hook or crook, is their *ultima Thule* ['most cherished goal'], and they like nothing better than rubbing elbows with the lords and M.P.'s by whom they are petted and demoralised."[32] What Marx witnessed (not for the first time in English politics) was the labor movement—or to be more precise, its leadership—subordinating the interests of the proletariat to those of the bourgeoisie. The International would have to institute explicit policies to prevent that from happening again.

A possible alternative to the class-collaborationist tendencies in the labor movement was what was being instituted in Germany. Beginning in 1862 the workers' movement, centered in Berlin and Leipzig, stirred anew after a decade of hibernation. Owing to his activist past in the 1848 events as well as his ties to Marx and Engels, Ferdinand Lassalle was asked by the workers to lead the fledgling body, the General Association of German Workers, founded in May 1863. However, his help came with a price—the insertion of ideas and a mode of functioning that were antithetical to the interests of independent working-class political action. While Marx and Engels waged a relentless campaign against his influence in the German worker's movement after his death in 1864—he was mortally wounded in a duel—they had to be careful in taking him on during his brief tenure as the movement's leader in order not to throw out the baby, the first truly German workers' association, with the bath water of Lassalleanism.

A year earlier, after a visit from Lassalle, Marx had concluded that there was no basis any longer of a "political PARTNERSHIP" with him, "since all we had in common politically were a few remote objectives."[33] Aside from the fact that he "gives himself all the airs of a future working men's dictator," Marx objected to his panaceas for the social emancipation of the German proletariat, among which was universal suffrage and Prussian state socialism. As Marx sarcastically noted to Engels, the "workers . . . are to agitate for *general suffrage*, after which they are to send people like himself into the Chamber of Deputies, armed 'with the naked sword of science.'"[34] Again, Marx was sober about universal suffrage. He also objected to Lassalle's proposal that "they organize workers' factories, for which the *state* advances the capital and, BY AND BY, these institutions spread throughout the country."[35] Despite its deformed birth, the General Association of German Workers was the best the German working class had to offer, and from afar Marx and Engels sought to shape its development

and the larger German workers' movement. A successful breakthrough came in 1869 with the formation of an alternative that they helped to nurture: the Social Democratic Workers Party. It was able to win two seats—held by August Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht—in the Reichstag, the best example of independent working-class political action.

In addition to the class collaborationists, there was another tendency in and around the IWMA that Marx and Engels had to confront—the anarchists. Under the influence of Mikhail Bakunin, they basically disagreed with what was implicit in the central messages of the founding documents of the International that Marx had written—namely, that the working class should employ the political arena as a means for its emancipation. What was implicit, Marx increasingly realized, would have to be made explicit.

After the victory of the Union over the slavocracy in the United States, the most important political event in the history of the International occurred in Paris in the spring of 1871 when the working class rebelled and held power for almost three months—the Commune. Marx's most enduring contribution to the Communards was his *The Civil War in France*, published within a month of its demise on behalf of the IWMA. As well as a defense of the insurgents, it provides an analysis of what took place and distills the most important lesson of the Commune. After quoting from the manifesto that the Commune's Central Committee issued to justify its actions on March 18—"The Proletarians of Paris . . . have understood that it is their imperious duty and their absolute right to render themselves masters of their own destinies, by seizing upon the governmental powers"—Marx declared, "But the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made State machinery, and wield it for its own purpose."[36] The insurgents quickly realized that in order to carry out fundamental social transformations to advance the interests of Paris's working masses, a radically new form of democratic governance, the Commune, had to be instituted. The liberal democratic state of the Third Republic was at best inadequate—not unlike the Second Republic that emerged in February 1848. So important was this conclusion that Marx and Engels repeated it in the Preface to the 1872 German edition of the *Manifesto*, the only correction they ever made to the founding document of the modern communist movement. The revolutionary program in the second part, they noted, had "in some details become antiquated. One thing especially was proved by the Commune, *viz, that* 'the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made State machinery, and wield it for its own purposes.'"[37] The bourgeois republic, in other words, could

not be a vehicle for socialist transformation—a lesson either ignored or unknown by twentieth-century social democracy, to its peril.

PLANTING THE SEED FOR WORKING-CLASS POLITICAL PARTIES

The long-simmering debate within the IWMA about working-class political action was finally put on its agenda at a meeting that convened in London in September 1871. The basic question was whether the abstentionist-anarchist perspective of Bakunin's followers or the class-collaborationist views of the English trade unionists were the only alternatives for workers. In his intervention, Engels distilled the essence of his and Marx's politics:

> [F]or us abstention is impossible. The workers' party already exist as a political party in most countries . . . The experience of real life and the political oppression imposed on them by existing governments . . . force the workers to concern themselves with politics, whether they wish or not. To preach abstention would be to push them into the arms of bourgeois politics. Especially in the aftermath of the Paris Commune which placed the political action of the proletariat on the agenda, abstention is quite impossible.
>
> We seek the abolition of Classes. What is the means of achieving it? The political domination of the proletariat . . . revolution is the supreme act of politics; whoever wants it must also want the means, political action, which prepares for it, which gives the workers the education for revolution and without which the workers will always be duped . . . But the politics which are needed are working class politics; the workers' party must be constituted not as the tail of some bourgeois party, but as an independent party with its own objective, its own politics.
>
> The political freedoms, the right of assembly and association and the freedom of the press, these are our weapons—should we fold our arms and abstain if they seek to take them away from us? It is said that every political act implies recognition of the status quo. But when this status quo gives us the means of protesting against it, then to make use of these means is not to recognize the status quo.[38]

Engels's speech was clearly directed at the anarchists. Their abstentionist line, however revolutionary it might sound, "would . . . push [the workers] into the arms of bourgeois politics" or make them be party, unwittingly perhaps, to the class-collaborationist line of the English trade unionists. Only if the workers had their own "independent party with its own politics" could they avoid the deadly trap of "bourgeois politics." Hence workers not only had an inherent interest in defending

basic democratic rights but were obligated to do so since their existence gave them the space to further their own class interests. The alternative, therefore, to both the Bakuninist and class-collaborationist lines was independent working-class political action, the bottom line of both the Inaugural Address and the Preamble—and the heart and soul of the politics of Marx and Engels for at least a quarter of a century. The task now, seven years after both documents had been adopted and after the experience of the Commune, was to make this line a living reality.

In one of his speeches at the London conference under this point, Marx specifically addressed the matter of workers in parliaments, which "must not be thought that it is of minor importance." When governments prevent duly elected workers' representatives from exercising their parliamentary rights, "the effect of this severity and intolerance on the people is profound." He, too, as had Engels in a letter to Spaniard comrades, offered the German example for what was possible when more political space existed:

> Whereas if, like [August] Bebel and [Wilhelm] Liebknecht, they are able to speak from this platform, the entire world can hear them—in one way or the other it means considerable publicity for our principles . . . When during the [Franco-Prussian War] Bebel and Liebknecht embarked on the struggle against it, and to disclaim responsibility on behalf of the working class with regard to what was happening—the whole of Germany was shaken, and even Munich . . . was the scene of great demonstrations demanding an end to the war.
>
> The governments are hostile to us. We must answer them by using every possible means at our disposal, getting workers into parliament is so much gaining over them, but we must choose the right men and watch out for the Tolains.[39]

Worker participation in parliaments, therefore, was a means to an end—"a platform . . . for our principles." In another set of minutes, Marx is recorded as having said, "Since the July Revolution [1830] the bourgeoisie has always made every effort to unnoticeably create obstacles, in the workers' way. Our newspapers are not reaching the masses—the speakers' platform is the best means of publicity." Again, the importance of the parliamentary "platform" or rostrum is emphasized as a means to disseminate party ideas especially when other avenues were blocked; no one, as we'll see, again, took this advice more to heart than Lenin.

Marx repeated Engels's point about the logic of the abstentionists' "revolutionary" posture: "[B]y adjourning politics until after the violent struggle they are hurling the people into the formalist, bourgeois opposition—which it is our duty to combat, as well as the powers-that-be."

In concluding both his remarks and the debate, he addressed what other speakers had raised: governmental repression of the IWMA in the aftermath of the Commune. "We must tell [these governments] . . . we know that you are the armed force opposing the proletariat—we shall act against you peacefully wherever possible—and take up arms when that is necessary."[40] Thus if the peaceful road through the employment of basic democratic rights and the parliamentary option was closed to the workers' movement, then the International was prepared to pursue armed struggle.

Independent working-class political action—this was the essence of Marx and Engels's intervention. This, precisely, was the core of their *Address of March 1850*, including the need for workers to have their own candidates in elections—the main lesson they drew from the 1848–49 upheavals. They won the overwhelming majority of the conference attendees to this perspective and were authorized to later draw up the resolutions as well as a new set of rules agreed to at the conference. A month later they presented to the GC the now famous resolution "IX. Political Action of the Working Class," which incorporated the majority sentiment on this debate.[41] A year later at a more representative meeting, The Hague Congress—effectively the last for the International—the resolution was adopted by the delegates against the opposition of the Bakuninists. The resolution's historic significance is that it constitutes the first explicit call for what would eventually be Europe's mass working-class political parties. While much would need to be done to make it a reality, it nevertheless gave those who were predisposed to move in that direction the authority,—that is, the prestige of the International—to go forth boldly.

THE FIGHT FOR PROGRAMMATIC INTEGRITY

Between 1875, three years after The Hague Congress, and 1894 more than 11 working-class parties in Europe were founded—the largest block at any one time.[42] These were the parties that came together to later form the Socialist or Second International and to constitute European social democracy. Hobbled by poor health in his final years, Marx provided what assistance he could to these fledgling organizations, particularly the French party. With his death in 1883 it fell to Engels, who outlived him by 12 years, to continue that work. Even before then the two recognized that their assistance and counsel could not guarantee that these parties actually adhered to and would remain loyal to their program. Thus until his last days Engels waged a concerted campaign to try to ensure fealty to his and his partner's lifelong project.

GERMAN SOCIAL DEMOCRACY AND THE "PARLIAMENTARY DISEASE"

The German movement, as noted earlier, had been in the vanguard of independent working-class political action—a source of inspiration for others. Marx and Engels, aware of its problematic birth—Lassalle's panaceas—were more sober. Thus their optimism when the Social Democratic Workers Party, closer to their views, was founded in 1869 as an alternative to the Lassallean-influenced General Association of German Workers. In 1875, however, the two organizations fused to form the German Socialist Workers Party (SAPD). Within a couple of years Marx detected problems, as he explained to a longtime comrade: "In Germany a corrupt spirit is asserting itself in our party, not so much among the masses as among the leaders (upper class and 'workers'). The compromise with the Lassalleans has led to further compromise with other waverers . . . not to mention a whole swarm of immature undergraduates and overwise graduates who want to give socialism a 'higher, idealistic' orientation, i.e. substitute for the materialist basis . . . a modern mythology with its goddesses of Justice, Liberty, Equality and *Fraternité.*"[43] What Marx detected in 1877 were the pernicious effects of liberalism on the workers' movement and what would later morph into "reformism" and "opportunism." As for one of the transmission belts for these influences, "immature undergraduates and over-wise graduates," more will be explained about them shortly.

When both the Social Democratic Workers Party and the General Association of German Workers made significant gains in the 1874 Reichstag elections—from two to six seats for the former, and three seats for the first time for the latter—Engels warned, "it can hardly be doubted that measures to restrict the franchise will follow, though not for a year or two."[44] He was off by two years, because it was not until 1878 that Bismarck, fearful of the SAPD—again, the product of the fusion in 1875—had it banned. Neither Engels nor Marx was under any illusion that Bismarck or any bourgeois government would respect its own legal order when it came to the electoral arena.

While Bismarck's Anti-Socialist Law banned the SADP and its press in 1878, it provided for an important exemption; it allowed the party to run candidates in elections and hold seats in the provincial and national Reichstags. An immediate issue posed by the law was how, while in exile in Zurich, the editorial committee for the new party organ, the *Sozialdemodrat*, should function in relation to the rest of the party and its elected leadership. The broader political question was whether the party should accommodate itself to Bismarck's crackdown by adopting a more moderate posture or maintain its revolutionary stance.

THE CIRCULAR LETTER OF 1879

The proposed editorial committee in Zurich consisted of what Marx derisively called a "social-philanthropist" ("the first man to buy his way into the party") and two adherents of Eugen Dühring (the target of Engels's famous polemic *Anti-Dühring*), one of whom was the then 29-year-old Eduard Bernstein. When this committee published an article that confirmed their worst fears, Marx and Engels reacted with a stinging denunciation. Their letter to Bebel and the rest of the party leadership, which has come to be known as the *Circular Letter*, ranks, as Hal Draper rightly argues, in importance with the *Manifesto*, the *Address of March 1850*, the *Inaugural Address*, and the *Civil War in France*.[45]

Written by Engels with Marx's collaboration, the document has two key themes. One, it unequivocally affirmed the historic program of the communist party in opposition to Bernstein (one of the "over-wise graduates" Marx had in mind two years earlier) and the other authors of the article that Engels sardonically called the "Manifesto of the Zurich Trio." In their "Manifesto," Bernstein et al. had proposed that the SAPD abandon its proletarian orientation, make an appeal to both the petit bourgeoisie and the bourgeoisie, and adopt a less threatening posture toward Bismarck's regime. "If," Engels replied, "they [the 'trio'] think as they write, they ought to leave the party or at least resign from office [i.e., the editorial committee]. If they don't, it is tantamount to admitting that they intend to use their official position to combat the party's proletarian character. Hence, the party is betraying itself if it allows them to remain in office."[46] Engels threw down the gauntlet because the clear implication of their position, as he bitingly and sarcastically put it, was

> Therefore elect bourgeois!
>
> In short, the working class is incapable of emancipating itself by its own efforts. In order to do so it must place itself under the direction of 'educated and propertied' bourgeois who alone have 'the time and the opportunity' to become conversant with what is good for the workers. And, secondly, the bourgeois are not to be combatted—not on your life—but *won over* by vigorous propaganda.[47]

The goal of the "trio," in Engels's skillful dissection of their diluted politics, was "to relieve the bourgeois of the last trace of anxiety" by showing it "clearly and convincingly that the red spectre really is just a spectre and doesn't exist." But to shore up its left flank, the "Manifesto" made clear that the party's "programme is not to be *relinquished*, but merely *postponed*—for some unspecified period." More precisely, "They accept it [the 'programme']—not for themselves in their own lifetime

but posthumously, as an heirloom for their children and their children's children. Meanwhile they devote their 'whole strength and energies' to all sorts of trifles, tinkering away at the capitalist social order so that at least something should appear to be done without at the same time alarming the bourgeoisie."[48] Engels's sarcasm resonates so well because its target is ever so present. Precisely because "we are still only too familiar with all these catch-phrases of 1848," could Engels and Marx be so insightful about the "trio." "These are the same people . . . whose fear of any kind of action in 1848 and '49 held back the movement at every step and finally brought about its downfall; the same people who never see reaction and then are dumbfounded to find themselves at last in a blind alley in which neither resistance nor flight is possible."[49] Engels then showed how the *Communist Manifesto* had foreseen this kind of development in the German movement and suggested what to do about it. Those who truly believe what "their Manifesto"—namely, that of the "trio"—put forward should form their own party, a "Social-Democratic petty-bourgeois party" separate and apart from a "Social-Democratic Workers' Party" with whom the latter "could negotiate with . . . and, according to circumstances, form an alliance with."[50] Under no circumstances should they be permitted to be in the leadership of the SAPD, and they should "remain aware that a break with them is only a matter of time."

The other major issue in Engels's *Circular* concerned the SAPD's Reichstag group or *Fraktion*. Here he addressed a problem that would bedevil many a twentieth-century workers' party wherever it had a parliamentary group—that is, how to make it accountable to the party as a whole. Engels, again in opposition to the Zurich "trio," came to the defense of a rank-and-file SAPD member who had publicly and sharply criticized a Fraktion member for voting for one of Bismarck's capitalism-from-above ventures—a whiff of the "stench" left behind by Lassalle's support to Bismarckian "state socialism." Engels agreed that the vote had "infringed party discipline" and that the deputy deserved to be handled "roughly" since the SAPD's program had specifically opposed both indirect taxation (the means by which the venture would be financed) and the "first and fundamental rule of our party tactics: not a farthing for this government" (from the slogan that Liebknecht made famous in 1871, *"diesem system keinen Mann und keinen Groschen!"*—"for this system, not one man and not one penny!").[51] In a didactic letter to Bebel two months later, Engels made the point—consistent with his and Marx's fundamental views—often forgotten by many a "social-democrat" in the subsequent century that warrants highlighting: "Social-Democratic deputies must

always uphold the vital principle of consenting to nothing that increases the power of the government vis-à-vis the people."[52]

However despicable the vote of the deputy or the *Fraktion* as a whole for the Bismarckian project, the bigger problem was the uproar, as reflected by the "trio," of the party leadership to the rank-and-file criticism of the vote. "[H]as German Social-Democracy indeed been infected with the parliamentary disease, believing that, with the popular vote, the Holy Ghost is poured upon those elected, that meetings of the faction [*Fraktion*] are transformed into infallible councils and factional resolutions into sacrosanct dogma?"[53] To combat this "disease," what Engels labeled in 1850 "parliamentary cretinism," the party had to uphold the norm that the parliamentary representatives be subordinate to the will of the party as a whole.

Clearly, it was the issue of the composition of the editorial committee that most concerned Marx and Engels. In concluding the *Circular*, Engels warned that if the "trio" constituted the new committee, "then all we could do—much though we regret it—would be publicly to declare ourselves opposed to it and abandon the solidarity with which we have hitherto represented the German party abroad. But we hope it won't come to *that*."[54] In terms less diplomatic, Marx explained to a longtime comrade a day later what was at stake: "Engels has written a circular (letter) to Bebel, etc. (just for *private circulation* among the German leaders, of course), in which our point of view is plainly set forth. So the gentlemen are forewarned and, moreover, are well enough acquainted with us to know that this means bend or break! If they wish to compromise themselves, *tant pis*! In no circumstances shall we allow them to compromise *us*. . . they are already so far infected with parliamentary cretinism as to believe themselves *above criticism* and to denounce criticism as a *crime de lèse majesté!*"[55]

In effect, the *Circular* constitutes Marx and Engels's major programmatic statement against opportunism or what would later be called reformism or revisionism. That one of the targets of their polemic, Bernstein, would some two decades later come to be called the father of revisionism is probably no accident. No other joint document of Marx and Engels so clearly anticipated and critiqued the course of social democracy in the twentieth century. Politically, it stands in direct descent from the *Manifesto* and the *1850 March Address*. That the document only became public in its entirety for the first time in 1931, in a Stalinist publication, when it was then in Moscow's interest to expose the reformist character of social democracy, is also not fortuitous.

Marx and Engels's threat of "bend or break" to the leadership of the SAPD forced Bebel, accompanied by Bernstein, to travel to London to resolve their differences with the "old ones"—testimony to their influence and what was at stake. Though the matter was settled to the satisfaction of both parties, allowing Bernstein to become editor of the *Sozialdemokrat*, the subsequent history of the party and Bernstein himself revealed that the issue of reformism in the German party would continue to be a problem.[56]

Lest it be construed that the "old ones" were unduly harsh with the German leadership, Marx's comment to the aforementioned longtime comrade a few months later is instructive: "[W]e have eschewed any kind of *public* intervention. It does not befit those who are peacefully—*comparativement parlant*—ensconced abroad to contribute to the gratification of government and bourgeoisie by doing anything to aggravate the position of those who are operating in the homeland under the most difficult circumstances and at considerable personal sacrifice."[57] Neither did they view themselves acting authoritatively—in the worst sense of the term, by imposing their views. Two years later Engels described to Bernstein their modus operandi vis-à-vis national parties: "[A]ny attempt to influence people against their will would only do us harm, destroy the old trust that dates from the International."[58]

THE ELECTORAL ROAD TO SOCIALISM—"PEACEFUL" OR "FORCIBLE"?

Once working-class parties were able to participate in the electoral arena, Marx and Engels paid close attention. In the aftermath of the adoption of Resolution IX by The Hague Congress of the IWMA, this was even more the case. Engels's brief but very rich comments to one of the leaders of the Social Democratic Workers Party about its gains in the 1874 Reichstag elections are exemplary:

> Jacoby's conduct is irresponsible. If he did not wish to take up his seat he should have requested the Party Committee in advance just to put him forward as a mere "name" in completely hopeless constituencies. The workers have neither the money nor the time to squander on empty gestures of this sort. The most strenuous efforts will be needed to get Bracke in, and victory there is doubly important since it is in a *rural* constituency. Jacoby has disqualified himself for good with this. The man is just *too much of a sage.* And his reasons are so trivial and vulgar-democratic! He hurls abuse at *force* as something reprehensible in itself, even though we all know that when it comes down to it, nothing can be achieved without force. If [one of the liberal party candidates] had written such things, that would not be

> so bad . . . but a candidate of our party! . . . And in fact it is all very fine and logical: on the one hand, he rejects *force*, on the other, parliamentary *legal* action—what is left then but pure Bakuninist abstention?[59]

Since it's not possible to do justice here to all that Engels raises, I note only the bare essentials. First, Johann Jacoby had been a left-wing liberal in the ill-fated Frankfurt and Prussian assemblies in the 1848–49 events, one of the "parliamentary cretins" that Engels ridiculed. Disillusioned by his parliamentary ambitions owing to Fredrick IV's imposition of the Imperial Constitution, he gravitated to more radical politics. He was a Social Democratic Workers Party candidate for the 1874 Reichstag elections and in the second round of voting actually won a seat representing a Leipzig constituency. However, to the party and Engels's consternation, he refused to take the seat in order to register his protest against the imposed constitution.

Engels's angry reaction is instructive. Working-class political parties had to take elections seriously—which meant collective decision making—despite how undemocratic they might be. Unlike Jacoby, he was under no illusion that the parliamentary arena was the venue for real change; it offered at best an opportunity to propagandize their ideas—as he and his partner had explained in the *Address of March 1850*. And when a real opportunity for winning presented itself, being serious was even more necessary. Protests about the democratic deficit were of more value from the parliamentary "platform" or rostrum than Jacoby's liberal gesture. What he protested against, that it was "force" that promulgated the constitution, revealed his own political naïveté. "We"—that is, communists and not "vulgar democrats"—"all know that when it comes down to it, nothing can be achieved without force." Last, if Jacoby was on principle opposed to the use of "force" and was unwilling to use available political space ("*legal* action"), then all that remained for him was an abstentionist posture—what Marx and Engels polemicized against at the London Conference of the IWMA.

Engels's comment about the double importance of winning "in a *rural* constituency" is most significant. It underscores one of the key lessons of the 1848–49 experience and points to the future: the importance of using the electoral arena to build the worker-peasant alliance. No alliance was more necessary in Marx and Engels's strategy for working-class ascendancy. Finally, as the results of the 1874 Reichstag elections were becoming available, Engels, three weeks earlier, applauded what he considered to be the correct conduct for working-class parties in elections that required runoffs: "[F]irst vote for our own man, and then, if it is clear that he won't get in on the second round, vote for the opponent of the government,

whoever he happens to be."[60] There is no evidence that Engels ever abandoned this runoff strategy.

Commenting on the Reichstag debate leading up to Bismarck's crackdown in 1878, Marx made a more general observation about force and the parliamentary road to social transformation.

> An historical development can remain "peaceful" only for so long as its progress is not forcibly obstructed by those wielding social power at the time. If in England, for instance, or the United States, the working class were to gain a majority in PARLIAMENT or CONGRESS, they could, by lawful means, rid themselves of such laws and institutions as impeded their development . . . However, the "peaceful" movement might be transformed into a "forcible" one by resistance on the part of those interested in restoring the former state of affairs; if (as in the American Civil War and the French Revolution) they are put down by *force*, it is as rebels against "lawful" force.[61]

If, even in the United States and England, there was some likelihood that the peaceful road was ruled out—in a speech six years earlier after The Hague Congress Marx appeared to be more certain about such an option in both countries[62]—then clearly it was unlikely in Bismarck's Germany. Its impending crackdown against the SAPD "is the necessary prelude to forcible revolutions."[63] Until the end of his life Engels waged an uphill battle within the German party against the "disease" of parliamentary cretinism to drive home this point.

Bismarck's ban of the SAPD gave—perhaps intentionally—its parliamentary *Fraktion*, which tended to be to the right of the membership, far more influence in the party than before. While Engels had no objection to the *Fraktion* taking the lead given the constraints of the ban on open party activities, it functioned, he told Kautsky six months after the ban was lifted in 1890, as "a dictatorship that, was of course, essential and excellently managed."[64] He held, however, that "they can neither demand nor impose the implicit obedience [of the membership] that could be demanded by the former party leadership, *specifically* elected for the purpose. Least of all under present circumstances, without a press, without mass meetings."[65] In this, Engels was stating an essential principle later associated with democratic centralist organizing—that is, centralism in action required full democracy in decision making. Because he had more faith in the party's ranks than its leadership, he was especially concerned that they have sufficient freedom of action—an issue to be returned to shortly.

Engels also reiterated that elections were important, but under capitalism, at least, they not an end in themselves. In his newly published

book, *Origin of the Family, Private Property and State*, which was reprinted as an excerpt in *Sozialdemokrat* in connection with the upcoming 1884 Reichstag elections, one of the key political conclusions he made was that "universal suffrage is the gauge of the maturity of the working class. It cannot and never will be anything more in the present-day state; but that," he continued, "is sufficient. On the day the thermometer of universal suffrage registers boiling point among the workers, both they and the capitalists will know where they stand."[66]

Cognizant of Bismarck's censors, Engels could not be as forthright with his metaphor as he was eight years later when he made this very same point to Paul Lafargue, following electoral gains for the party in France, about the value of elections for the revolutionary process.

> Do you realize now what a splendid weapon you in France have had in your hands for forty years in universal suffrage; if only people knew how to use it! It's slower and more boring than the call to revolution, but it's ten times more sure, and what is even better, it indicates with the most perfect accuracy the day when a call to armed revolution has to be made; it's even ten to one that universal suffrage, intelligently used by the workers, will drive the rulers to overthrow legality, that is, to put us in the most favorable position to make the revolution.[67]

Engels, therefore, left no doubt, contrary to later efforts to make him into a reformist, that elections under capitalism were only a means—a "gauge," the best in his opinion—to determine when to resort to armed struggle.[68] And this was a gauge to be employed not just in Bismarck's Germany.

This is the framework in which Engels's, as well as Marx's, pronouncements on elections and the use of force for socialist transformation must be understood. In 1880 he and Marx helped to draft the electoral program of what was in Marx's opinion the "*first real workers' movement* in France."[69] In the preamble, Marx made perhaps his most succinct and popular rationale for the participation of the workers' party in elections. He began with the premise, "That the emancipation of the producing class ['or proletariat'] is that of all human beings without distinction of sex or race." Also, only on the basis of "collective ownership" of the means of production would liberation be assured. Such an "appropriation" required the "revolutionary action of the producing class . . . organized into an independent political party." To this end, "all of the means at the disposal of the proletariat, including universal suffrage," should be utilized. Taking part in the elections, he emphasized, was a "*means of organization and struggle.*"[70]

Regarding the successes of the SAPD in the 1884 elections, Engels told Bebel, "I am less concerned just now with the number of seats that will eventually be won . . . the main thing is the proof that the movement is marching ahead . . . [and] the way our workers have run the affair, the tenacity, determination and above all, humor with which they have captured position after position and set at naught all the dodges, threats and bullying on the part of the government and bourgeoisie."[71] In other words, the self-organization of the working class was the decisive gain. About the successes in the 1887 elections, he said, "But it's not the number of seats that matter, only the statistical demonstration of the party's irresistible growth."[72]

Finally, remarking on the 1893 elections, he reiterated, "[T]he number of seats is a very secondary consideration. The principal one is the increase of votes . . . [especially in the] rural districts . . . without which we cannot expect to be victorious."[73] Again, the rural vote was crucially important. Although the *Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands* or SPD, the new name the party adopted after the ban was lifted in 1890, didn't do as well in the runoff elections in terms of seats, Engels said, "I am prouder of the defeats than of the successes . . . What we won we owe—for the first time—entirely to our own strength . . . [and not to] the help of the liberals and democrats."[74] All these assessments only make sense when seen from the perspective of elections as a gauge for the best moment when to employ revolutionary force.

Within this framework, Engels was sober about the German vote. As for the gains made in the 1884 elections, "In Germany it is easy to vote for a Social Democrat because we are the only real opposition party and because the Reichstag has no say in things, so that ultimately it doesn't matter whether one votes at all, or for which of the 'dogs that we are' one does vote."[75] Thus he recognized the reality of the protest vote in relation to the so-called wasted vote.

Engels like Marx was unequivocal on the necessity of force. To Bebel in 1884, when the prospects for lifting the ban against the SAPD seemed likely in return for its renunciation of violence, he counseled steadfastness on principles: "No party, unless it was lying, has ever denied the right to armed resistance *in certain circumstances*. None has ever been able to renounce that ultimate right." But "we shall not go into action as long as we have a military power against us. We can bide our time until the military power ceases *to be a power against us.*"[76] To a cothinker in Denmark in 1889, he wrote, "That the proletariat cannot seize political power, which alone will open the doors to a new society, without violent revolution is something upon which we are both agreed."[77] In his commentary on the

SPD's new program in 1891, the so-called Erfurt Program, Engels argued that the reality of Germany "proves how totally mistaken is the belief that a . . . communist society, can be established in a cosy, peaceful way."[78] To an Italian critic in 1892, Engels replied publicly, "I have never said the socialist party [the SPD] will become the majority and then proceed to take power. On the contrary, I have expressly said," echoing an aforementioned comment, "that the odds are ten to one that our rulers, well before that point arrives, will use violence against us, and this would shift us from the terrain of majority to the terrain of revolution."[79]

Finally, there was Engels's angry reaction to the most famous bowdlerization in the history of the socialist movement: Liebknecht's cut-and-paste job in the party newspaper *Vorwärts* on his 1895 "Introduction"—which summarized his and his partner's approach to universal suffrage and electoral politics—to Marx's *Class Struggles in France*. What Engels objected the most to about Liebknecht's self-serving editing, as he explained to Kautsky and Lafargue, was that it was done "in such a fashion that I appear as a peaceful worshiper of legality at any price" in order "to support the tactics of *peace at any price and of opposition to force and violence*."[80] Even the version that he approved for publication in the SPD's theoretical journal, *Die Neue Zeit*, edited by Kautsky, after watering it down because of the leadership's fears about government reprisals, had a key paragraph removed. The unexpurgated text made clear that "street fighting" was still on the revolutionary agenda in most places, if not everywhere, but that it would "have to be undertaken with greater forces."[81] This was his last word on the matter, since he died five months later. Had Engels known beforehand that it would be the expurgated version, which made him appear as an opponent of "street fighting," that subsequent generations of social democrats would be reared on, he no doubt would have resisted the entreaties to tone it down.

The Electoral Arena in Marx and Engels's Politics

Underlying Engels's position was a very fundamental principle that informed him and Marx even before they became conscious communists—that is, the need for the working class to take time to make adequate preparations to take power under the best circumstances. Elections were the best means to do so because they revealed what the party's strengths were and its level of support and organization. This was the point he was getting at in an article in *Sozialdemokrat* shortly after the government's ban on the party had expired in September 1890, though in language more couched and less provocative. "The attempt must be made to get

along with legal methods of struggle for the time being"—the qualifier at the end being crucial. Should the party, he asked, "build barricades" if the regime banned it again? "It will certainly not do its opponents this favor. It will be saved from this by the knowledge of its own position of strength, given it by every general election to the Reichstag. Twenty per cent of the votes cast is a very respectable figure, but this also means that the opponents together still have eighty per cent of the vote." But given the rate of the gains that the party was making in each election, "it would be mad to attempt a putsch."[82]

While reformists have tried to use this statement to justify their politics, it's at best a very tortured reading of Engels that flies in the face of his overall strategy as argued here. His other public and private pronouncements at the time make clear that his call for revolutionary restraint in the *Sozialdemokrat* was exactly that. Precisely because of the gains the party had just made, doubling its vote to 1.5 million from the 1887 election, he expected that Bismarck would take preemptive action. "No doubt they will be the first ones to fire. One fine day the German bourgeois and their government, tired of standing with their arms folded, witnessing the ever increasing advances of socialism, will resort to illegality and violence."[83] However, the regime should remember, he warned in the party press that "at least one-half of the German socialists have passed through the army" and there are "amongst them too many who have learned to stand at order arms in a hail of bullets till the moment is ripe for attack."[84]

In letters to Paul and Laura Lafargue, Engels revealed the strategy behind his warning—playing for time. In spite of Bismarck's expected actions,

> it is our duty not to let ourselves be prematurely crushed. As yet only one soldier out of four or five is ours—on a war footing, maybe one in three. We are making headway in rural areas . . . In three or four years' time we shall have won over the farm laborers and hired hands, in other words the staunchest supporters of the status quo . . . That is why we must, for the time being, advocate lawful action, and not respond to the provocations they will lavish upon us.[85]

Elections, therefore, were the means by which the party could garner the effective forces to successfully wage the violent struggle. And until the most propitious moment, there would be revolutionary restraint. Of course, Engels recognized, consistent with his and Marx's earlier views, that while it would be a "great misfortune" if—because of, for example, a war with Russia—the party was brought "to power prematurely, we have to be prepared for that eventuality."[86] Being "armed" meant above

all having a leadership in place that understood what had to be done in such a scenario.

If there is any doubt about how Engels viewed elections, read his comment to Bebel on the eve of the 1890 Reichstag elections in which the SPD was expected to make (and did make) significant gains: "[M]y only fear is that we shall obtain *too many* seats. Every other party in the Reichstag can have as many jackasses and allow them to perpetrate as many blunders as it can afford to pay for, and nobody gives a damn, whereas we, if we are not to be held cheap, must have nothing but heroes and men of genius."[87] Quality and not quantity was the goal—not the demand of a bourgeois politician.

It should be noted that nowhere does Engels say anything about winning a majority of the electorate through elections. The reason, as already suggested, is that he didn't expect the ruling class to allow the electoral process to go that far. Thus what was crucial for success was winning not just a simple majority in elections but rather effective supporters—that is, those who were willing to vote with their feet to resist the regime and especially those who knew how to use arms. Participating in the electoral process made it possible to determine when the requisite number of such forces had been accumulated. This is why the conduct of the party's proletarian ranks in the process was more important for him than just the number of votes obtained or seats won. Engels was also aware that the electoral process itself was flawed. Given the constraints on universal suffrage (e.g., neither women nor anyone under 25 could vote), or the gross inequities in the apportionment of electoral districts, the elections were far from an accurate measure of majority sentiment. Last, by taking preemptive action—that is, overthrowing the electoral process—the regime would forfeit its claims to legality and thus strengthen the workers' party politically in its use of force. The government then, to employ the previously cited point that Marx made, would be acting as "rebels against 'lawful' force"—that is, the majority.

One of the features of the "parliamentary disease," as Engels explained in his aforementioned critique of the so-called Erfurt Program of the SPD in 1891, was the tendency of "striving for the success of the moment" at the expense of the "future of the movement"—namely, "opportunism." In the electoral arena this translated into the disease of "vote-catching." It was exactly this secondary affliction, specifically the "striving" by reformist forces in both the German and French parties to win the peasant vote at the expense of communist principles, that convinced Engels to write in 1894, seven months before his death, *The Peasant Question in France and Germany*. This text came to constitute his and Marx's most

comprehensive programmatic views on the peasant question. At the heart of it is the strategy not just for winning the peasant vote on a principled basis but for ensuring the worker-peasant alliance needed for working-class ascendancy.

Commenting on that wing of the SPD, led by Georg Vollmar, that wanted to "catch the peasant vote" at the expense of programmatic integrity, Engels told Paul Lafargue, "You will have seen in *Vorwärts* [the official organ of the SPD] Bebel's speech in the 2nd electoral constituency of Berlin. He complains with reason that the party is going bourgeois. That is the misfortune of all extreme parties when the time approaches for them to become 'possible.'"[88] Not surprisingly it was Bebel who complained about the reformist direction of the party, an assessment with which Engels agreed. Of all the SPD leaders, including Kautsky, as well as party leaders anywhere in the world, it was Bebel for whom Engels had the highest regard. To an old comrade he wrote in 1884, "There is no more lucid mind in the whole of the German party, besides which he is utterly dependable and firm of purpose."[89]

The reformist trend that Bebel called attention to was one that both Marx and Engels had earlier diagnosed—what Engels later called "opportunism." Engels's hope was that principled political differences would provoke the right wing into a split after the ban was lifted in 1890, hence the necessity of programmatic integrity. As for Bebel's prognosis about the SPD, Engels responded that "our Party cannot go beyond a certain limit in this respect without betraying itself."[90] Only would hindsight reveal that, contrary to what Engels thought, the "bourgeois" trend had indeed gone "beyond a certain limit." The parliamentary disease had metastasized into a cancer within the SPD. The campaign for catching the peasant vote signaled the beginning of revisionism in the German party. Vollmar was its political leader, and Bernstein, not long afterwards, became its theoretician. The consequences would be devastating results for all humanity.

Bernstein and Kautsky

This is the appropriate place, near the end of Engels's life, to say a few words about what he and Marx thought about two of the individuals in the German movement with whom they collaborated, specifically Bernstein and Kautsky (especially because they will reappear when attention turns to Lenin). As already discussed, Marx and Engels first encountered the young Bernstein in and about 1879 and severely chastised him and others—in the *Circular Letter of 1879*—who wanted to take the German

party in a reformist direction. They thought (erroneously, as history later revealed) that they had won him over to revolutionary politics after the resolution of the kerfuffle. While Engels was more tolerant and patiently tried to bring him along politically—including efforts to "counteract his enthusiasm for Fabianism"[91]—it is worth noting that Marx continued to have doubts. Three months before his death in 1883, Engels told him, "You are right when you say that Bernstein doesn't always allow himself adequate time for reflection."[92] No doubt Marx's suspicions about the "educative elements," the "immature undergraduates and over-wise graduates," continued to influence his opinion of Bernstein.

That attitude about the "educative elements" was certainly on display in Marx's first encounter with Kautsky in 1881. To his daughter Jenny, he wrote, "He's a mediocrity, narrow in outlook, over-wise (only 26 years old), a know-all, hard-working after a fashion, much concerned with statistics out of which, however, he makes little sense, by nature a member of the philistine tribe . . . I unload him onto *amigo* Engels as much as I can."[93] Nothing in the two remaining years of Marx's life indicates that he changed his mind. Engels's comment on a series of articles Kautsky wrote in 1889 on the French Revolution is typical of his opinion of his writings. Engels, ever the dialectician, admonished him, "Altogether you generalize far too much and this often makes you absolute where the utmost relativity is called for . . . I would say a great deal less about the modern mode of production. In every case a yawning gap divides it from the *facts* you adduce and *thus* out of context, it appears as a *pure abstraction which* far from throwing light on the subject, renders it still more obscure."[94]

And then there was a comment Engels made about his political sense or lack thereof when it came to publishing. He accused Kautsky of having "lost touch with the living party movement. A few months ago he showed an inconceivable want of tact in proposing to sling a purely academic discussion of the general strike *in abstracto*, and of its pros and cons generally, into the midst of a movement engaged in a life and death struggle against slogans advocating such a strike."[95] Engels was criticizing him for having invited Bernstein to write an article on the general strike in *Die Neue Zeit* just as the Austrian party was engaged in a major fight with opponents about its use in the campaign for universal suffrage. Kautsky's penchant for abstraction at the expense of grounded context was in Marx and Engels's opinion characteristic of the "over-wise graduates" of Germany's universities.

Both criticisms are significant because Kautsky would come to exercise enormous influence through his writings. One in particular, *The Class Struggle (Erfurt Program)*, a popular presentation of the SPD's 1891

program, came to be widely seen after its publication in 1892 as the best one-volume introduction to the political program of Marx and Engels and, later, as the founding "text" of "orthodox" or "classical Marxism." It was intended, Kautsky said, to serve as a "catechism of Social Democracy."[96] His sobriquet, "the Pope of Marxism," was apropos given the popularity and influence of the book. As for what Engels thought about it, he told Kautsky, "I have only been able to read the first 16 pages. If I were you I should omit the better part of the introduction . . . [and] plunge straight into it . . . So overwhelmed am I by work."[97] His priority, as he explained, was the completion of Volume Three of *Capital*—a task only fulfilled about eight months before his death. While his suggestion about the introduction was taken, it's not clear if Engels ever read the published book. His relationship with Kautsky was clearly strained at the end due to three issues: Kautsky's foot dragging on completing Volume IV of *Capital* (*Theories of Surplus Value*); his shabby treatment of his estranged wife, Louise; and, last, his failure to inform Engels that he was writing and editing a multivolume history of socialism.

Speculation is all that is possible about what Engels thought of *The Class Struggle* in the absence of concrete evidence, but speculation can be informed. In one of the sections most relevant for this book, "9. The Political Struggle," Kautsky writes,

> Great capitalists can influence rulers and legislators directly, but the workers can do so *only* through parliamentary activity . . . By electing representatives to parliament, therefore, the working-class can exercise an influence over the governmental powers. The struggle of all classes which depend upon legislative action for political influence is directed, in the modern state, on the one hand toward an increase in the power of the parliament (or congress), and on the other toward an increase in their own influence within the parliament . . . [P]roletariat . . . parliamentary activity . . . is *the most powerful lever* that can be utilized to raise the proletariat out of its economic, social and moral degradation.[98]

If ever there was an example of "parliamentary cretinism," then this could surely be nominated for Exhibit A. Not only the tone but the language on display here is precisely what Marx and Engels polemicized against. Nothing in the Marx-Engels arsenal would support the claim that "only through parliamentary activity" can the working class influence the ruling class. Just the opposite! They argued that it was *outside* the parliamentary arena where the working class was more efficacious. Furthermore, to say that "parliamentary activity . . . is the most powerful lever" at the disposal of the working class for its advancement is to challenge the only

addendum that Marx and Engels ever made to their *Manifesto*. I suspect that if Engels read what Kautsky alleged in 1892, he would not have been surprised. In 1894, as quoted before, he wrote that Bebel "complains with reason that the party is going bourgeois."

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There is a respected body of literature that argues that twentieth-century social democracy traces its programmatic roots to Kautsky's "catechism."[99] It's beyond the scope of this book to interrogate that claim in any kind of detail. What can be argued with confidence is that the previously quoted sentences from the book—the reader can verify that they are not taken out of context—are diametrically opposed to the historic program of Marx and Engels based on the evidence presented here. To return to the question that opened this section and to conclude, Engels's approach to the electoral arena—with its roots in his and his partner's balance sheet on the "European Spring" of 1848–49, the *Address of March 1850*—was to view it as only as a means—the best in his opinion—to determine when to use revolutionary force. Electoral victories, specifically, were also a means to an end: access to the parliamentary "platform" or "rostrum," a most advantageous venue for propagating revolutionary ideas. These claims I make are most credible when coupled with the main lesson that Engels and Marx drew from the experience of the Paris Commune—that "the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made State machinery, and wield it for its own purposes."

The question now is whether there was any continuity with Marx and Engels's program. Had they successfully recruited a committed cadre to their project? If Kautsky's "heresy" suggests that they were not to be found in the leadership of the German party—other than Bebel—were there forces anywhere prepared to pick up their mantle?

"AND ONCE THE FUN BEGINS IN RUSSIA, THEN HURRAH!"

When Marx and Engels determined in 1860 that a new revolutionary era had begun, they pointed to the peasant movement then under way in Polish Russia—evidence that in the new era "the lava will flow from East to West." However, it took Marx specifically about seven years to make direct contact with Russia's nascent revolutionary movement. In the meantime, and symptomatic of developments there, revolutionaries in Moscow took the initiative to have *Capital* published in Russian, its first translation into a language other than German.

While conducting his political economy research, Marx gained a better appreciation of Russia's importance, which spurred him in early 1870 to learn Russian. As his wife Jenny described it, "he has begun studying Russian as if it were a matter of life and death."[100] Marx wrote Engels that "the most important book published since your work on the *Condition of the Working Class*" was by the Russian Narodnik socialist N. Flerovsky, titled *The Condition of the Working Class in Russia*.[101] After reading Flerovsky, Marx felt "deeply convinced that a most terrible social revolution . . . is irrepressible in Russia and near at hand. This is good news. Russia and England are the two great pillars of the present European system. All the rest is of secondary importance, even *la belle France et la savante Allemagne.*"[102] Five years later Engels accurately foresaw—clearly, it took longer than he expected—that the social revolution in Russia would "have inevitable repercussions on Germany."[103] From this point to the very end of their lives both Marx and Engels prioritized developments in Russia over any other country—a fact that virtually every Marxological account ignores.

MARX TAKES THE LEAD

Owing in part to the enormous impact that *Capital* had in Russia—the Russian edition sold better than any other—as well as his renown in connection with the IWMA, a group of Russian émigrés in Geneva asked Marx in March 1870 to represent them on the GC in the IWMA. This was the beginning of his formal links with the generation of Russian revolutionaries from whose ranks would emerge the leadership of the Russian Revolution. Given his and Engels's long-standing and well-known antipathy for Russia—the bulwark of European reaction—Marx found it ironic that he would "be functioning as the representative of *jeune Russie*! A man never knows what he may achieve, or what STRANGE FELLOWSHIP he may have to suffer."[104] One of these young émigrés, Elisaveta Tomanovskaya, worked closely with Marx and Engels during the Commune. That these Russian youth adamantly opposed Bakunin no doubt helped to deconstruct the essentialist views—largely negative—that Marx and Engels had long harbored about the "Russian race." Very soon Engels would say of these youth, "As far as talent and character are concerned, some of these are absolutely among the very best in our party." And in anticipation of a Lenin, "They have a stoicism, a strength of character and at the same time a grasp of theory which are truly admirable."[105]

It's instructive to note that the Geneva exiles wanted Marx to represent them because "the practical character of the movement was so similar in

Germany and Russia, [and] the writings of Marx were so generally known and appreciated by the Russian youth."[106] Although the standard Marxological charge is that Marx and Engels's perspective did not speak to peasant societies such as Russia, young Russian radicals in the 1870s begged to differ. They sought his views on the prospects and course of socialist revolution in their homeland. Specifically, they wondered if Russia would have to undergo a prolonged stage of capitalist development or if it could proceed directly to socialist transformation on the basis of communal property relations that prevailed in much of the countryside at that time.

Exactly because of the socioeconomic changes then underway in Russia, Marx was reluctant to make any categorical judgments. In a letter never mailed to the editorial board of the publication of a group of Russian populist Narodniks in 1877, he warned against turning his "historical sketch of the genesis of capitalism in Western Europe" in *Capital* "into a historical-philosophical theory of general development, imposed by fate on all peoples, whatever the historical circumstances in which they are placed."[107] What he was willing to say about Russia, based on intense study, was that if it "continues along the path it has followed since 1861, it will miss the finest chance that history has ever offered to a nation, only to undergo all the fatal vicissitudes of the capitalist system."[108]

When a related question was posed to him in 1881 by one of the founders of the Marxist party in Russia, Vera Zasulich, specifically about whether the Russian peasant commune could survive in the face of the ever-expanding capitalist mode of production, Marx was again cautious. In order for it to be saved and be the basis for socialist property relations, "it would first be necessary to eliminate the deleterious influences which are assailing it from all sides."[109] In other words, as one of the drafts of his letter put it, "To save the Russian commune, a Russian revolution is needed."[110] The drafts on which this reply was based went into far greater detail on the peasant question and revealed how extensively Marx had been following developments in Russia.

While Marx was cautious about the question, Engels seemed to be more certain that the commune would not survive capital's penetration into the countryside—at least in the context of a polemic with a Russian who, in Engels's opinion, romanticized the peasant. As it turned out, it fell on Engels's shoulders to bring more clarity to this question, because in outliving Marx by 12 years, he witnessed developments in Russia's countryside that Marx could only anticipate.

As for the politics and strategy of socialist revolution in Russia, Engels in the aforementioned polemic first predicted what would be involved. Rejecting the view that the Russian peasant was "instinctively revolutionary,"

he warned against "a premature attempt at insurrection," since "Russia undoubtedly is on the eve of a revolution." He provided a quite accurate sketch of what would occur, though not when he expected but three decades later: "[A] growing recognition among the enlightened strata of the nation concentrated in the capital that . . . a revolution is impending, and the illusion that it will be possible to guide this revolution among a smooth constitutional channel. Here all the conditions of a revolution are combined, of a revolution that, started by the upper classes of the capital, perhaps even by the government itself, must be rapidly carried further, beyond the first constitutional phase, by the peasants, of a revolution that will be of the greatest importance for the whole of Europe."[111] Marx saw a similar scenario, and when the Russo-Turkish War broke out in 1877, they both thought it would precipitate Russia's social revolution. They got the algebra if not the mathematics right, because it was indeed a war, the Russo-Japanese War in 1905, that helped catalyze the process culminating in 1917.

In the aforementioned polemic, Engels made clear that given Russia's reality a revolution that began with a conspiracy was certainly justifiable. Never "at any time in my political career [have I] declared that conspiracies were to be universally condemned in all circumstances."[112] Later, both he and Marx praised Russian revolutionaries—one of whom, Vera Zasulich, they would establish close ties with—who either carried out or attempted individual acts of terror against Russian rulers. "Against such wild animals one must defend oneself as one can, with powder and lead. Political assassination in Russia is the only means which men of intelligence, dignity and character possess to defend themselves against the agents of an unprecedented despotism."[113]

Both also held that the opening of the social revolution in Russia would spread westward, leading to "*radical change throughout Europe*."[114] In fact, the "overthrow of Tsarist Russia . . . is . . . one of the first conditions of the German proletariat's ultimate triumph."[115] In 1882 Engels counseled that the formation of the next international should only be done when conditions were ripe: "[S]uch events are already taking shape in Russia where the avant-garde of the revolution will be going into battle. You should—or so we think—wait for this and its inevitable repercussions on Germany, and then the moment will also have come for a big manifesto and the establishment of an *official*, formal International, which can, however, no longer be a propaganda association but simply an association for action."[116] This was most prophetic, since it was indeed the Russian Revolution in 1917 that lead to the formation in 1919 of the Third or Communist International, which proudly proclaimed its adherence to the Marx program.

Finally, in the Preface to the second Russian edition of the *Manifesto* in 1882, they wrote that "Russia forms the vanguard of revolutionary action in Europe." As for the future of the peasant commune in Russia, they provided their clearest answer yet: "If the Russian Revolution becomes the signal for a proletarian revolution in the West, so that the two complement each other, the present Russian common ownership of land may serve as the starting point for communist development."[117] To the end of his life, which was only 15 months away, Marx continued to devote his attention to the peasant question in Russia. Not coincidentally, this is the question that Lenin would begin his revolutionary studies with.

ENGELS IN CHARGE

With Marx gone, it fell to Engels to render assistance to the many national movements that sought his counsel. But none held his attention as did the Russian movement. He continued to believe, as Marx had, that it was in Russia where Europe's revolutionary "vanguard" existed. "And once the fun begins in Russia," he told his main contact in the United States in 1887, "then hurrah!"[118] The Russian "lava," in other words, "will flow . . . West."

The spate of political assassinations that began in 1877 had impressed him and Marx with Russia's volatility. Just as was true for Vera Zasulich's assassination attempt, they praised the assassins—members of *Narodnaya Volya* [*People's Will*]—of Czar Alexander II in 1881. To his daughter Jenny, Marx wrote that they were "sterling chaps through and through, without melodramatic posturing, simple, matter-of-fact, heroic . . . [T]hey . . . are at pains to teach Europe that their *modus operandi* is a specifically Russian and historically inevitable mode of action which no more lends itself to moralizing—for or against—than does the [recent] earthquake in Chios [Greece]."[119] For Engels, they were "our people," whose actions had helped to create a "revolutionary situation" in Russia.[120]

As Marx's comment to Jenny indicates, neither he nor Engels praised terrorism as a tactic suitable for all places at all times. Thus in the same article in which he condemned a terrorist bombing in London in January 1885—"Irish hands may have laid the dynamite, but it is more than probable that a Russian brain and Russian money were behind it"—he publicly defended *Narodnaya Volya*: "The means of struggle employed by the Russian revolutionaries are dictated to them by necessity, by the actions of their opponents themselves. They must answer to their people and to history for the means they employ. But the gentlemen who are needlessly parodying this struggle in Western Europe in schoolboy

fashion . . . who do not even direct their weapons against real enemies but against the public in general, these gentlemen are in no way successors or allies of the Russian revolutionaries, but rather their worst enemies."[121] In the specific conditions of Russia, terror was justifiable, but it was not in Western Europe, at least at that moment.

Because Engels closely followed the debate within the Russian movement on the use of terror—"these Russian quarrels are not uninteresting," he told Laura Lafargue[122]—he could respond to Zasulich's request to comment on Georgi Plekhanov's polemic, *Our Differences*, against *Narodnaya Volya*'s overall perspective and tactics. The Russian situation was so unstable, he pointed out, that it "is one of those special cases where it is possible for a handful of men to *effect* a revolution . . . Well, if ever Blanquism, the fantasy of subverting the whole of a society through action by a small group of conspirators, had any rational foundation, it would assuredly be in St. Petersburg." However—a most important qualifier—"Once the match has been applied to the powder, the men who have sprung the mine will be swept off their feet by an explosion a thousand times more powerful than they themselves."[123]

For Engels, then, the important thing was "that revolution should break out," and it was "of little concern to me" whether it be conspirators or not since the pent-up energy in Russia was such that "1789, once launched, will before long be followed by 1793"—that is, the "revolution in permanence." "Men who have boasted of having *effected* a revolution have always found on the morrow that they didn't know what they were doing; that once *effected*, the revolution bears no resemblance at all to what they had intended."[124] From its beginnings, the Marx-Engels project, based on the "real movement of history," lacked guarantees—a revolutionary project without guarantees.

At this time Engels began a regular correspondence and contact with Zasulich, Plekhanov, and other leaders of the recently formed Emancipation of Labor group, the first explicitly Russian Marxist organization.[125] As he and Marx had earlier commented, the seriousness with which the Russians took the study of their writings was singular among all their party contacts. They sought his views on the key theoretical issue that Marx had been asked to address—whether Russia could bypass capitalist development and proceed directly to socialism based on the common ownership of property of the traditional peasant commune. There were of course enormous political implications in the answer to this most vital question.

After almost a decade and a half had lapsed since his and Marx's last detailed comments, in 1894 Engels made his final and definitive

judgment on Russia's trajectory. Its recent development, as he and Marx had suspected, was decidedly capitalist, and the "proletarianisation of a large proportion of the peasantry and the decay of the old communistic commune proceeds at an ever quickening pace." Whether enough of the traditional communes remained for a "point of departure for communistic development," Engels could not say.

> But this much is certain: if a remnant of this commune is to be preserved, the first condition is the fall of tsarist despotism—revolution in Russia. This will not only tear the great mass of the nation, the peasants away from the isolation of their villages . . . and lead them out onto the great stage . . . it will also give the labour movement of the West fresh impetus and create new, better conditions in which to carry on the struggle, thus hastening the victory of the modern industrial proletariat, without which present-day Russia can never achieve a socialist transformation, whether proceeding from the commune or from capitalism.[126]

In no uncertain terms, then, and contrary to all the future Stalinist distortions of Marx and Engels's views, Russia could "never achieve a socialist transformation" *without* the overthrow of the bourgeoisie in Western Europe by its own proletariat. Not only would Russia be the "impetus" for the socialist revolution in the West, as Marx and Engels had been saying for two decades, but its own revolution was inextricably linked to that outcome. This forecast would be profoundly and tragically confirmed by subsequent history.

Engels also noted in his final pronouncement that the Russian bourgeoisie, like its German counterpart, was content to allow a despot—the Czar—to rule in its place because the autocracy "offers it more guarantees than would changes even of a bourgeois-liberal nature." This was advantageous to the socialist revolution because the bourgeoisie's cowardly stance meant that Russia's small but growing proletariat, just as was true for Germany, would be forced to combine the fight for economic and social advancement with the struggle for political democracy; this would ensure, in other words, that the revolution would go beyond the boundaries of its bourgeois-democratic tasks to become "permanent." In Western Europe, it was the German proletariat that was expected to be the immediate recipient of Russia's "impetus." It was exactly this point, the vanguard role of the proletariat in Russia's as well as Germany's coming revolution, that Engels made to Zasulich at his last New Year's Eve celebration—a forecast she quickly relayed to her comrades in the Emancipation of Labour Group.[127] History would again confirm Engels's prescience.

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If the prospects for a revolutionary leadership in Germany at the end of Engels's life looked dim, it didn't discourage him. He and his partner died with their eyes on Russia—a fact ignored in virtually every standard account of their lives. Part and parcel of Engels's fight for the political soul of the German party, to prevent it from "going bourgeois," was also an antiwar cause—to try to prevent what would be the First World War.[128] Russia was very much part of that strategy. In 1888 he wrote that "revolution in Russia at this moment would save Europe from the horrors of a general war and would usher in universal social revolution."[129] Three years later he was uncannily prophetic. While a general European war was not inevitable, "one thing is certain": "This war, in which fifteen to twenty million armed men would slaughter one another and devastate Europe as it has never been devastated before . . . would either lead to the immediate triumph of socialism, or it would lead to such an upheaval in the old order of things, it would leave behind it everywhere such a heap of ruins, that . . . the socialist revolution, set back by ten or fifteen years, would only be all the more radical and more rapidly implemented."[130] And a year later in 1892, he wrote, "If war breaks out, *those who are defeated* will have the opportunity and duty to bring about a revolution—and that's that."[131] Without a crystal ball, all that Engels—and Marx—could foresee was that a European conflagration was intimately linked with revolutionary prospects for Russia and the rest of Europe. The task now is to see if his and Marx's expectations were justified.

Chapter 2

Revolutionary Continuity

Lenin's Politics Prior to 1905

"Bloody Sunday," January 9, 1905, in St. Petersburg initiated the "Russian Spring"—the beginning of the end of the three-hundred-year-old Romanov dynasty. Like Frederick IV in Prussia, or the military regime that replaced the dethroned Hosni Mubarak, Nicholas II was forced in October after months of near nationwide mass protests to grant the semblance of representative democracy. While Marx and Engels had mistakenly thought that Russia's bourgeois revolution would come sooner, they were right that Europe's last remaining absolute monarchy was on life-support. They did all they could to influence its expected death in the interests of the toilers through their writings and collaboration with Russia's nascent Marxist movement.

To understand how Lenin responded to "Bloody Sunday" and its revolutionary aftermath, it is necessary to step back in time to see what his politics were prior to then. What was his understanding of the nature of the Russian Revolution? What was his conception of the role of democracy itself in organizing to make a revolution? Most important for this book, what was his attitude toward representative democracy and the electoral process—the concessions that Nicholas was forced to make? And for all these questions, last, how did Marx and Engels inform Lenin, or perhaps more correctly, how did he think they informed him, and was he right? I beg the reader's indulgence, because what follows is a detailed compilation of what Lenin actually said and did—necessary, I think, given the success of the Leninologists in having painted him with an antidemocratic brush. Perhaps the best way to challenge that all-too-familiar image is to let Lenin speak for himself.[1]

Building on the Legacy Bequeathed

When Engels in 1872 wrote to a longtime comrade in Germany and veteran of 1848–49 about the Russian youth he and Marx were now

collaborating with, he compared them favorably to a prior generation of Russian revolutionaries. Unlike those "who came to Europe earlier on—noble, aristocratic Russians, among whom we must include Herzen and Bakunin and who are swindlers to the last man . . . those who are coming now, all of whom are of the *people*. As far as talent and character are concerned, some of these are absolutely among the very best in our party. They have a stoicism, a strength of character and at the same time a grasp of theory which are truly admirable."[2] Though only two years old when Engels penned these comments, Lenin would come to epitomize more than anyone what Engels was describing.

Apprenticeship

If any one of the three qualities that Engels noted about the Russian youth came to distinguish Lenin, it was clearly his "grasp of theory." Critically important in understanding why were his extraordinary language skills.[3] At the encouragement of his mother, with roots in Germany, he and his siblings were fluent readers from a fairly early age of not only German but also French and English. His German skills made it possible for him to read *Das Kapital* at age 18, in 1888—an auspicious beginning for learning how to "grasp theory." Precisely because of what Marx and Engels bequeathed, the young Lenin was able to enter the political arena with a communist perspective about five years earlier than they had at a comparable age.

It was in Samara, in the Volga region and severely impacted by the 1891–92 famine—a transformative event for Lenin according to Trotsky—where he moved to in 1889, that Lenin qualitatively deepened his understanding of Marx's politics and analysis. A year later, he translated the *Manifesto* into Russian for use by a study circle there that he had contact with.[4] During and immediately after the famine he immersed himself in the study of volumes one and two of *Capital* (Engels did not complete volume three until 1894[5]). The Samara period, owing to his intense study, specifically 1891–92, is when, Trotsky argues, Lenin became a conscious Marxist for the first time. As to when he became familiar with Russian social democracy, "Lenin told [Karl] Radek on a walk they took together that he had studied not only *Das Kapital* but also Engels' *Anti-Dühring* before he got hold of any publications of the Emancipation of Labor Group . . . [H]is acquaintance with the works of Plekanov, without which one could not have arrived at Social Democratic positions, must have taken place in 1891." In a party questionnaire in 1921, Lenin wrote that his revolutionary activities began in Samara in 1892–93.[6]

Lenin, in 1904, said that prior to Marx and Engels, it was Chernyshevsky who "had a major, overpowering influence on me."[7] Marx, it

should be noted, thought very highly of Chernyshevsky's political economy writings, which, like *Capital*, owed a significant debt to Ludwig Feuerbach and the young Hegelians. Marx might have agreed, therefore, that reading Chernyshevsky would be a good place to begin for a young Russian wanting to understand his analysis.[8]

Reading *Capital* is one thing—applying it is another. This is just what Lenin began doing at the end of his Samara period (1889–93)—that is, using Marx's analysis to understand Russia's reality, particularly the peasantry and the penetration of capitalist property relations in the countryside. That this was exactly the question that occupied Marx at the end of his life—probably unbeknownst to Lenin—indicates how well-tuned he was to his mentors. Employing *Capital* in his first analytical writing, he reached essentially the same conclusion that Engels, as noted in the previous chapter, would a few months later in 1894: "[T]he transformation of the country into a capitalist industrial nation . . . proceeds at an ever quickening pace." To reach similar conclusions—independently—testifies to how well Lenin had graduated from apprenticeship to mastery of Marx's method.

LENIN THE "SOCIAL-DEMOCRAT"

What the "Friends of the People" Are was Lenin's opening salvo. Written in 1894, this two-hundred-page polemic took on a then influential current in radical circles: the populist Narodniks and their chief spokesperson, Nikolai Mikhailovsky. It began with a defense of *Capital* for understanding Marx's methodology. Interestingly, it was Mikhailovsky who was the target of Marx's criticism in 1877 (noted in Chapter 1) for having turned his "historical sketch of the genesis of capitalism in Western Europe" in *Capital* "into a historical-philosophical theory of general development, imposed by fate on all peoples, whatever the historical circumstances in which they are placed." Whether Lenin then knew of Marx's criticism is uncertain. But for present purposes what is significant about Lenin's employment of Marx is its defense of the political struggle, specifically the fight for democracy.

Despite the illusions the Narodniks had about the small peasantry—that the preservation of small landowners was somehow revolutionary—Marxists, Lenin argued, were not neutral in the historic fight of this petit bourgeois class against the large landowning class. The latter represented the "survivals of the medieval epoch and of serfdom," and any struggle against them was the "democratic side" to the peasant struggle.

> [A]lthough the Marxists completely repudiate petty-bourgeois theories, this does not prevent them from including democracy in their programme,

> but on the contrary, calls for still stronger insistence on it . . . Social-Democrats unreservedly associate themselves with the demand for the complete restoration of the peasants' civil rights, the complete abolition of all privileges of the nobility, the abolition of bureaucratic tutelage over the peasants, and the peasants' right to manage their own affairs.
>
> In general, the Russian communists, adherents of Marxism, should more than any others call themselves **SOCIAL-DEMOCRATS**, and in their activities should never forget the enormous importance of **DEMOCRACY** . . . it is the direct duty of the working class to fight side by side with the radical democracy against absolutism and the reactionary social estates and institutions—a duty which the Social-Democrats must impress upon the workers, while not for a moment ceasing also to impress upon them that the struggle against all these institutions is necessary only as a means of facilitating the struggle against the bourgeoisie, that the worker needs the achievement of the general democratic demands only to clear the road to victory over the working people's chief enemy, over an institution that is purely democratic by nature, *capital*, which here in Russia is particularly inclined to sacrifice its democracy and to enter into alliance with the reactionaries in order to suppress the workers, to still further impede the emergence of a working-class movement . . . political liberty will primarily serve the interests of the bourgeoisie and will not ease the position of the workers, but . . . will ease only the conditions for their struggle . . . *against this very bourgeoisie*.[9]

In his very next writing a few months later, *The Economic Content of Narodism and the Criticism of It in Mr. Struve's Book*, Lenin returned to what he calls the "progressive" side of the Narodnik program for the peasantry "relating to self-government, to the 'people's' free and broad access to knowledge, to the 'raising' of the 'people's' (that is to say, small) economy by means of cheap credits, technical improvements, better regulation of marketing, etc." These are what he called "general democratic measures."

> The Narodniks in this respect understand and represent the interests of the small producers far more correctly [than Struve], and the Marxists, while rejecting all the reactionary features of their programme, must not only accept the general democratic points, but carry them through more exactly, deeply and further. The more resolute such reforms are in Russia, the higher they raise the living standard of the working masses—the more sharply and clearly will the most important and fundamental (already today) social antagonism in Russian life stand out. The Marxists, far from "breaking the democratic thread" or trend, as [an opponent] slanderously asserts they do, want to develop and strengthen this trend, they want to bring it closer to life.[10]

The comments from both writings are Lenin's first pronouncements—at the outset of his political career—on the bourgeois democratic revolution and its relation to the socialist revolution.[11] As will be seen, they constituted the basic stance he adhered to going into the 1905 Revolution and continued to inform his practice during the heady days of 1917. They were, I argue, thoroughly informed by Marx and Engels's politics beginning with the *Manifesto*, particularly the last section, and ending with Engels's retort in 1892 to a critic who claimed that he and his partner had ignored forms of governance: "Marx and I, for forty years, repeated ad nauseam that for us the democratic republic is the only political form in which the struggle between the working class and the capitalist class can first be universalized and then culminate in the decisive victory of the proletariat."[12] It should be recalled that while the *Manifesto* didn't include the peasantry as a potential ally for workers, the later *Demands* that Marx and Engels drew up did so. Given that it's unlikely that Lenin knew that when he wrote this, his inclusion of them testifies once again to how thoroughly he had grasped their theory and politics.

Also noteworthy about what Lenin wrote is his usage of "social-democracy" as a way to make more explicit the content of the communist program. Given what "social-democracy" would later come to mean—a not unimportant issue that Lenin would address after 1917—his semantic move here in 1894 is instructive and prescient, more evidence of his deep understanding of Marx and Engels's project. He also made clear that Marxists supported reforms if they indeed put the toilers in a better position to wage the decisive fight against capital. Contrary to what Struve alleged, the "fight for reforms" was always part of Marx's strategy: "[H]e said in the *Manifesto* that the movement towards the new system cannot be *separated* from the working class movement (and, hence from the struggle for reforms), and when he himself, in conclusion, proposed a number of practical measures."[13] Last, and most important in understanding his politics in 1905 and afterward, is his claim about Russian capitalists—that is, their group's inclination to "sacrifice its democracy and to enter into alliances with the reactionaries in order to suppress the workers." The centrality of this claim to his politics can't be overstated. It, too, originates in Marx and Engels—the central lesson they took from the "European Spring" of 1848–49.

In making his case, Lenin drew almost exclusively on Marx and Engels and not subsequent recruits to their program such as Kautsky and Georgi Plekhanov. He certainly respected the latter two and acknowledged, as already noted, a debt to them. But by being able to go straight to the source, he had the confidence, I argue, to break with them when he later

thought their reading of Marx and Engels was faulty. To argue, also, as I do that the paternity from Marx and Engels to Lenin was direct and not through Kautsky and Plekhanov, as some claim, means that it is to the former and not the latter that attention must be directed in understanding Lenin's politics and perspective.[14] In an early self-reflective moment, Lenin wrote, "Let us not believe that orthodoxy means taking things on trust, that orthodoxy precludes critical application and further development, that it permits historical problems to be obscured by abstract schemes. If there are orthodox disciples who are guilty of these truly grievous sins, the blame must rest entirely with those disciples and not by any means with orthodoxy, which is distinguished by diametrically opposite qualities."[15]

Lenin's first trip to Europe in 1895—much of it spent in libraries—allowed him to quantitatively deepen his knowledge of the writings of Marx and Engels as well as related issues, not the least important being the Paris Commune. His article "Fredrick Engels," written shortly after his death, registered how productive the five-month trip had been. As always, he never missed the opportunity to extract the relevant political lessons:

> Marx and Engels, who both knew Russian and read Russian books, took a lively interest in the country, followed the Russian revolutionary movement with sympathy and maintained contact with Russian revolutionaries. They both became socialists after being *democrats*, and the democratic feeling of *hatred* for political despotism was exceedingly strong in them. This direct political feeling, combined with a profound theoretical understanding of the connection between political despotism and economic oppression, and also their rich experience of life, made Marx and Engels uncommonly responsive *politically.* That is why the heroic struggle of the handful of Russian revolutionaries against the mighty tsarist government evoked a most sympathetic echo in the hearts of these tried revolutionaries. On the other hand, the tendency, for the sake of illusory economic advantages, to turn away from the most immediate and important task of the Russian socialists, namely, the winning of political freedom, naturally appeared suspicious to them and was even regarded by them as a direct betrayal of the great cause of the social revolution. "The emancipation of the workers must be the act of the working class itself"—Marx and Engels constantly taught. But in order to fight for its economic emancipation, the proletariat must win itself certain *political* rights. Moreover, Marx and Engels clearly saw that a political revolution in Russia would be of tremendous significance to the West-European working-class movement as well. Autocratic Russia had always been a bulwark of European reaction in general . . . Only a free Russia, a Russia that had no need either to oppress the Poles, Finns, Germans, Armenians or any other small nations, or constantly to set France and Germany at loggerheads, would enable modern Europe, rid of the burden of war, to breathe freely, would weaken all the reactionary elements in Europe and strengthen the

> European working class. That was why Engels ardently desired the establishment of political freedom in Russia for the sake of the progress of the working-class movement in the West as well. In him the Russian revolutionaries have lost their best friend.[16]

Again, for Lenin the fate of Russia's socialist revolution depended on the fight for "political freedom," for "political rights"—for democracy. In hammering home the necessity for what the *Manifesto* called "the battle for democracy," Lenin was criticizing another group of opponents, the "economists"—that is, those who tended to prioritize economic struggles while dismissing political democracy. And Russia's democratic quest, he insisted, had implications beyond its borders, not just for the oppressed nations within the Czar's domain but elsewhere. Here is Lenin's first explicit statement—following Engels, and Marx as well—that Russia's revolution was linked to Europe's proletarian revolution.

While in prison in 1895–97, following his first confrontations with the regime as a communist, Lenin composed a "Draft and Explanation of a Programme for the Social-Democratic Party." Like the *Manifesto*, it was not a program for the organization he was a member of, the League of Struggle, but rather the "social-democratic party" of Russia in a broad historical sense just as Marx and Engels's document was written for the "communist party" and not the League of Communists that actually commissioned the program. The "Draft" was basically an update of a program Plekhanov composed a decade earlier that called for, among other things, all the essentials of bourgeois democracy.[17] The "Explanation" is all Lenin's voice. What he had to say about the section in the "Draft" on the aims of the "Russian Social-Democratic Party" vis-à-vis workers is particularly relevant:

> What is meant by these words: the struggle of the working class is a political struggle? They mean that the working class cannot fight for its emancipation without securing influence over affairs of state, over the administration of the state, over the issue of laws . . . Thus we see that the struggle of the working class against the capitalist class must necessarily be a political struggle. Indeed, this struggle is already exerting influence on the state authority, is acquiring political significance. But the workers' utter lack of political rights, about which we have already spoken, and the absolute impossibility of the workers openly and directly influencing state authority become more clearly and sharply exposed and felt as the working-class movement develops. That is why the most urgent demand of the workers, the primary objective of the working-class influence on affairs of state must be *the achievement of political freedom*, i.e., the direct participation, guaranteed by law (by a constitution), of all citizens in the government of the state, the guaranteed right of all citizens freely to assemble, discuss their affairs, influence affairs of state

> through their associations and the press. The achievement of political freedom becomes the "*vital task of the workers*" because without it the workers do not and cannot have any influence over affairs of state, and thus inevitably remain a rightless, humiliated and inarticulate class.[18]

Here Lenin, for the first time, specified what "political freedom" means—that is, all the characteristics of bourgeois democracy, including civil liberties. These were essential, once again, in aiding the working class in its quest for political power, without which they would continue to be subject to "the domination of the capitalist class."[19]

The Tasks of the Russian Social Democrats

Out of jail and in exile in Siberia, Lenin had time to reflect on the most tumultuous events of his political career so far: the St. Petersburg textile workers' strikes in 1896—in many ways his baptism of fire. He drew some preliminary lessons in commenting on the government's new legislation that sought to assuage workers with some improvements in working conditions such as the length of the working day. One of the lessons, he pointed out, is that "the Russian Government is a far worse enemy of the Russian workers than the Russian employers are, for the government not only protects the interests of the employers, not only resorts, for this purpose, to brutal persecution of the workers, to arrests, deportations and the use of troops against unarmed workers, but what is more, protects the interests of the *most stingy* employers and resists any tendency of the better employers to yield to the workers."[20] And from that fact another lesson was to be drawn about the government's new policies: "[A]s long as the Russian workers, like the Russian people in general, stand disenfranchised in face of a police government, as long as they have no political rights, no reforms can be effective."[21] Again, the primacy of the struggle for political democracy.

As for the broader lessons of St. Petersburg and beyond, Lenin wrote a widely distributed pamphlet at the end of 1897, *The Tasks of the Russian Social-Democrats*, which provided greater precision about the democratic content of social democracy and the strategy for its implementation. Of Lenin's political writings prior to 1905, the pamphlet ranks in importance with *What Is to Be Done?*, published three years later. Russian social democrats make clear from the beginning that their task in leading the proletarian class struggle had two sides, "as the name they have adopted" indicates: "socialist (the fight against the capitalist class aimed at destroying the class system and organising socialist society), and democratic (the fight against absolutism aimed at winning political liberty in Russia and democratising the political and social system of Russia)."[22] He then

detailed what the socialist task is with reference to the activities of the League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class in the recent St. Petersburg strikes. Essentially this involved a combination of winning urban industrial workers to a communist perspective and taking part in their fights with the capitalists. In prioritizing the industrial proletariat, Lenin assured his readers that this didn't mean ignoring other toilers. To the contrary, he argued, a class-conscious, fighting industrial proletariat was the best aid the other toilers had in their own struggles.

> We have pointed to the inseparably close connection between *socialist* and *democratic* propaganda and agitation, to the complete parallelism of revolutionary activity in both spheres. Nevertheless, there is a big difference between these two types of activity and struggle. The difference is that in the economic struggle the proletariat stands absolutely alone against both the landed nobility and the bourgeoisie, except, perhaps, for the help it receives (and by no means always) from those elements of the petty bourgeoisie which gravitate towards the proletariat. In the democratic, *political* struggle, however, the Russian working class does not stand alone; at its side are all the political opposition elements, strata and classes, since they are hostile to absolutism and are fighting it in one form or another. Here *side by side* with the proletariat stand the opposition elements of the bourgeoisie, or of the educated classes, or of the petty bourgeoisie, or of the nationalities, religions and sects, etc., etc., persecuted by the autocratic government.[23]

The question then was what kind of alliance should the working class have with these other forces in the democratic struggle?

> The attitude of the working class, as a fighter against the autocracy, towards all the other social classes and groups in the political opposition is very precisely determined by the basic principles of Social-Democracy expounded in the famous *Communist Manifesto*. The Social-Democrats support the progressive social classes against the reactionary classes, the bourgeoisie against the representatives of privileged landowning estate and the bureaucracy, the big bourgeoisie against the reactionary strivings of the petty bourgeoisie. This support does not presuppose, nor does it call for, any compromise with non-Social-Democratic programmes and principles—it is support given to an ally against a *particular* enemy. Moreover, the Social-Democrats render this support in order to expedite the fall of the common enemy, but expect nothing *for themselves* from these temporary allies, and concede nothing to them. The Social-Democrats support every revolutionary movement against the present social system, they support all oppressed nationalities, persecuted religions, downtrodden social estates, etc., in their fight for equal rights.[24]

Thus Marx and Engels provided the answer, specifically in Part IV of the *Manifesto*. As his mentors had taught, the alliance of the proletariat with other forces willing to fight for democracy and the support rendered was specific, "temporary and conditional" as he put it. Most important, it did not "presuppose" or mean a "compromise" of social democracy's eventual goal of socialist revolution.

Lenin then explained why what Marx and Engels fought for, "independent working class political action," was necessary in the democratic struggle. He recognized that this might be misread by potential allies. "We shall be told that 'such action will *weaken* all the fighters for political liberty at the present time.' We shall reply that such action will *strengthen* all the fighters for political liberty. Only those fighters are strong who rely on the *consciously recognised* real interests of certain classes, and any attempt to obscure these class interests, which already play a predominant role in contemporary society, will only weaken the fighters. That is the first point." In other words, the class position of the proletariat—so central to Marx and Engels's analysis—justified putting it into the proverbial driver's seat. But that was only the beginning of wisdom, Lenin recognized. Comparisons with the other social layers were necessary.

> The second point is that, in the fight against the autocracy, the working class must single itself out, for it is the *only* thoroughly consistent and unreserved enemy of the autocracy, *only* between the working class and the autocracy is no compromise possible, *only* in the working class can democracy find a champion who makes no reservations, is not irresolute and does not look back. The hostility of all other classes, groups and strata of the population towards the autocracy is *not unqualified*; their democracy always looks back. The bourgeoisie cannot but realise that industrial and social development is being retarded by the autocracy, but it fears the complete democratisation of the political and social system and can at any moment enter into alliance with the autocracy against the proletariat. The petty bourgeoisie is two-faced by its very nature, and while it gravitates, on the one hand, towards the proletariat and democracy, on the other, it gravitates towards the reactionary classes, tries to hold up the march of history, is apt to be seduced by the experiments and blandishments of the autocracy . . . is capable of concluding an alliance with the ruling classes against the proletariat *for the sake of* strengthening its own *small-proprietor* position.

Though virtually nowhere in the document does Lenin have anything to say explicitly about the small peasantry—the heroes for the Narodniks—it can be safely assumed, based on prior writings cited earlier, that they are included with the "small-proprietor."

But if the "hostility" of the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie toward the autocracy is "not unqualified," unlike that of the proletariat, then might not there be other social layers that could be as solid in their opposition to the autocracy as that of the proletariat? If so, they were not, Lenin said, to be found in the ranks of at least one of two possible candidates:

> Educated people, and the "intelligentsia" generally, cannot but revolt against the savage police tyranny of the autocracy, which hunts down thought and knowledge; but the material interests of this intelligentsia bind it to the autocracy and to the bourgeoisie, compel it to be inconsistent, to compromise, to sell its oppositional and revolutionary ardour for an official salary, or a share of profits or dividends. As for the democratic elements among the oppressed nationalities and the persecuted religions, everybody knows and sees that the class antagonisms within these categories of the population are much deeper-going and stronger than the solidarity binding all classes within any one category against the autocracy and in favour of democratic institutions.

The intelligentsia, unlike oppressed nationalities, could not be expected to be as resolute as the proletariat in the democratic quest. Lenin's almost matter-of-fact but unsparing read of Russia's intelligentsia is reminiscent of Engels's comments about the parliamentary cretins in Germany in 1848–49, of which a large component were university professors on the state payroll.

The proletariat was unique. It "alone can be the *vanguard fighter* for political liberty and for democratic institutions. Firstly, this is because political tyranny bears most heavily upon the proletariat whose position gives it no opportunity to secure a modification of that tyranny—it has no access to the higher authorities, not even to the officials, and it has no influence on public opinion." And then Lenin gets to what I argue is the heart of his position—what any assessment of his views on democracy has to come to terms with: "Secondly, the proletariat alone is capable of bringing about the *complete* democratisation of the political and social system, since this would place the system in the hands of the workers." Nothing was more fundamental to his stance, as well to that of Marx and Engels. Only with the working class in power, in other words, is real democracy possible—exactly the conclusion that the young Marx and Engels reached a bit more than a half century earlier.

There were tactical and strategic consequences for such a conclusion, as alluded to earlier:

> That is why the *merging* of the democratic activities of the working class with the democratic aspirations of other classes and groups would *weaken*

> the democratic movement, would *weaken* the political struggle, would make it less determined, less consistent, more likely to compromise On the other hand, if the working class *stands out* as the vanguard fighter for democratic institutions, this will *strengthen* the democratic movement, will *strengthen* the struggle for political liberty, because the working class will *spur on* all the other democratic and political opposition elements, will push the liberals towards the political radicals, will push the radicals towards an irrevocable rupture with the whole of the political and social structure of present society.

Though Lenin doesn't cite Marx and Engels's *Address of March 1850* for support, I think it likely that it was the inspiration for his stance. As pointed out in Chapter 1, the document stressed repeatedly that in the event of a new revolutionary upsurge the proletariat party had to avoid the mistake it previously made. Rather than "unity" with nonproletarian democratic forces, it should only enter into an alliance with them. Though Lenin employed—or at least his translators do—"merging," what he warned against here was exactly in the spirit of Marx and Engels's admonition. Although it's not clear when he did so, the Bolshevik's leading archivist, David Riazanov, said, again, Lenin committed the *Address* to memory.

There is one additional point from *The Tasks*—at least at this stage of the exposition—that merits mention. It refers to the state bureaucracy not only in Russia but in England as well. While it was unmistakable in Russia that the institution in all its myriad incarnations served the interests of the privileged,

> Even in England we see that powerful social groups support the privileged position of the bureaucracy and hinder the complete democratisation of that institution. Why? Because it is in the interests of the proletariat alone to democratise it *completely*; the most progressive strata of the bourgeoisie defend certain prerogatives of the bureaucracy and are opposed to the election of all officials, opposed to the complete abolition of electoral qualifications, opposed to making officials directly responsible to the people, etc., because these strata realise that the proletariat will take advantage of such complete democratisation in order to use it *against* the bourgeoisie. This is the case in Russia, too.[25]

Lenin made clear here that his indictment of the Russian ruling class did not exempt its counterparts elsewhere, including in settings where bourgeois democracy was in place. Particularly significant is his reference—for the first time, as far as I can determine—to the electoral process. This reveals that he had no illusions about bourgeois democracy if and when it finally came to Russia—crucial in understanding what his response would be.

Taking into Account Russian Realities

All the positions discussed so far that Lenin held on political freedom, civil liberties, democracy in general, bourgeois democracy, and its relation to the socialist revolution were repeated in one form or another in his subsequent writings, including the soon to be discussed *What Is to Be Done?* Nothing new of significance was added, though to be sure, there were some elaborations and occasional tweaks. For example, "[W]hile our allies in the bourgeois-democratic camp, in struggling for liberal reforms, will always glance back . . . the proletariat will march forward to the end . . . we will struggle for the democratic republic . . . The party of the proletariat must learn to catch every liberal just at the moment when he is prepared to move forward an inch, and make him move forward a yard. If he is obdurate, we will go forward without him and over him."[26] Or, to the list of "general democratic reforms" in the old party program, which already included "universal franchise" and "salaries for deputies" among other basic rights, "it would be well to add: 'complete equality or rights for men and women.'"[27] And last, the all-important democratic alliance of workers and peasants was flushed out in "A Draft Programme for Our Party" at the end of 1899; in *The Tasks* it was only implied. To that end the most popular presentation of the aforementioned positions was in Lenin's widely distributed pamphlet *To the Rural Poor*. For the first time, Russian peasants learned about social democracy and what it meant for them.

If Lenin's views should, as I contend, sit well with real liberal democrats, what about his "dictatorship of the proletariat"? In many ways the previously mentioned liberal who has to be gone "over" alludes, in fact, to the controversial concept. Lenin's first other-than-cursory usage of the "dictatorship of the proletariat" came, in fact, almost at the same time in 1902 and thus offers a hint for his meaning. Marx and Engels coined the phrase and employed it, according to the most exhaustive inquiry, 12 times.[28] Hal Draper argues that once it got into Russian hands its original meaning changed—an issue I'll revisit. Suffice here to note what Lenin wrote about it—an attempt to provide clarity to Plekhanov's usage in the 1885 Russian party program: "To effect this social revolution the proletariat must win political power, which will make it master of the situation and enable it to remove all obstacles along the road to its great goal. In this sense the dictatorship of the proletariat is an essential political condition of the social revolution."[29] Again, this was Lenin's first try at defining the term. He would employ it extensively during the 1905 Revolution, and I argue that only then will it become clear what he meant. Until that discussion I think it important to point out that though Marx and Engels didn't use the phrase in the *Manifesto*, which Lenin was intimately familiar with, they did say

in four successive locations in the document that "force" would be necessary for the proletariat to carry out socialist transformation.[30] A case can be made, I think, that if not in the letter, Lenin's first try at a definition—"remove all obstacles"—captures the spirit of their program.[31]

In defending his politics, including the need for the dictatorship of the proletariat, Lenin often noted how Russia differed from Western Europe and the social democratic parties in place there. At the level of methodology, Lenin argued that difference had to be taken into account: "We do not regard Marx's theory as something completed and inviolable; on the contrary, we are convinced that it has only laid the foundation stone of the science which socialists *must* develop in all directions if they wish to keep pace with life." And that task was even more incumbent on Russian socialists, since Marx's theory "provides only general *guiding* principles, which in *particular*, are applied in England differently than in France, in France differently than in Germany, and in Germany differently than in Russia."[32]

In the old party program of Plekhanov, Zasulich, and others, rather than parliamentary democracy, it called for "direct people's legislation." Lenin thought that given "the specific features of Russia," it would be better to demand parliamentary representative democracy. "The victory of socialism must not be connected, in principle, with the *substitution* of direct people's legislation for parliamentarism." Direct democracy, though preferable, was—drawing on the research of Kautsky—more suitable for societies at a higher level of sociopolitical development. While "we are not in the least afraid to say that we want to imitate the Erfurt Program of the German Social Democratic Party," Lenin felt its demands for "direct legislation of the people by means of the initiative and referendum" and an electoral system with "proportional representation" and other very democratic features were inappropriate for the Russian reality.[33] "We, therefore, believe that at present, when the autocracy is dominant in Russia, we should limit ourselves to the demand for a 'democratic constitution.'"[34] Lenin reiterated this position in *What Is to Be Done?* with the additional point about representative democracy within the revolutionary party—an issue to be discussed in the second part of this chapter.

Shortly afterward in a polemic against opponents who called themselves social democrats but subordinated the political to the economic struggle—the "economists"—Lenin spelled out his earlier pronouncements. "What is meant by the overthrow of the autocracy?"

> It implies the tsar's renunciation of absolute power; the granting to the people of the right to elect their own representatives for legislation, for supervision over the actions of the government officials, for supervision over the collection and disbursement of state revenues. This type of

> government in which the people participate in legislation and administration is called the *constitutional* form of government (constitution = law on the participation of people's representatives in legislation and the administration of the state). Thus, the overthrow of the autocracy means the replacement of the autocratic form of government by the constitutional form of government . . . It means the convening of a Zemsky Sobor ["A central representative assembly"] of representatives of the people for the elaboration of a constitution ["to win a democratic constitution"; people's constitution, drawn up in the interests of the people], as it is put in the draft programme of the Russian Social-Democrats published in 1885 by the Emancipation of Labor Group.[35]

Here in very clear language for the first time Lenin stated what he meant by "constitutional government." He then reiterated his previously stated views about the necessity of such government, the democratic revolution, for the socialist revolution.

Some pages later, Lenin addressed the ridicule of the opponents about the fact that social democrats like him "'incessantly give first place to the advantages of workers' activities in a parliament [nonexistent in Russia], while completely ignoring . . . the importance of workers' participation' in the employers' legislative assemblies, on factory boards, and in municipal self-government." Lenin was only too happy to respond, pedagogically:

> If the advantages of parliament are not brought into the forefront, how will the workers learn about political rights and political liberty? If we keep silent on these questions—as does Rabochaya Mysl [the opponent newspaper]—does this not mean perpetuating the political ignorance of the lower strata of the workers? As to workers' participation in municipal self-government, no Social-Democrat has ever denied anywhere the advantages and the importance of the activities of socialist workers in municipal self-government; but it is ridiculous to speak of this in Russia, where no open manifestation of socialism is possible and where firing the workers with enthusiasm for municipal self-government (even were this possible) would actually mean distracting advanced workers from the socialist working-class cause towards liberalism.[36]

Thus in unambiguous terms Lenin defended the participation of workers in parliaments and other forms of representative government—a means to "learn about political rights and political liberty." When that opportunity opened in Russia, Lenin, as we'll see, did all he could to make it a reality. But in the absence of that opportunity—that is, political liberty—advocating what the opponents wanted would actually divert the most

"advanced workers" from the democratic revolution—the fight that no liberals were willing to pursue.

On Terrorism and Armed Struggle

Crucial in understanding much of the opposition to Lenin's politics was precisely the absence of political liberty. Russia was the world's largest remaining absolutist state. It was effectively a police state. To many no-doubt-sincere revolutionaries, to argue as he did that it was necessary to think about how to utilize the parliamentary arena seemed naïve. But there was nothing in Lenin's politics that ruled out armed struggle or even, perhaps, terror—just as for Marx and Engels, as noted in Chapter 1—as a means for ending the monarchy and instituting parliamentary democracy. What Lenin argued against, based on the historical record, was conspiratorial armed struggle or terror that was divorced from the mass movement. His first substantive comments on terror made at the end of 1899 in his "Draft Programme" began to make this point. The 1885 program contained under the principles section a point on the "means of political struggle" that he thought should be eliminated. "The programme should leave the question of means open, allowing the choice of means ['even terror'] to the militant organisations and to the Party congresses that determine the *tactics* of the Party." Thus terror was a tactic and not a principle, and its use should be decided through collective discussion, which was urgently needed.

It was needed, Lenin perceptibly noted, because "the growth of the movement leads of its own accord, spontaneously, to more frequent cases of the killing of spies and to greater, more impassioned indignation in the ranks of the workers and socialists who see ever greater numbers of their comrades being tortured to death in solitary confinement and at places of exile." Unless, in other words, the rightful anger generated by the terror of the police state was not handled in a conscious and strategic way, the desire for revenge could get out of hand and be unproductive—precisely why an organized discussion was necessary. Lenin's call for collective discussion was, as we'll see shortly, a cardinal principle in his political work.

Lenin then concluded, "In order to leave nothing unsaid, we will make the reservation that, in our own personal opinion, terror is *not* advisable as a means of struggle *at the present moment*, that the Party *(as a party)* must renounce it (until there occurs a change of circumstances that might lead to a change of tactics) and concentrate *all of its energy* on organization and the regular delivery of literature."[37] The task

now was to do the propaganda work to win the working class to social democracy.

Two years later in *What Is to Be Done?* Lenin noted what appeared to be a paradox—the agreement in opinion of "an Economist," one of the aforementioned opponents that Lenin had been polemicizing against, and a "non-Social-Democratic terrorist." But actually it wasn't, he asserted: "The Economists and terrorists merely bow to different poles of spontaneity . . . it is no accident that many Russian liberals—avowed liberals and liberals that wear the mask of Marxism—whole-heartedly sympathise with terror . . . [C]alls for terror and calls to lend the economic struggle itself a political character are merely two different forms of *evading* the most pressing duty now resting upon Russian revolutionaries, namely, the organisation of comprehensive political agitation."[38] Lenin's book, as we'll discuss, was part of his campaign for party organizing, and the problem with terrorism was that it hindered that objective. "Comprehensive" was exactly that—organizing designed to attract the largest numbers. And any organization that included "terror in its programme, calls for an organization of terrorists, and such an organisation would indeed prevent our troops from establishing closer contacts with the masses, which, unfortunately, are still not ours, and which, unfortunately, do not yet ask us, or rarely ask us, when and how to launch their military operations."[39] For Lenin the existence of a police state was not reason enough to call for terrorism. He opposed it, again, not on principle, but because it was an obstacle to building a mass movement. In that sense a principle was indeed at stake—that of the need for a movement that was the most inclusive. And only a mass movement could sanction the launching of "military operations."

In 1901 a new opponent organization was founded, the Socialist Revolutionary Party. In many ways this was a rebirth of the Narodniks with a socialist label. And as was the case with their predecessors, they, too, subscribed to the use of terror. Lenin's brother Alexander, it should be noted, was hanged in 1888 for trying to carry out a Narodnik assassination of the Czar. Lenin knew personally the futility of such schemes, a factor no doubt in his decision to take on its new advocates. "In their naïveté, the Socialist-Revolutionaries do not realize that their predilection for terrorism is causally most intimately linked with the fact that, from the very outset, they have always kept, and still keep, aloof from the working class movement . . . *without* the working people all bombs are powerless, patently powerless . . . Without in the least denying violence and terrorism in principle, we demanded work for the preparation of such forms of violence as were calculated to bring about the direct participation of the masses and which guaranteed that participation."[40]

And in their aloofness they committed the "principal mistake of terrorists" in not providing leadership for a proletariat in motion:

> At a time when the revolutionaries *are short of* the forces and means to lead the masses, who are already rising, an appeal to resort to such terrorist acts as the organisation of attempts on the lives of ministers by individuals and groups that are known to one another means, not only *thereby* breaking off work among the masses, but also introducing downright disorganization into that work . . . it even leads to apathy and passive waiting for the next *bout*. . . [A] revolutionary party is worthy of its name only when it guides *in deed* the movement of a revolutionary class . . . the working people are literally straining to go into action, and that their ardour runs to waste because of the scarcity of literature and leadership, the lack of forces and means in the revolutionary organisation . . . On the other hand, shots fired by the "elusive individuals" who are losing faith in the possibility of marching in formation and working hand in hand with the masses also end in smoke.[41]

These were certainly not Lenin's last words on terror, but it would be difficult to match the clarity in what he wrote here. It can't be stressed enough how central to his politics was the mobilization of the masses. The oft-made accusation thus—that he subscribed to putschism, overthrowing governments by a small group of revolutionaries—is simply not supported by the historical record, at least prior to 1905.[42]

As with terror, Lenin regarded armed struggle as a tactic and not a strategy. At a conference in 1902 that helped to prepare what would be the Second Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (RSDLP) the following year, Lenin sketched a resolution on its "immediate political task." Not surprisingly, by now it was the "overthrow of the autocracy." As for the means to do that, he recommended "boycotts, manifestations at theatres etc., as well as organized mass demonstrations." And then he proposed that the conference "advises all Party committees and groups [the branches of the party in various cities] to devote due attention to the need for preparatory measures for a nation-wide armed uprising against the tsarist autocracy."[43] This was Lenin's first mention of armed struggle in a party document, but it provided no details. It wasn't a call to do so but to take "preparatory measures" toward that end. And he treated it as one of a number of means to be employed—a tactic in that sense. Last, note that he called it a "nation-wide armed uprising." To do that would obviously require a mass movement—exactly what he accused those who regarded terror as a strategy of not wanting to bring into existence.

Lenin played a key role in the Second Congress, including the drafting and editing of resolutions. The "Draft Resolution on Demonstrations"

began with the point that they are "a highly important means of political education of the masses." It was therefore necessary that "the participation of the broad *masses* of the working class in the demonstrations" be secured. It also recommended that "preparations for armed demonstrations should be begun, strictly observing instructions of the Central Committee in this respect."[44] And to that end he repeated the point made at the earlier conference about the need for party locals to help in those preparations.

Lenin drafted another resolution titled "The Army," which for some reason wasn't submitted to the Congress—possibly, I suspect, for security reasons. "The Congress calls the attention of all Party organisations to the importance of Social-Democratic propaganda and agitation in the army, and recommends that all efforts should be made for the speediest strengthening and proper channelling of all the existing contacts among the officers and other ranks. The Congress considers it desirable to form special groups of Social-Democrats serving in the army, in order that these groups should occupy a definite position in the local committees (as branches of the committees), or in the central organisation (as institutions formed directly by the Central Committee and subordinated directly to it)."[45] Lenin was dead serious about winning the "broad masses"—including those within the army. This perspective of boring from within the military was completely consistent with his notion of the democratic alliance, particularly that between workers and peasants. The ranks of the military, as he would later say, were simply workers and peasants in uniform. The fruit of this work, over the course of about 14 years, would pay off for the Bolsheviks in October 1917, as we'll see. Finally, it should be noted that Lenin drafted a resolution on "Terrorism" in which he basically distilled in a short paragraph the points discussed earlier. The Congress voted in favor of the resolution, making it the official stance of the party.

Before turning to Lenin the party organizer, a few words about an issue that will get more attention later but that had its origins in the pre-1905 period: Because of its prestige in international social democracy, the course and actions of the German Social-Democratic Party (SPD) were followed closely by Lenin and cothinkers in other parties. As noted earlier, he wasn't afraid to admit that he wanted "to imitate the Erfurt Program" or at least "what is good" in it. The qualifier is significant, I think, when coupled with a later comment in *What Is to Be Done?*, almost in passing, about the SPD—its "weak points." Though it isn't clear what the latter refers to, Lenin was well acquainted with the reformist or "opportunist" wing of the German party led by Edouard Bernstein as soon as it appeared in 1898, and he carried out a fight against its echo within the Russian movement. Little

did he know, however, that a cleavage was in the making that would sharply distinguish the Russian party from its fraternal organizations in most of Western Europe—imitating the Erfurt Program notwithstanding.

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A final observation—for now: What pervades all Lenin's pronouncements and actions about Russia's yet-to-come democratic revolution is a profound sense of optimism. He truly believed that, other than the most privileged, no segment of Russian society—most important, the peasantry, the majority—was immune to the democratic virus. Nor was there any hint in his writings that an antidemocratic virus, as some would have it, lurked deep within the souls of the Russian people, making the democratic quest a nonstarter.[46] What was needed was for Russian social democracy to "raise the general-democratic banner, in order to group about itself all sections and all elements capable of fighting for political liberty or at least of supporting that fight in some way or another."[47] No better example of this deep faith was his proposal to the Second Congress in 1903 that the RSDLP make a special effort to reach out to "members of religious sects . . . so as to bring them under Social-Democratic influence." After all, "the sectarian movement . . . represents one of the democratic trends in Russia." The specific project was to be the publication of "a popular newspaper entitled *Among Sectarians.*"[48] The first issue—with a different name, *Rassvet* [*Dawn*]—appeared in January 1904. After nine issues the monthly folded, owing to an insufficient number of writers, as Lenin was forced to admit. Despite its brief existence, the "experiment," which he had fought to keep on life-support, had been worth pursuing: "Something . . . has been accomplished: contacts among the sects are broadening, both in America and in Russia."[49]

BUILDING A PARTY

At about the same time that he and Engels were making the case in London in 1871 for the necessity of independent working-class political action, Marx offered similar advice to a supporter in the United States. In a most didactic letter, he distilled the essence of the political struggle: "The POLITICAL MOVEMENT of the working class naturally has as its final object the conquest of POLITICAL POWER for this class, and this requires, of course, a PREVIOUS ORGANISATION of the WORKING CLASS developed up to a certain point, which arises from the economic struggles themselves."[50] For the working class to seize political power, it must have, in other words, an organization already in place. Fast forward to 1901: Lenin's debates with the "Economists." Against their view that

political agitation and building revolutionary organizations weren't essential in quiescent times, he countered, "[I]t is precisely in such periods and under such circumstances that work of this kind is particularly necessary, since it is too late to form the organization in times of explosion and outbursts; the party must be in a state of readiness to launch activity at a moment's notice."[51] Having a "previous organization" in place for the working class to take power was necessary because it would be "too late" to try to construct one in the heat of revolutionary turbulence.

Lenin's important addition to Marx's insight anticipated probably his most enduring contribution to his mentor's project. It registers how thoroughly he had grasped not only Marx's theory of political economy but his politics as well. In the remainder of this chapter the focus is on what kind of "previous organization" Lenin did seek to realize—again, prior to 1905—and how did democracy figure in as a means and end.

SOWING THE SEEDS

It was in Lenin's initial political declaration, *What the "Friends of the People" Are*, that he revealed his earliest thoughts on organizing a revolutionary party. But only toward the end of the two-hundred-page document did he address the issue. He rejected the claim of those who "foist upon Marx the most senseless fatalistic views . . . [T]hey assure us, the organization and socialization of the workers occurs spontaneously." The history of social democracy refutes such a claim, he argued. "Social-Democracy—as Kautsky very justly remarks—is a fusion of the working class movement and socialism," and that would not happen spontaneously; it required the "utmost energy" and "many, many persons." Socialists were therefore obligated to popularize Marxist theory and "help the worker to assimilate it and devise *the form of organization* most **SUITABLE** *under our conditions for disseminating Social-Democratic ideas and welding the workers into a political force.*"[52] By suitability "under our conditions" Lenin was referring to the absence of "political liberty" in Russia, which required the use of "secret circles"—as was true, he noted, for Marx and the Communist League in 1848. From the outset, then, Lenin considered his call to form an organization to be in the tradition of social democracy going back to Marx and Engels.

Lenin was already aware of the charge that in this scenario—socialists schooled in Marx's theory fusing with workers—the outcome would be an intellectual elite heading the organization. If the project, he said earlier in the document, was truly about "promoting the organization of the proletariat," then "the role of the 'intelligentsia' is to make special leaders from among the intelligentsia unnecessary."[53] Lenin recognized—as had

Marx and Engels—that the inequalities of class societies could impact the revolutionary party itself and therefore had to be addressed.[54] It's reasonable to assume that Lenin counted himself—at least at this stage of his political work—among the "intelligentsia." Thus he provided a reasonable criterion for the evaluation of his own practice. To what extent, in other words, did he act from then on to make those of his class background unnecessary for the working class's liberation?

Again, within months of the appearance of *What the "Friends of the People" Are*, Lenin experienced his political baptism of fire. In St. Petersburg in 1895, textile workers took the lead in staging Russia's first mass industrial strikes. Lenin and other social democrats were obligated to take part in whatever way they could. To coordinate their work, he helped found what would be the League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class.[55] Their activities led to his arrest and others' at the end of the year. He used his more than four-year-long imprisonment and Siberian exile to draw the lessons of the struggle, including its organizational tasks. To understand why, consider a comment he made in *What Is to Be Done?* To make his case that prior organizational work norms during the days of the strikes left much to be desired and that being more "professional" was needed now, he confessed,

> Let no active worker take offense at these frank remarks, for as far as insufficient training is concerned, I apply them first and foremost to myself. I used to work in a study circle that set itself very broad, all-embracing tasks; and all of us, members of that circle, suffered painfully and acutely from the realization that we were acting as amateurs at a moment of history when we might have been able to say, varying a well-known statement: "Give us an organization of revolutionaries, and we'll overturn Russia!" The more I recall the burning sense of shame I then experienced, the bitterer become my feelings towards those pseudo-Social-Democrats whose preachings "bring disgrace on the calling of a revolutionary," who fail to understand that our task is not to champion the degrading of the revolutionary to the level of an amateur, but to *raise* the amateurs to the level of revolutionaries.[56]

With real-life experiences under his belt, Lenin now sought to convince other social democrats to take organizing more seriously.

In his popular pamphlet written at the end of 1897, *Tasks of the Russian Social-Democrats*, Lenin wrote that the "creation of a durable revolutionary organization among the factory, urban workers is . . . the first and most urgent task confronting Social-Democracy."[57] He made clear what it would not be. He rejected the argument of a Narodnik opponent that such a party would effectively mean "organizing a political *conspiracy* . . .

The Social-Democrats . . . are not guilty of such a narrow outlook; they do not believe in conspiracies; they think that the period of conspiracies has long passed away, that to reduce political struggle to conspiracy means, on the one hand, immensely restricting its scope, and, on the other hand, choosing the most unsuitable methods of struggle." As for the same opponent's claim that "the Russian Social-Democrats take the activities of the West as an unfailing model," Lenin also begged to differ. "Russian Social-Democrats have never forgotten the political conditions here, they have never dreamed of being able to form a workers' party in Russia legally, they have never separated the task of fighting for socialism from that of fighting for political liberty. But they have always thought, and continue to think, that this fight must be waged not by conspirators, but by a revolutionary party based on the working-class movement."[58] The party that Lenin envisioned would have to operate, unlike fraternal social democratic parties in Western Europe, illegally given the absence of political liberty in Russia. And despite that glaring reality, its orientation would not be conspiratorial but rather toward the education and organization of the proletariat in its broadest numbers.

If there was a "model," Lenin wrote, it was that of the short-lived St. Petersburg League of Struggle and the work it conducted in Russia's first proletarian upsurge—the "embryo of a revolutionary party." Lenin's participation in the League was too brief, owing to his arrest, to draw any conclusions about his own organizational norms. In exile he wrote a leaflet that he appended to his pamphlet in support of the League as it came under increasing state oppression. Of significance was its call for a "strengthening and development of revolutionary discipline, organization and underground activity . . . And underground activity demands above all that groups and individuals specialize in different aspects of work and that the job of co-ordination be assigned to the central group of the League of Struggle, with as few members as possible."[59] This last recommendation would seem to contradict earlier pronouncements that suggested a more inclusive mode of functioning and opposition to conspiratorial organizing. What this confirms, rather, is that for Lenin organizational norms were flexible and to be adapted to the concrete situation; he had already said as much in distinguishing between the Russian and West European contexts for doing political work. The intent of the recommendation was to make it difficult to destroy the whole organization if individual members were arrested.[60] The leaflet, interestingly, was not appended to subsequent editions of the pamphlet.

In March 1898, a small group of social democrats who had been able to avoid the Czar's dragnet met secretly in Minsk to found the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party. Though unable to attend because of his

exile, Lenin applauded its work. The meeting was significant for another reason. It revealed a core characteristic of Russian social democracy often underappreciated and unacknowledged (certainly by Leninologists) from its official inception—its willingness to risk incarceration and sometimes life and limb to reach decisions through democratic discussion, debate, and vote and provide an account of its deliberations. No other political current, on either side of the spectrum, as far as I can determine, displayed such a similar trait. Russian social democracy, from the beginning, voted literally with democratic feet.

Events soon made clear that the party's founding was a stillbirth. Almost all the delegates who attended the Minsk meeting were arrested shortly afterward. Despite the setback, Lenin—again, in exile—labored arduously to write for what was to be the new party's central organ. A series of articles—though never published owing to the police state—formally initiated his party-building campaign. He set the tone for how to have a discussion in a preliminary piece criticizing an economist "credo" or manifesto: "We invite all groups of Social-Democrats and all workers' circles in Russia to discuss the above-quoted *Credo* and our resolution, and to express a definite opinion on the question raised, in order that all differences may be removed and the work of organizing and strengthening the [RSDLP] may be accelerated." Open discussion and debate to resolve differences to advance the party—that was the modus operandi Lenin advocated, and not for the last time.

His article *Our Immediate Task* was his first writing, as the title might suggest, devoted entirely to party building. It anticipated almost all the themes he would elaborate on in *What Is to Be Done?* (*WITBD*) two years later. The most important lines (certainly, for purposes here) had to do with what Lenin rightly saw as a potential tension in a mass revolutionary party "under conditions that are quite different from those of Western Europe." And precisely because of the latter fact, "there are no ready-made models to be found anywhere." He framed the issues with two questions: "1) How is the need for the complete liberty of local Social-Democratic activity to be combined with the need for establishing a single—and, consequently, a centralist—party?" Lenin recognized, in other words, at the outset the tension in a revolutionary party between the needs of centralization and democracy from below. The second question is even more instructive: "2) How can we combine the striving of Social-Democracy to become a revolutionary party that makes the struggle for political liberty its chief purpose with the determined refusal of Social-Democracy to organise political conspiracies, its emphatic refusal to 'call the workers to the barricades' . . . , or, in general, to impose on the workers this or that

'plan' for an attack on the government, which has been thought up by a company of revolutionaries?"[61] From a practical angle, he then said how these questions should not be answered. "This is not a solution that can be made by a single person or a single group; it can be provided only by the organized activity of Social-Democracy as a whole." Lenin's words are worth a reread because they challenge virtually every standard or Leninological account that portrays his project as exactly the opposite—a small elite with him in the lead imposing its will on the working class. Little wonder that they have been treated with silence.[62]

The solution Lenin proposed to both questions was the "*founding of a Party organ that will appear regularly and be closely connected with all the local groups*. . . The organization and disciplining of the revolutionary forces and the development of revolutionary technique are impossible without the discussion of all these questions in a central organ, without the collective elaboration of certain *forms and rules for the conduct of affairs*, without the establishment—through the central organ—of every Party member's *responsibility* to the entire Party."[63] Note, again, Lenin's emphasis on collective discussion—exactly what a central organ could guarantee. Regarding his later proposals for a party program, "it is to be hoped that in the discussion of the draft programme all views and all shades of views will be afforded expression, that the discussion will be comprehensive." Though, again, these and the related articles were never published in Lenin's lifetime, they offer an invaluable window into his thinking leading up to *WITBD*.

The "Iskrist Party"

When conditions finally permitted in 1901 for having not only a party newspaper, *Iskra*, but a magazine as well, *Zarya*, Lenin—now abroad—registered two relevant opinions. First, he disagreed with the custom elsewhere in the world of social democracy (Germany in particular) where the newspaper was popularly pitched to a working-class audience while the magazine was for the more "educated":

> [W]e wish particularly to emphasise our opposition to the view that a workers' newspaper should devote its pages exclusively to matters that immediately and directly concern the spontaneous working-class movement, and leave everything pertaining to the theory of socialism, science, politics, questions of Party organisation, etc., to a periodical for the intelligentsia. On the contrary, it is necessary to combine all the concrete facts and manifestations of the working-class movement with the indicated questions; the light of theory must be cast upon every separate fact; propaganda on questions of politics and

> Party organisation must be carried on among the broad masses of the working class; and these questions must be dealt with in the work of agitation.[64]

Nothing could be "more dangerous and more criminal than the demagogic speculation on the underdevelopment of the workers" and the assumption that they couldn't grasp theory.[65] Hence the only difference, he argued, between the two publications should be the length of their articles, not their content.

His second opinion had to do with, again, the apparent tension between centralism and democracy and how to ensure the latter:

> [W]e desire our publications to become organs for the *discussion* of all questions by all Russian Social-Democrats of the most diverse shades of opinion. We do not reject polemics between comrades, but, on the contrary, are prepared to give them considerable space in our columns. Open polemics, conducted in full view of all Russian Social-Democrats and class-conscious workers, are necessary and desirable in order to clarify the depth of existing differences, in order to afford discussion of disputed questions from all angles, in order to combat the extremes into which representatives of various views, various localities, or various "specialities" of the revolutionary movement inevitably fall.[66]

Both opinions provide more evidence for Lenin's democratic credentials: specifically how to ensure (1) real working-class leadership in a party that purported to advance its interests and (2) democratic discussion and debate. His answers would find their way into *WITBD*.

The two publications were the product of a political fusion of the new generation of social democrats headed by Lenin with the older one in exile headed by Plekhanov. The six-person editorial board consisted of Lenin, Alexander Potresov, and Julius Martov representing the youth, and Plekhanov, Zasulich, and Pavel Axelrod representing the "old ones." The board, increasingly known as the "Iskrists" or "Iskrist Party," functioned as an ersatz party in waiting. In essence, this was Lenin's first opportunity, as editor-in-chief, to work in a body in which votes were taken to make decisions and for which there is some account. His letter to Plekhanov early in the newspaper's life, for example, is instructive. Negotiations on behalf of the committee with the aforementioned Struve on a joint publication proved to be politically unproductive, he reported: "I have made a copy of this letter, and am appending it to the Minutes of today's meeting as a statement of my protest and of my 'dissenting opinion,' and I invite you too to raise the banner of revolt . . . If the majority expresses itself in favour—I shall, of course, submit, but only after having washed

my hands of it beforehand."[67] It's not clear if he had to "submit" to the will of the majority—because the negotiations eventually broke off—but he was "of course" willing to do so. Some months later a majority of the board did vote against his wording of an article, which he accepted with apparent magnanimity in a report to Plekhanov.[68] The available evidence reveals that in his two-and-a-half-year editorship he collaborated with the others—some with whom he had significant political disagreements—in a principled and aboveboard manner.[69]

What Is to Be Done?

Very little of relevance in Lenin's most famous publication before 1905 had not been previewed in his prior writings discussed here. In the order of presentation in the book, let's begin with "the vanguard" question (implicit, I contend, in the prior writings).

In the aforementioned writing in which Lenin labeled "dangerous" and "criminal" any assumption about the political incapacities of the Russian proletariat, he was challenging the central argument of a recently formed committee of social democrats in Kiev in 1899. He offered, to the contrary, a litany of examples of how Russian workers had engaged in political struggle. If the response was that these were merely examples of just "spontaneous outbursts rather than political struggles," Lenin countered pedagogically, "Can one find in history a single case of a popular movement, of a class movement, that did not begin with spontaneous, unorganized outbursts, that would have assumed an organized form and created political parties without the conscious intervention of enlightened representatives of the given class?" The history of the class struggle, he argued, had demonstrated that within subjected classes some of its members are more "enlightened" than others—that is, they understand better the interests of the class and have the skills to organize the struggle to advance them. In other words, every class—dominant as well as subject ones—had a vanguard. What was missing in Russia, he went on to say, wasn't, contrary what the committee alleged, a lack of proletarian political struggles but rather a vanguard—those willing to organize and lead the numerous examples of local struggles to a successful conclusion: a political revolution. Lenin's argument rested on what he saw as the facts of history—Marx and Engels's "materialist conception of history"—and thus a counterargument would have to dispute him on that terrain.

Two years later Lenin was more explicit. It is in the 15-page section, "The Working Class as Vanguard Fighter for Democracy," of the third chapter that Lenin discussed the term for the first time. But it soon becomes clear

that, rather than the label, it is a set of actions that concerned Lenin the most. The task for social democracy, he argued, is how to bring "class political consciousness" to the working class. Such consciousness required workers to think beyond their own immediate economic interests, and this is what social democrats were uniquely suited to assist in. As one of the more well-known lines of *WITBD* put it, "the Social-Democrat's ideal should not be the trade union secretary, but *the tribune of the people*, who is able to react to every manifestation of tyranny and oppression, no matter where it appears, no matter what stratum or class of the people it affects."[70] A couple of pages later Lenin elaborated on how this ideal could be realized; in the process he called attention—of importance for this book—to the role that parliamentary activity could play when available:

> The principal thing . . . is *propaganda* and *agitation* among all strata of the people. The work of the West European Social-Democrat is in this respect facilitated by the public meetings and rallies which *all* are free to attend, and by the fact that in parliament he addresses the representatives of *all* classes. We have neither a parliament nor freedom of assembly; nevertheless, we are able to arrange meetings of workers who desire to listen to *a Social-Democrat*. We must also find ways and means of calling meetings of representatives of all social classes that desire to listen to *a democrat*; for he is no Social-Democrat who forgets in practice that "the Communists support every revolutionary movement," that we are obliged for that reason to expound and emphasise *general democratic tasks before the whole people*, without for a moment concealing our socialist convictions. He is no Social-Democrat who forgets in practice his obligation to be *ahead of all* in raising, accentuating, and solving *every* general democratic question.[71]

Thus Lenin defined a vanguard as those who are "*ahead of all* in raising, accentuating, and solving every general democratic question." In the reality of Russia in 1902, that was what Lenin asserted a vanguard to be—no more, no less!

To be even clearer, he then ridiculed some self-proclaimed vanguard social democrats: "[I]t is not enough to call ourselves the 'vanguard,' the advanced contingent; we must act in such a way that all the other contingents recognize and are obliged to admit that we are marching in the vanguard. And we ask the reader: Are the representatives of the other 'contingents' such fools as to take our word for it when we say that we are the 'vanguard'?" A few months later Lenin reiterated this point about the problem with self-proclamation. In his second draft of a party program, Plekhanov wrote something about "advancing Social-Democracy *to the very first place* . . . In my opinion, we should not talk at all about the very first

place: that is self-evident from the entire program. Let us leave it to history to say this about us, rather than say it ourselves."[72] Only history, in other words, would determine whether a party was in the vanguard or not.

Despite the contortions and discomforts the label has given to some sincere democrats, I contend that there is nothing in Lenin's understanding of a "vanguard" they should fear. If anything, he should be applauded. The actions of those who are "ahead of all" were intended to ensure the democratic revolution. Nor should there be concern about his claim that within classes there are those who step forward before others to provide leadership. There is nothing inherently undemocratic about that time-tested truth. If read in real time and not hindsight, Lenin's arguments were compatible with the democratic quest. The reader can, again, verify my claim by reading the entire section from which the quotes I've selected come.

As for the second issue, it may be remembered that Lenin in his very first programmatic statement wrote that the "role of the 'intelligentsia' is to make special leaders from among the intelligentsia unnecessary." This is exactly the issue addressed in "The Scope of Organizational Work" in the fourth chapter of *WITBD*. Lenin like other social democrats recognized that there were an insufficient number of cadre to carry out the necessary work, but he strongly disagreed with those who argued that the working conditions of the "average worker"—especially the 11.5-hour workday—meant that the most important tasks of revolutionary work, other than "agitation," "fall mainly upon the shoulders of an extremely small force of intellectuals." He especially disliked the notion that "pedagogics" was needed to bring workers up to speed to do more complex tasks. Such thinking "proves that our very first and most pressing duty is to help to train working-class revolutionaries who will be on the same level *in regard to Party activity* as the revolutionaries from amongst the intellectuals (we emphasize the words 'in regard to Party activity,' for, although necessary, it is neither so easy nor so pressingly necessary to bring the workers up to the level of intellectuals in other respects). Attention, therefore, must be devoted *principally to raising* the workers to the level of revolutionaries." And to achieve that goal required organizational adjustments.

Lenin then began to spell out what he meant by "to the level of revolutionaries" and what was required:

> To be fully prepared for his task, the worker-revolutionary must likewise become a professional revolutionary. Hence B-v [the opponent who provoked his dissent] is wrong in saying that since the worker spends eleven and a half hours in the factory, the brunt of all other revolutionary functions (apart from agitation) "*must necessarily* fall mainly upon the shoulders of an

> extremely small force of intellectuals." But this condition does not obtain out of sheer "necessity." It obtains because we are backward, because we do not recognize our duty to assist every capable worker to become a *professional* agitator, organizer, propagandist, literature distributor, etc., etc.[73]

It wasn't workers, because of the conditions in which they labored, who were the problem but rather "we"—that is, those who claimed to be revolutionary social democrats. Lenin then detailed how the German SPD took steps to recruit "capable working class men" to become "professional" revolutionaries, August Bebel being Exhibit A. By "professional"—a label, like "vanguard," that often contorts many sincere democrats—Lenin meant no more than a worker who had the requisite skills to "wage a stubborn struggle against its excellently trained enemies."

With the German movement as a reference point, he specified what the Russian movement needed to do:

> A worker-agitator who is at all gifted and "promising" *must not be left* to work eleven hours a day in a factory. We must arrange that he be maintained by the Party; that he may go underground in good time; that he change the place of his activity, if he is to enlarge his experience, widen his outlook, and be able to hold out for at least a few years in the struggle against the gendarmes. As the spontaneous rise of their movement becomes broader and deeper, the working-class masses promote from their ranks not only an increasing number of talented agitators, but also talented organisers, propagandists, and "practical workers" in the best sense of the term (of whom there are so few among our intellectuals who, for the most part, in the Russian manner, are somewhat careless and sluggish in their habits). When we have forces of specially trained worker-revolutionaries who have gone through extensive preparation (and, of course, revolutionaries "of all arms of the service"), no political police in the world will then be able to contend with them, for these forces, boundlessly devoted to the revolution, will enjoy the boundless confidence of the widest masses of the workers. We are directly to *blame* for doing too little to "stimulate" the workers to take this path, common to them and to the "intellectuals," of professional revolutionary training, and for all too often dragging them back by our silly speeches about what is "accessible" to the masses of the workers, to the "average workers," etc.[74]

If there are any doubts about Lenin's sincerity in acting on his dictum to make those of his class background unnecessary for working class liberation, what he outlines here—particularly the concreteness of the proposals—must surely be reassuring. No one in the nascent Russian social democratic movement, as far as I can determine, was as conscientious as

he in the recruitment of workers to its leadership. Subsequent events will reveal whether or not his efforts were rewarded.

The third and last issue of importance in *WITBD* concerns the previously discussed issue of direct versus representative democracy. Earlier, as noted, Lenin thought that given the reality of autocratic, underdeveloped Russia, the latter form of democracy—that is, parliamentary government—was preferable. But what about the party itself? Couldn't a case be made for direct democracy in the revolutionary party? Lenin demurred. The issue was part of a larger question—could the kind of revolutionary party he was proposing conform to the "broad democratic principle"—that is, "full publicity" and "election to all offices"? If that was the standard, then in the "frame of our autocracy" such norms could not be met. Under such conditions the "only serious organizational principle for the active workers of our movement should be the strictest secrecy, the strictest selection of members, and the training of professional revolutionaries." But—and this is important—it "would be a great mistake to believe that the impossibility of establishing real 'democratic' control renders the members of the revolutionary organization beyond control altogether."

What if direct democracy was possible in Russia? The history of the working-class movement itself, Lenin argued—citing the lessons of the English trade-union movement drawn by "Mr. [Sidney] and Mrs. [Beatrice] Webb's book" and "Kautsky's book on parliamentarism"—demonstrated after lots of trials and errors that even in settings where political liberty existed workers learned "the necessity for representative institutions, on the one hand, and for full-time officials, on the other."[75] To demand direct or "primitive democracy" by those who should have known these lessons, or the application of the "broad principle of democracy" in the reality of the Russian police state, was to engage in "playing at democracy," "democratism," or a mere "striving for effect."[76]

In criticizing those "striving for effect," there is not the slightest hint of Lenin making virtue out of necessity. A highly centralized and secretive mode of functioning with "professional" cadre not subject to the "broad democratic principle" was necessary in autocratic Russia, not desirable. This will be confirmed, as we'll see, when political space opened for the first time in the heady days of 1905–6.[77]

Letter to a Comrade

When Lenin received a letter from a worker in St. Petersburg in the fall of 1902 that sought his opinion on revolutionary organizing, it allowed him to concretize two key themes in his recently published book—how

to ensure that workers actually lead the revolutionary party and how to do effective revolutionary work under the constraints of a police state. His response, "A Letter to a Comrade on Our Organizational Tasks," in fact, should be read alongside *WITBD* to fully understand Lenin's arguments.[78] Written, as its title suggests, in a very comradely tone—in contrast to the polemical style of the book—Lenin addressed in order the points the worker wanted an opinion about. Relevant for purposes here was the second: a party central committee "should consist of both workers and intellectuals, for to divide them into two committees is harmful":

> This is absolutely and indubitably correct. There should be only one committee of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, and it should consist of fully convinced Social-Democrats who devote themselves entirely to Social-Democratic activities. We should particularly see to it that as many workers as possible become fully class-conscious and professional revolutionaries and members of the committee. Once there is a *single* and not a dual committee, the matter of the committee members *personally* knowing many workers is of particular importance. In order to take the lead in whatever goes on in the workers' midst, it is necessary to be able to have access to all quarters, to know very many workers, to have all sorts of channels, etc., etc. The committee should, therefore, include, as far as possible, all the principal *leaders* of the working-class movement from among the workers themselves; it should direct *all* aspects of the local movement and take charge of *all* local institutions, forces and means of the Party.[79]

"As many workers as possible" on the central committee and "from among the workers themselves"—that was Lenin's ideal. In the accompanying footnote, he wrote, "We must try to get on the committee revolutionary workers who have the greatest contacts and the best 'reputation' among the mass of workers." Lenin's affirmative-action perspective, if implemented, would begin to reduce the weight of the "intellectuals" in the revolutionary workers' party. And having a unified central committee would aid this process, for if the intellectuals were to have their own space, they would likely exercise undue influence owing to the skill advantages that class society had bequeathed to them.

Though not in the order of presentation in the inquiry, there was a related point that Lenin took up—"the factory circles. These are particularly important to us: the main strength of the movement lies in the organisation of the workers at the *large* factories, for the large factories (and mills) contain not only the predominant part of the working class, as regards numbers, but even more as regards influence, development, and fighting capacity. Every factory must be our fortress." But this most

vital work needed to be at the very center of revolutionary organizing and not ghettoized as was often the case where "the traditional type of purely labour or purely trade-union Social-Democratic organization" existed. To avoid this, the "factory group . . . should consist of a very small number of *revolutionaries*, who take their instructions and receive their authority to carry on all Social-Democratic work in the factory *directly from the [central] committee.* Every member of the factory committee should regard himself as an agent of the [central] committee, obliged to submit to all its orders and to observe all the 'laws and customs' of the 'army in the field' which he has joined and from which in time of war he has no right to absent himself without official leave."[80] Putting the factory groups at the center of the party would ensure that its leadership consisted overwhelmingly of industrial workers.

Almost every page of Lenin's letter refers to the overarching context—the Russian police state. That reality, more than any other, explained the party's necessary modus operandi, which Lenin distilled:

> The whole art of running a secret organisation should consist in making use of *everything possible*, in "giving everyone something to do," at the same time retaining *leadership* of the whole movement, not by virtue of having the power, of course, but by virtue of authority, energy, greater experience, greater versatility, and greater talent. This remark is made to meet the possible and usual objection that strict centralisation may all too easily ruin the movement if the centre *happens* to include an *incapable* person invested with tremendous power. This is, of course, possible, but it cannot be obviated by the elective principle and decentralisation, the application of which is absolutely impermissible to any wide degree and even altogether detrimental to revolutionary work carried on under an autocracy. Nor can any rules provide means against this; such means can be provided only by measures of "comradely influence," beginning with the resolutions of each and every subgroup, followed up by their appeals to the C[entral].O[rgan]. and the C[entral].C[ommittee]., and ending (if the worst comes to the worst) with the *removal* of the persons in authority who are absolutely incapable. The committee should endeavour to achieve the greatest possible division of labour, bearing in mind that the various aspects of revolutionary work require various abilities, and that sometimes a person who is absolutely useless as an organiser may be invaluable as an agitator, or that a person who is not good at strictly secret work may be an excellent propagandist, etc.[81]

Real elections for the selection of the party's leadership, as Lenin had pointed out before, required a set of conditions that simply didn't exist "under an autocracy."

If decentralization, like the "elective principle," could neither prevent an admitted potential danger with "strict centralization"—that is, the abuse of power—this didn't mean that Lenin dismissed it. To the contrary, his final main point was about the advantages of decentralization for a centralized party:

> [W]hile *the greatest possible centralisation* is necessary with regard to the ideological and practical *leadership* of the movement and the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat, *the greatest possible decentralisation* is necessary with regard to keeping the Party centre (and therefore the Party as a whole) *informed* about the movement, and with regard to *responsibility* to the Party. The leadership of the movement should be entrusted to the smallest possible number of the most homogeneous possible groups of professional revolutionaries with great practical experience. Participation in the movement should extend to the greatest possible number of the most diverse and heterogeneous groups of the most varied sections of the proletariat (and other classes of the people) . . . This decentralisation is an essential prerequisite of revolutionary centralisation and an *essential corrective to it*.[82]

Diversity in action at the local level and the information about it was exactly what a highly centralized organization needed to be an effective working-class revolutionary party. Under the conditions of the autocracy this was, as Lenin maintained, the only way to build what was needed to be "ahead of all" in the democratic revolution.

The richness of Lenin's 20-page document on organizational matters—which more workers read than *WITBD*—can only be glimpsed at here. Its details, for example, on how to deal with spies, agent provocateurs, and traitors—should they be killed or not?—or how to be prepared to respond to the arrests of leaders and cadre, are invaluable in understanding the daily repressive atmosphere in which revolutionaries had to function. Again, it can't be overstated how much that reality shaped Lenin's proposals. It should come as no surprise that almost all the surviving copies of the document came from police files.

The Second Congress and Afterward or, *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*

The Iskrists, with Lenin in the lead, were eventually successful in convening a congress of the RSDLP in July 1903. The undercover meeting took place in Brussels after two preliminary conferences inside Russia resulted in the arrests of most of their attendees. But even Brussels proved to be a dangerous venue, and after 13 sessions the congress was moved to London; it concluded there but again was forced to change venues. Lenin

didn't exaggerate in writing later about "all of the tremendous effort, danger and expense" that went into holding it.[83] The danger was especially real for those delegates not already in exile but traveling from Russia. They had the challenge of not only getting out but also returning and then avoiding arrest for having been a participant. The approximately sixty attendees left a record of their proceedings not only for themselves but for posterity and recognized the risks involved—a potentially convenient tool for the police. Great care, then, had to be exercised by the minute takers, such as, for example, the use of gender-neutral pseudonyms given the number of women delegates. Such details underscore, again, the point made before about the often underappreciated extent to which Russian social democracy uniquely went to have democratic discussion, debate, and decision making.

Of the issues debated and resolved (or perhaps not) at the gathering, three are particularly relevant for this book. First, the delegates adopted the draft program that Plekhanov and Lenin had largely written that called for (among other points) the democratic republic with all the necessary trappings, like a "legislative assembly," "universal suffrage," and civil liberties as discussed earlier. Lenin's democratic agenda had now become the official program of Russian social democracy.

The second issue—and maybe the most contentious at the time—concerned the requirements for party membership. The proposal that Lenin offered stipulated, "A Party member is one who accepts the Party's programme and supports the Party both financially and by personal participation in one of its organizations." But what if someone, Pavel Axelrod objected, who supported the party couldn't be actively involved in a party organization—such as a university professor? What the ensuing debate exposed was the long-simmering differences of opinion about the role of intellectuals in a revolutionary workers party. Lenin, as already discussed, saw their role as that of making themselves expendable. To do as Axelrod wanted would allow them to have their cake and eat it too—to be fashionably revolutionary without having to pay the costs. But there were enough opponents of Lenin's proposal—for very different reasons—to have it modified.

After the congress Lenin revisited the issue, along with others, in his analysis of the overall outcome of the historic meeting, *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back* (*OSFTSB*). The differences on the question were not for him "a matter of life and death for the Party"; they could be resolved. Two years later, in fact, the opponents of his position, who had now crystallized into what came to be known as the Mensheviks, agreed with him. But their concern about intellectuals like university professors in the way Axelrod and kindred minds voiced it revealed for him something much

more problematic. If Lenin was ever a member of the intelligentsia or the intellectual crowd, he burned whatever remaining bridges he had to them in *OSFTSB*. They—as well as sincere revolutionaries like Rosa Luxemburg and Leon Trotsky—took special umbrage to his characterization of them. A letter in the "new *Iskra*," now in Menshevik hands, provoked him. The writer, the anonymous "Practical Worker," "denounces me for visualizing the Party 'as an immense factory' headed by a director in the shape of the Central Committee." Lenin gladly took the bait:

> "Practical Worker" never guesses that this dreadful word of his immediately betrays the mentality of the bourgeois intellectual unfamiliar with either the practice or the theory of proletarian organisation. For the factory, which seems only a bogey to some, represents that highest form of capitalist co-operation which has united and disciplined the proletariat, taught it to organise, and placed it at the head of all the other sections of the toiling and exploited population. And Marxism, the ideology of the proletariat trained by capitalism, has been and is teaching unstable intellectuals to distinguish between the factory as a means of exploitation (discipline based on fear of starvation) and the factory as a means of organisation (discipline based on collective work united by the conditions of a technically highly developed form of production). The discipline and organisation which come so hard to the bourgeois intellectual are very easily acquired by the proletariat just because of this factory "schooling." Mortal fear of this school and utter failure to understand its importance as an organising factor are characteristic of the ways of thinking which reflect the petty-bourgeois mode of life and which give rise to the species of anarchism that the German Social-Democrats call *Edelanarchismus*, that is, the anarchism of the "noble" gentleman, or aristocratic anarchism, as I would call it.[84]

For "Practical Worker," and presumably an avowed Marxist, to treat the world of the factory in such an undifferentiated way was most telling about the "new Iskra."

This wasn't Lenin's first incision regarding intellectuals. An earlier one in the book complemented his rebuke of "Practical Worker":

> No one will venture to deny that *the intelligentsia*, *as a special stratum* of modern capitalist society, is characterized, by and large, *precisely by individualism* and incapacity for discipline and organization . . . This, incidentally, is a feature which unfavorably distinguishes this social stratum from the proletariat; it is one of the reasons for the flabbiness and instability of the intellectual, which the proletariat so often feels; and this trait of the intelligentsia is intimately bound up with its customary mode of life, its mode of earning a livelihood, which in a great many respects approximates

to the *petty-bourgeois mode of existence* (working in isolation or in very small groups, etc.).[85]

Lenin's unflattering portrait was completely consistent with his campaign to make, as he had said at the outset of his political career, the intelligentsia expendable for the working class. Not for naught, I suspect, the intellectual world in general has ever since looked askance on him—aside from his politics. As always, for Lenin, it wasn't personal but political.[86]

On a related note, Lenin restated what he had said at the congress about "professional revolutionaries" in response to what his critics alleged. "'It should not be imagined that Party organizations must consist solely of professional revolutionaries. We need the most diverse organizations of all types, ranks, and shades, beginning with extremely limited and secret and ending with very broad, free, *lose Organisationen*.' This is such an obvious and self-evident truth that I did not think it necessary to dwell on it."[87]

The third relevant issue of the congress was the fateful decision by the majority of delegates to select a central committee and new editorial board for *Iskra*, the now officially adopted organ of the party, whose respective compositions gave Lenin more influence. In the case of *Iskra* the delegates voted (in a most contentious session) to reduce its editorial board from six to three: Lenin, Martov, and Plekhanov. Thus two of the "old ones," Zasulich and Axelrod, and a "new one," Potresov, were no longer on the board. This vote, in hindsight, and not the dispute on membership, set into motion what would be the historic split in the RSDLP between the majority, the Bolsheviks, and the minority, the Mensheviks. Not content to be outvoted, the latter, with Martov leading the way—he refused to remain on the editorial board—rejected the decisions of the majority. What was at stake, Lenin argued in *OSFTSB*, was a basic democratic question—the "sovereignty of the congress." That was the principle, more than any other one, he defended in the two-hundred-page book. "If people really want to work together, they should also be willing to submit to the will of the majority, that is, of a congress."[88] In his retort to Luxemburg's criticism of his book, he asked, "[D]oes the comrade consider it normal for supposed party central institutions to be dominated by the minority of the Party Congress?—can she imagine such a thing?—has she ever seen it in any party?"[89] Lenin's opponents and enemies didn't see it that way, and thus began the story of "Lenin the ogre." Both Trotsky and Luxemburg were its initial authors.[90]

As it was becoming increasingly clear that a split in the RSDLP was underway in the aftermath of the Second Congress, Lenin responded very

comradely to an article Plekhanov had written asking what could be done to avoid it:

> [F]irst of all: do not conceal from the Party the appearance and growth of potential causes of a split, do not conceal any of the circumstances and events that constitute such causes; and, what is more, do not conceal them not only from the Party, but, as far as possible, from the outside public either . . . To be a party of the masses not only in name, we must get ever wider masses to share in all Party affairs, steadily elevating them from political indifference to protest and struggle, from a general spirit of protest to the conscious adoption of Social-Democratic views, from the adoption of these views to support of the movement, from support to organized membership in the Party. Can we achieve this result without giving the widest publicity to matters on whose decision the nature of our influence on the masses will depend?

Lenin then agreed with Plekhanov's point about making sure "suitable persons" were promoted to the party's "central bodies." "And for that very reason *the whole Party*" had to be involved in the process, and that meant having all the necessary information about possible candidates, their strengths and weaknesses, "their victories and 'defeats.'" Plekhanov, he noted, was particularly insightful, owing no doubt to his wealth of experiences—giving him his deserved props—about understanding the reasons for successes and failures:

> And just because these observations are so acute, it is necessary that the whole Party should benefit by them, that it should *always see* every "defeat," even if partial, of one or other of its "leaders." No political leader has a career that is without its defeats, and if we are serious when we talk about influencing the masses, about winning their "good will," we must strive with all our might not to let these defeats be hushed up in the musty atmosphere of circles and grouplets, but to have them submitted to the judgment of all . . . Only through a series of such open discussions can we get a really harmonious ensemble of leaders; only given this condition will it be *impossible* for the workers to cease to understand us; only then will our "general staff" really be backed by the *good* and *conscious* will of an army that follows and at the same time directs its general staff![91]

Lenin's civil, pedagogical, and measured reply to Plekhanov's article gives lie, again, to "Lenin the ogre."[92]

Some final words about *OSFTSB*—it was in the context of the previously quoted comment about party organizational norms in Western Europe that Lenin gave his first sustained discussion of a feature of social

democracy that was still in its infant stage. "It is highly interesting to note that these fundamental characteristics of opportunism in matters of organisation (autonomism, aristocratic or intellectualist anarchism . . . are, *mutatis mutandis* with appropriate modifications), to be observed in all the Social-Democratic parties in the world, wherever there is a division into a revolutionary and an opportunist wing (and where is there not?)"[93] He then devoted about five pages to describing the feature, first in the German party—"where opportunism is weaker than in France and Italy"—and then he noted the similarities with the fledgling Russian party. While he considered Kautsky to be "one of the spokesmen of the revolutionary trend" in the German party, he wrote in a footnote that "Comrade Kautsky has sided with Martov's formulation, and . . . is mistaken."[94] Lenin sent his reply to Luxemburg's criticism of his book to Kautsky for publication in *Neue Zeit*, where her article appeared, but Kautsky refused to publish it. Lenin's initial comments on opportunism in the German party would not be his last.

Lenin's comradely reply to Plekhanov's article about the need for openness recalls the advice that Engels in 1890 gave to the young Vera Zasulich, who was piqued about some of the Western social democratic press airing the debates within Russian émigré circles: "[I]t would surely be to the advantage of the Russian movement itself if it ran its course somewhat more openly before the wider public in the West, rather than covertly, in small isolated circles which, for that very reason, become hotbeds of intrigue and conspiracy. To inveigle his adversaries out into the open, into the light of day, and to attack them in full view of the public, was one of Marx's most powerful and most frequently used ploys when confronted by clandestine intrigue."[95] It was exactly the "isolated circles," the "autonomists," and, as he derisively labeled it, the "family" atmosphere they bred that Lenin wanted to get rid of through centralization. His book was just what Marx would have advised—an "attack . . . in full view of the public." Tragically, it seems, Zasulich never fully appreciated Engels's advice. She, along with Martov, and Trotsky in tow, helped lead the charge against Lenin's project. No Russian, I contend, understood better what Engels was talking about than Lenin.

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What were the theoretical and programmatic premises that informed Lenin and the Bolsheviks when the political opening came in 1905—that is, when the monarchy was forced to grant a semblance of representative government? That is what this chapter has sought to understand. Again, the focus has been on issues related directly or peripherally to that opening, such as the relationship between the democratic and socialist

revolutions, parliamentary democracy and the electoral process. Thus other matters that occupied his time have been ignored or, as in the case of the all-important one of the peasantry, treated only briefly. Lenin, like Marx and Engels, understood that the electoral arena was only one component—important, certainly—in the larger totality of the revolutionary process. And not least important in understanding that process, particularly what the Bolsheviks were able to accomplish later, was Lenin's profound grasp of the need for adequate preparation. Again, as he put it, if a revolutionary party was not in place when a revolution exploded, it would be "too late" to try to do so. That insight, more than anything else, explains his bull-dogged insistence in party-building in order to avoid such a scenario. Hence the details provided about Lenin's fight for a revolutionary party are especially valuable not just for the sake of determining Lenin's democratic credentials but for understanding democracy as a means in the revolutionary process. As 1904 was drawing to a close Lenin began to sense, rightly, that Russia's long-expected democratic revolution was drawing near. The task now is to see if and how the preparatory work he carried out paid off.

Chapter 3

"The Dress Rehearsal" and the First Duma

As the "Arab Spring" of 2011 began to unfold, especially when it reached Cairo, questions immediately began to be posed about its course. Did the movement have staying power? Was the world witnessing something historic, a regime thought to be impregnable on the verge of collapse? What about the countryside? Was there sufficient antiregime sentiment there or not, or could Cairo and Alexandria do it alone? Further, what if the regime, in an effort to stay in power, made concessions such as a new constitution, real elections, and representative government for the first time—should these be accepted or not? But was it really about reforming the regime or getting rid of it? And of course, there was the military: whose side would it take, and could it be won over to regime change? Last, and not least important, was there a leadership with a program prepared to rule in the name of the movement? Not for the first time were such questions posed, mutatis mutandis, when that far-too-infrequent moment occurred—the masses making history. Nor will it be the last.

The Revolution of 1905

Russia's first experiment with representative governance, as had often been the case in history, was the product of its first democratic revolution—a fact that was indelibly stamped on its course. But unlike its predecessors, the Russian revolution had a protagonist more conscious and conversant with the lessons of such revolutions than any of the prior overturns. That too would forever shape its outcome. The events of 1905, how they set the stage for the convening of the First Duma in 1906, and the role Lenin and the Bolsheviks played in that process are the subjects of the first part of this chapter.

"BLOODY SUNDAY" AND THE AFTERMATH

In 1877, Marx, sixty years old and in failing health, wrote the following to a long-time comrade: "Russia . . . has long been on the verge of an upheaval; all the elements are to hand. The gallant Turks have advanced the explosion by many years through the blows they have dealt not only to the Russian army and Russian finances, but also personally to the *dynasty in command* of the army . . . The upheaval will begin, *secundum artem* ['by the rules of the game'], with some constitutional tomfoolery, *et puis il y aura un beau tapage* ['and then there'll be a fine how-do-you-do']. Unless Mother Nature is exceptionally unkind, we shall yet live to see the fun . . . This time the revolution will begin in the East, hitherto the impregnable bastion and reserve army of counter-revolution."[1] Marx's "gallant Turks" refers to the advances Turkish armies were making in the war then underway between Russia and Turkey.[2] As was sometimes the case with his and Engels's forecasts, the elegance of the algebra outshone that of the arithmetic. Indeed, it was the "blows" of war that set into motion the "constitutional tomfoolery" that led to the "upheaval" that eventually resulted in "revolution"—but 26 years later. Mother Nature could not be expected to be that kind.

Russia and Japan went to war in 1904 and, as was true in the Russo-Turkish War, the Romanov monarchy proved to be just as inept. The defeat that Russian armies suffered at the hands of the modernizing capitalist state of Japan exposed just what Marx and Engels accurately saw: not just a regime but a socioeconomic system on its deathbed. In a leaflet/article to celebrate May Day that year, Lenin wrote, "The war is making the preposterousness of the tsarist autocracy obvious to all and is showing everyone the death-agony of the old Russia . . . The old Russia is dying. A free Russia is coming to take its place . . . Comrade workers! Let us then prepare with redoubled energy for the decisive battle that is at hand!"[3] Lenin probably didn't realize—in that moment at least—the imminence of his prediction.

Thinking the regime was now vulnerable to pressures to loosen up a bit, to be at least willing to look like it would grant democratic reforms, liberal forces began to press for change. The Romanovs had been forced to do the same decades earlier. Another war and defeat, the Crimean, had bared the regime's increasingly sclerotic constitution. In an attempt to salvage itself, it granted in 1864 limited local self-government in the form of bodies called *zemstvos*. About those concessions, Lenin wrote, in his 1901 pamphlet *The Persecutors of the Zemstvo and the Hannibals of Liberalism*, that the "question of the relation of the Zemstvo to political freedom is a particular case of the general question of the relation of reforms to revolution." The oft-made claim of liberals "that the 'principle of progress is

that the better things are, the better' . . . is as untrue as its reverse that the worst things are the better."

> Revolutionaries, of course, will never reject the struggle for reforms, the struggle to capture even minor and unimportant enemy positions, *if* these will serve to strengthen the attack and help to achieve full victory. But they will never forget that sometimes the enemy himself surrenders a certain position in order to disunite the attacking party and thus to defeat it more easily. They will never forget that only by constantly having the "ultimate aim" in view, only by appraising every step of the "movement" and every reform from the point of view of the general revolutionary struggle, is it possible to guard the movement against false steps and shameful mistakes.[4]

At the end of 1904 the challenge for democratic forces was "to guard . . . against false steps," in this instance the wink and nod from the regime that it might grant the long-held hope of its liberal supporters by convening a national *zemstvo*, or *Zemsky Sobor*—what some erroneously thought would be Russia's *États-Généraux*. "If there is a single, repetitive theme in the history of Russia during the last twenty years of the old regime," argues Orlando Figes, "it is that of the need for reform and the failure of successive governments to achieve it in the face of the Tsar's opposition."[5] The liberal-inclined minister who had made the ill-fated proposal to Nicholas recognized immediately the consequences of its rejection: "'Everything has failed,' he said despondently to one of his colleagues. 'Let us build jails.'"[6] Lenin was right: "[T]he tsar intends to preserve and uphold the autocratic regime. The tsar does not want to change the form of government and has no intention of granting a constitution."[7] Marx's prescience about the "constitutional tomfoolery" would be tragically confirmed on a wintry day a few weeks later.

Hopes for liberal reforms, which Lenin said the "proletariat must support,"[8] combined with the increasingly harsh reality of daily existence for Russia's plebian classes explain why on January 9, 1905, tens of thousands of them peacefully attempted to petition the Czar to improve their deteriorating situation. Bullets and saber blades greeted their plea. While hundreds were killed and wounded, more important is that the masses believed thousands had been slaughtered as word quickly spread beyond St. Petersburg. For the next ten months the masses would vent their anger in cities, small towns, and villages, to which the regime responded with horrendous brutality. Whatever remaining illusions they had about the monarchy were now shattered. Thus began the beginning of the end of the three-hundred-year-old Romanov dynasty.[9]

Because Lenin, at the end of 1904, thought that "a tremendous popular movement" was imminent,[10] he quickly went into action once the upsurge

that came in the wake of January 9, "Bloody Sunday," commenced. Characteristically, he sought counsel in the lessons of the past. "In the present moment," he wrote in February from Geneva, "we all stand on the shoulders of the [Paris] Commune."[11] In addition to writing and giving lectures in exile, Lenin immediately moved to make the necessary organizational response to the revolution. The new situation required democratic discussion and decision making—that is, a party congress. What was to have been the third congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (RSDLP) in April—again, in London—proved in fact to be a Bolshevik congress; the Mensheviks held their own concurrent meeting in Geneva.

Despite the brutality visited on them, Russia's insurgent toilers refused to be cowered. And it's exactly for that reason that the regime had to play its soft-cop card, once again. It floated in February the idea of representative government. In anticipation of what would later be known as the Bulygin Duma proposal, Lenin gave his first public stance on how the Bolsheviks should respond. As he told the delegates at the congress, "[I]t is impossible to reply categorically whether it is advisable to participate in the Zemsky Sobor. Everything will depend on the political situation, on the electoral system, and on other specific factors which cannot be estimated in advance. Some say that the Zemsky Sobor is a fraud. That is true. *But there are times when we must take part in elections to expose a fraud* [my italics]." Yes, the regime was offering only "sham concessions," but the RSDLP, as he put it in the relevant resolutions, "should *take advantage of them* in order, on the one hand, to *consolidate* for the people every improvement in the economic conditions and every extension of liberties with a view to intensifying the struggle, and on the other, steadily to expose before the proletariat the reactionary aims of the government . . . [The Party has] to make use of each and every case of open political action on the part of the educated spheres and the people . . . all legal and semi-legal channels." And to be clear, "while maintaining and developing their underground machinery," party units should take the necessary steps to prepare for "open Social-Democratic activity, even to the point of clashes with the armed forces of the government."[12]

To participate or not in the electoral process could not, Lenin argued, be answered in the abstract. Participation depended on the political context and, most important, on whether it offered opportunities to advance the revolutionary process, including material improvements and the extension of liberties for the masses. Also evident is that Lenin did not make virtue out of underground work; it was necessary only when the opportunity for "open political action" was not available. Note also that "clashes with the armed forces of the government" constituted one of the forms of "open political activity"; events would soon reveal why he

allowed for this possibility. Though these were Lenin's initial pronouncements on the subject in concrete circumstances, history would show that they forever informed his approach to electoral politics. Also on display here was his deep understanding of political contingency—a necessary skill to meet the challenges of political struggle for the rest of his life.

The Third Congress addressed another contingency. What stance should the Bolsheviks take if the regime was overthrown and replaced by a provisional government? Should they take posts in it or not? The delegates resolved that they could, "provided that the Party maintain strict control over its representatives and firmly safeguard the independence of the [RSDLP]."[13] In his major intervention in the discussion and debate, Lenin, it should be noted, drew on the authority of Marx and Engels. Their *Address of March 1850* figured significantly in his argument—his first detailed discussion of it—and revealed that he had a more accurate reading of the document than Plekhanov.[14] Though the revolution never got as far as a provisional government (in 1917 it would), the resolution would have implications for the Bolshevik stance toward a Duma if instituted. That is, if the RSDLP decided to put forward candidates who were elected, should they take their seats? A year later, this is exactly what happened, and not surprisingly, it was the Bolsheviks who insisted on party control and political independence as a condition for their participation.

Not taking anything for granted, Lenin, sometime in June and July, drafted a "Sketch of a Provisional Revolutionary Government." Though more relevant for developments in 1917, his three-page very rough outline (see Appendix B) reiterated his point about the need for extending "liberties": "Object of the struggle = *Republic* (including *all* democratic liberties, the **minimum programme** and far-reaching social reforms)."[15] A republic for Lenin, in other words, would institute social and democratic measures, including civil liberties, just as he had been defining "Social-Democracy" since 1894.

While Lenin had already been thinking about the possibility of "clashes with the armed forces of the government," the events in Odessa in June made that real for the first time and brought home the gravity of the situation. There, mutinous sailors of the battleship *Potemkin* tried to unite with the city's rebellious masses, immortalized in Sergei Eisenstein's film by that name. And for their deeds, Odessians suffered the greatest concentrated repression by the regime during the revolution, with two thousand killed and three thousand wounded.

> The tremendous significance of the recent events in Odessa lies precisely in the fact that, for the first time, an important unit of the armed force of tsarism—a battle ship—has openly gone over to the side of the revolution.

> The government made frantic efforts and resorted to all possible tricks to conceal this event from the people, to stifle the mutiny of the sailors from the outset. But to no avail. The warships sent against the revolutionary armoured cruiser *"Potemkin" refused to fight* against their comrades . . . the armoured cruiser *Potemkin* remains an unconquered territory of the revolution, and whatever its fate may be, the undoubted fact and the point of highest significance is that here we have the attempt to form the *nucleus of a revolutionary army*.

But Lenin cautioned that the revolution may have reached a stage such that its military side, as registered by the *Potemkin* mutiny and similar rebellions in the armed forces, was outpacing its political organization. And to forge the latter would be very difficult:

> But we must not allow what in the present circumstances would be still more dangerous—a lack of faith in the powers of the people. We must remember what a tremendous educational and organising power the revolution has, when mighty historical events force the man in the street out of his remote corner, garret, or basement and make a *citizen* out of him. Months of revolution sometimes educate citizens more quickly and fully than decades of political stagnation. The task of the class-conscious leaders of the revolutionary class is always to march ahead of it in the matter of education, to explain to it the meaning of the new tasks, and to urge it forward towards our great ultimate goal. The failures inevitably involved in our further attempts to form a revolutionary army and a provisional revolutionary government will only teach us to meet these tasks *in practice*; they will serve to draw the new and fresh forces of the people, now lying dormant, to the work of solving them . . .

As for forging a "revolutionary army," Lenin sought to make clear what that actually meant:

> Social-Democracy never stooped to playing at military conspiracies; it never gave prominence to military questions until the actual conditions of civil war had arisen . . . Social-Democracy has never taken a sentimental view of war. It unreservedly condemns war as a bestial means of settling conflicts in human society. But Social-Democracy knows that so long as society is divided into classes, so long as there is exploitation of man by man, wars are inevitable. This exploitation cannot be destroyed without war, and war is always and everywhere begun by the exploiters themselves, by the ruling and oppressing classes. There are wars and wars. There are adventurist wars, fought to further dynastic interests, to satisfy the appetite of a band of freebooters, or to attain the objects of the knights of capitalist

profit. And there is another kind of war—the only war that is *legitimate* in capitalist society—war against the people's oppressors and enslavers.

Lenin concluded with the "minimum programme" of the RSDLP—"of course, this is only a tentative list"—"*six* such fundamental points that must become the political banner and the immediate programme of any revolutionary government . . . (1) a Constituent Assembly of all the people, (2) arming of the people, (3) political freedom, (4) complete freedom for the oppressed and disfranchised nationalities, (5) the eight-hour day, and (6) peasant revolutionary committees." And consistent with everything he had said prior to the momentous events he was speaking to, "for the proletariat, the democratic revolution is only the first step on the road to the complete emancipation of labour from all exploitation, to the great socialist goal. All the more quickly, therefore, must we pass this first stage."[16] Shortly afterward, Lenin restated the Third Congress resolution about what was needed for a "democratic republic": "an assembly of people's representatives, which must be popular (i.e. elected, on the basis of universal and equal suffrage, direct elections, and secret ballot), and constituent assembly."[17] As for "arming of the people," this had very much to do with the fact that the regime unleashed fascist-like hordes that came to be known as the Black Hundreds; Jews were especially targeted for its bloodletting. Given the "atrocities perpetrated by the police, the Cossacks, and the Black Hundreds against unarmed citizens," such preparations were obligatory.[18]

If the Occupy Wall Street movement and its inspirers in Tahrir Square could be faulted for not having specific demands when they went into motion, that's the last that could be said of the Bolsheviks when Russia's spring erupted. The head-start program Marx and Engels provided and the very capable student who was recruited to it years before goes a long way in explaining why. Lenin was so confident about what he had learned that he felt he could correct one of his mentors. The laboratory of the class struggle offered that opportunity. As the Russian events unfolded, Lenin milked all he could out of what they had bequeathed. Most relevant were their writings about the Paris Commune, the only overturn in their lifetime when the working class held, though briefly, political power. Although he didn't mention Engels specifically, Lenin, informed by the reality of the Russian revolution, disagreed with his famous comment about the Commune: "That was the dictatorship of the proletariat."[19] That "the socialist proletariat," Lenin cautioned, had participated in "a revolutionary government with the petty bourgeoisie . . . shows us . . . that the real task the Commune had to perform was primarily the achievement of the democratic and not the socialist dictatorship, the implementation of 'our minimum programme' . . . It is not the word 'Commune' that we must adopt from the great fighters of

1871; we should not blindly repeat each of their slogans; what we must do is to single out those programmatic and practical slogans that bear upon the state of affairs in Russia and can be formulated in the words 'a revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry.'"[20] The creative application of Marx and Engels's analysis to concrete situations is what it meant for Lenin to be a Marxist, as opposed to others who called themselves "Marxists."

The fact that the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks held separate party congresses in April registered the deep differences that continued to divide the two wings of the RSDLP after the Second Congress in 1903. The response of the flagship of international social democracy, the German Social Democratic Party, was revelatory for Lenin. His complaint to the Secretariat of the International Socialist Bureau—that is, the Second International—in July showed why: "I am compelled to state that nearly all German socialist papers, especially *Die Neue Zeit* and *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, are entirely on the side of the 'Minority,' and present our affairs in a very one-sided and inaccurate way. Kautsky, for instance, also calls himself impartial, and yet, in actual fact, he went so far as to refuse to publish in the *Neue Zeit* a refutation of an article by Rosa Luxemburg, in which she defended disruption in the Party. In *Leipziger Volkszeitang* Kautsky even urged that the German pamphlet with the translation of the resolutions of the Third Congress should not be circulated!! After this it is easy to understand why many comrades in Russia are inclined to regard the German Social-Democratic Party as partial and extremely prejudiced in the question of the split in the ranks of Russian Social-Democracy."[21]

With the benefit of hindsight, admittedly, this was the moment that first revealed the collision course the Bolsheviks and the German party leadership were on. Whether Lenin was aware of what was now in motion is difficult to say. But as the Russian party deepened its involvement in electoral politics in the next decade, it became increasingly clear to him that the differences he had with the Mensheviks were similar to those he had with the German leaders—over how revolutionary social democrats should comport themselves in that arena. Not for naught did Kautsky find it easier to publish Menshevik rather than Bolshevik documents.

The Revolution Deepens and Then Retreats

The revolutionary genie refused to be rebottled. The regime therefore was forced to concretize the representative government proposal it floated in February. On August 6 it issued an Imperial Manifesto that set the conditions and timetable for its institution. Named after the minister who drew

up the guidelines, the Bulygin parliament or Duma would be elected by indirect vote based on a very limited suffrage. The electors of the deputies were to be elected in the curiae or electoral colleges of various categories of the population: landowners (which included the clergy), urban property owners, peasants on communal land, and last, city residents. High property qualifications existed for all the categories.[22] Russia's small but increasingly vocal working class was not included. It didn't take Lenin long to condemn the proposal: "a consultative assembly of representatives of the landlords and the big bourgeoisie, elected under the supervision and with the assistance of the autocratic government's servants on the basis of an electoral system so indirect, so blatantly based on property and social-estate qualifications, that it is sheer mockery of the idea of popular representation."[23] Especially reprehensible was that the "*entire urban working class, all the village poor, agricultural labourers, and peasants who are not householders, take no part whatever in any elections*."[24]

The proposal was so patently antidemocratic that even many liberals denounced it, calling for a boycott of the Duma, which Lenin endorsed. But "we must exert every effort to make the boycott of real use in extending and intensifying agitation, so that it shall not be reduced to mere passive abstention from voting. If we are not mistaken this idea is already fairly widespread among the comrades working in Russia, who express it in the words: an *active* boycott. As distinct from passive abstention, an active boycott should imply increasing agitation tenfold, organizing meetings everywhere, taking advantage of election meetings, even if we have to force our way into them, holding demonstrations, political strikes, and so on and so forth." Just how active was active? It meant "advocating an insurrection and calling for the immediate organization of combat squads and contingents of a revolutionary army for the overthrow of the autocracy and the establishment of a provisional revolutionary government; spreading and popularizing the fundamental and absolutely obligatory program of this provisional revolutionary government, a program which is to serve as the banner of the uprising and as a model for all future repetitions of the Odessa events."[25] For the first time, Lenin publicly called for an insurrection to overthrow the regime and replace it with a provisional government. As he and other revolutionary veterans of that era would later remark, 1905 was the "dress rehearsal" for 1917.

Not every oppositional current was on board with the insurrectionary road. As bourgeois liberal forces began maneuvering for partaking in the Duma, Mensheviks saw an opening. Perhaps real change could come via the parliamentary route in an alliance with such forces. Lenin rebuked them and drew on Marx and Engels to support his argument. To entertain such a possibility

means "playing at parliamentarism when no parliament whatever exists. It has been well said: we have no parliament as yet, but we have parliamentary cretinism galore."[26] Rather than cozying up to the liberals, Lenin—to let the reader know he had been thoroughly schooled by his mentors—wrote, "[W]e must expose the venal soul of a 'Frankfurt Parliament windbag' in every [Russian liberal] adherent who shuns this slogan of insurrection."[27] Not for the last time Lenin would invoke Marx and Engels's phrase to criticize those who viewed the parliamentary arena as the engine of real politics as opposed to what was actually taking place in Russia—the masses in the streets.

Lenin's strategy regarding the Duma was based on the assumption that insurrection was still on the agenda; as long as that was true, all energy should be devoted to its realization. "Only an uprising holds out the possibility that the Duma farce will not be the end of the Russian bourgeois revolution, but the beginning of a complete democratic upheaval, which will kindle the fire of proletarian revolutions all over the world." To begin maneuvering for the parliamentary road, as the Mensheviks were now doing, would undercut that effort. Yet he was sober about the situation. The proletariat could be "defeated," and if it was, "a new era will be inaugurated . . . European history will repeat itself, parliamentarism will for a time become the touchstone of all politics." But until that happens, "prepare for insurrection, preach it, and organize it."[28] As he explained to the Bolshevik leader Anatoli Lunacharsky in St. Petersburg in early October, "[T]here is no parliament as yet . . . We must fight in a revolutionary way *for* a parliament, but not in a parliamentary way for a revolution."[29] For a "*detailed* analysis of the relation of 'parliamentarism' to revolution," Lenin recommended that he read "Marx on the class struggles in France in 1848."

In criticizing the Mensheviks, Lenin made clear that he was not opposed in principle to making deals with liberals. It all depended on context, as he explained in an article toward the end of October. "Under a parliamentary system it is often necessary to support a more liberal party against a less liberal one." (In the previously cited letter to Lunacharsky, he was more specific: "For example, when balloting, etc. Such action there would not in the slightest degree violate the independence of the class party of Social-Democracy.") "But during a revolutionary struggle for a parliamentary system it is treachery to support liberal turncoats [the Cadets] who are "reconciling" Trepov [a Czarist official] with the revolution."[30] To be seen later, Lenin's contextual approach to politics indeed informed his approach to electoral politics once the revolutionary upsurge had exhausted itself and the Duma became a reality.

Lenin had every reason to believe that insurrection was still an option. From the late summer until October a strike wave swept through Russia

that was unprecedented in the annals of the world's working class. Nothing gives a better sense of the moment than the letter that the very agitated Lenin wrote to his Bolshevik comrades in St. Petersburg on October 16:

> What is needed is furious energy, and again energy. It horrifies me—I give you my word—it horrifies me to find that there has been talk about bombs for *over six months*, yet not one has been made! And it is the most learned of people who are doing the talking . . . Go to the youth, gentlemen! That is the only remedy! . . . Do not demand any formalities, and, for heaven's sake, forget all these schemes, and send all "functions, rights, and privileges" to the devil. Do not make membership in the R.S.D.L.P. an absolute condition—that would be an absurd demand for an armed uprising. Do not refuse to contact any group, even if it consists of only three persons . . . Let the groups join the R.S.D.L.P. or *associate* themselves with the R.S.D.L.P. if they want to; that would be splendid. But I would consider it quite wrong to *insist* on it . . . You must proceed to propaganda on a wide scale . . . organise combat groups immediately, arm yourselves as best you can, and work with all your might; we will help you in every way we can, but *do not wait for our help*; act for yourselves . . . The principal thing in a matter like this is the initiative of the mass of small groups. They will do everything. Without them your entire Combat Committee is nothing. I am prepared to gauge the efficiency of the Combat Committee's work by the number of such combat groups it is in contact with. If in a month or two the Combat Committee does not have a minimum of 200 or 300 groups in St. Petersburg, then it is a dead Combat Committee. It will have to be buried. If it cannot muster a hundred or two of groups in seething times like these, then it is indeed remote from real life . . . But the essential thing is to begin at once to learn from actual practice: have no fear of these trial attacks. They may, of course, degenerate into extremes, but that is an evil of the morrow, whereas the evil today is our inertness, our doctrinaire spirit, our learned immobility, and our senile fear of initiative. Let every group learn, if it is only by beating up policemen: a score or so victims will be more than compensated for by the fact that this will train hundreds of experienced fighters, who tomorrow will be leading hundreds of thousands.[31]

Written in probably the most intense moment of the revolution, this letter instructively distills the core of Lenin the revolutionary organizer; it's a plea to the Bolsheviks to broaden their ties to the mass movement—"do not refuse to contact any group"—and to take initiatives—"do not wait for our help." It's also worth noting Lenin's awareness that fighters should learn to judge when a revolutionary process might "degenerate into extremes."[32] That insight, as well as the rest of this most instructive letter, bears revisiting when 1917 arrives.

Undoubtedly, the political high-water mark of the revolution was the establishment, in St. Petersburg on October 13, of a new form of

representative democracy unique to Russia—the soviet, an experiment repeated in Moscow and fifty or so other cities. Originally a body to coordinate the strike movement with elected representatives of various work places, the soviet quickly evolved into a combination legislative/executive body for the working class and its allies and potentially—not unlike the Paris Commune—an alternative government. Trotsky, who had managed to sneak his way back into Russia as early as February, became its effective head. Given the increasing breadth of the strike wave, especially when Moscow, "the very heart of Russia," revolted that month, clearly "ridiculous are the hopes of transforming the Duma into a revolutionary assembly."[33] Lenin could now point to a viable alternative.

Buffeted by a near nationwide revolt, the regime relented once again. On October 17 the Czar issued a new manifesto. In Lenin's words, it "promises a regular constitution; the Duma is invested with legislative powers; no law can come into force prior to approval by the people's representatives, ministerial responsibility has been granted; civil liberties have been granted—inviolability of the person, freedom of conscience, speech, assembly and association." Whereas the Bulygin Duma would have been only a consultative assembly, the new one being proposed would actually have "legislative powers." The earlier proposal was effectively rendered to the dustbin of history—vindication for Lenin of the policy of "active boycott." The newly granted "concessions" were for Lenin profound confirmation of Marx and Engels's basic political premise—unlike what "parliamentary cretins" believed—that what takes place in the streets is decisive in explaining the fate of the parliamentary process, a point he would forever make.

Lenin, of course, was under no illusion about Nicholas's manifesto. The regime was simply buying time. "The workers will never forget that it was only by force, by the force of their organization, their unanimity and their mass heroism, that they wrested from tsarism a recognition of liberty in a paper manifesto; and only in this way will they win real liberty for themselves." That could be realized, more specifically, "*only* by a victorious rising of the people, *only* by the complete domination of the armed proletariat and the peasantry over all representatives of tsarist power, who, under pressure by the people, have retreated a pace but are far from having yielded to the people, and far from having been overthrown by the people. Until *that* aim is achieved there *can be no* real liberty, no genuine popular representation, or a really *constituent* assembly with the power to set up a new order in Russia."[34] And crucial in that fight was the need to "pay special attention to the army . . . [W]e must attract the soldiers to workers' meetings, intensify our agitation in the barracks, extend our liaisons to officers, creating, alongside of the revolutionary army of workers, cadres of class conscious

revolutionaries among the troops as well."[35] This was no abstract proposal. The regime struck back using the terrorism of the Black Hundreds, particularly targeting Jews. "There were 690 documented pogroms—with over 3,000 reported murders—during the two weeks following the declaration of the October Manifesto . . . The worst pogrom took place in Odessa, where 800 Jews were murdered, 5,000 wounded and more than 100,000 made homeless."[36] If ever there was a need to win the ranks of the army to the fight for "real liberty," the time was now.

Despite the state-sponsored terrorism, Lenin and other émigrés eventually returned to Russia, sensing that there was now sufficient space for them to work in the open since for the first time the working class was mobilized and civil liberties were at least on paper. His immediate task was to reorient the Bolsheviks and to urge them out of their semisectarian existence with regard to the mass movement, particularly the St. Petersburg soviet. The latter, in his view, "should be regarded as the embryo of a *provisional revolutionary government*"—what would only be realized in 1917. His willingness, unlike a number of other Bolshevik leaders, to work with Trotsky, the effective head of the St. Petersburg soviet but an opponent since the Second Congress in 1903, also anticipated 1917. In addition to broadening the party, Lenin said "the elective principle" could now be implemented (or, as he put it a few months later, "should be applied from top to bottom"[37]); that is, the party could now elect its leadership, more evidence that he never made virtue out of underground work. Parenthetically, he noted at the time that *What Is to Be Done?* was written in "entirely different, now outdated conditions."[38]

Preparing for the "Beginning of a Humdrum Life"

Lenin had long been sober about the revolution. As a student of history through the lens of Marx and Engels, he knew that all upsurges, even the most radical, eventually ebb. Signs began to appear that, though not defeated, the St. Petersburg proletariat was "exhausted." When sailors at Kronstadt mutinied at the end of October, the St. Petersburg's soviet called for a general strike in solidarity. The response was not massive enough to prevent the regime from quelling the uprising. It sensed, correctly, that the momentum was now on its side.

December was the decisive month. Both the St. Petersburg and Moscow soviets called for general strikes in response to the government's counteroffensive. On the third of December the regime arrested most of the deputies of the St. Petersburg soviet, including Trotsky. The initiative now passed to Moscow, where for a couple of weeks the outcome of the

revolution hung in the balance. To tip the scales to its advantage, the government's chief minister, Sergei Witte, issued on December 11 a decree that modified the August 6 Bulygin Duma proposal. Industrial workers, who had been excluded in the earlier decree, would now be able to elect Duma deputies, albeit quite indirectly. Witte, who no doubt hoped that this concession would possibly mollify the working class and lessen its revolutionary ardor, would forever have his name associated with the First Duma after it assembled in April 1906. How determinative his tactic was is uncertain, but by December 19 the opposition in Moscow called an end to its strike—the effective end to the 1905 revolution.

As the fighting in Moscow was underway, Bolshevik leaders and cadre met to discuss and chart a course forward from December 12 to 17 in the Finnish town of Tammerfors (Tampere), a relatively close and safe site (they ended earlier than planned so that delegates could return to take part in the revolt). Aside from agenda points on the agrarian question and plans for a unity congress with the Mensheviks, the most urgent item was how to respond to the Duma proposals Witte had just announced. Should the active boycott be maintained or not? In a telling moment, Lenin and one other delegate voted against the majority who wanted to keep it in place. It may be remembered that for Lenin context was all-important in answering question of political strategy and tactics. As he argued in response to the Bulygin Duma proposal, the key factor was whether insurgency was still a possibility. The majority of the delegates (including Josef Stalin, who he met for the first time) felt it was. Lenin no doubt differed with them on this critical point, but he was willing to change his vote. The majority had been on the ground in Russia longer than he had, with closer contacts to the rank-and-file cadre. Thus Lenin felt, apparently, that he had to concede to their opinion—also telling.[39] Years later, however, he would admit that the boycott had been a mistake.

As a disciplined member of the Bolshevik faction, Lenin publicly defended their boycott of the Witte Duma, but in a most nuanced way. In a series of writings after the Tammerfors decision, he discussed very civilly the differences between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks, emphasizing that the crux of the matter was whether—drawing on the experience of Germany in 1847–49—revolution was still on the agenda or in "final exhaustion . . . and the beginning of a humdrum life under a dock-tailed constitution?"[40] The latter meant the less-than-exciting prospects of work in the parliamentary arena. The answer would have to be resolved at the upcoming "unity congress" of the two factions of the RSDLP. If the congress decided "that insurrection isn't possible . . . we must regard the State Duma as a parliament, even if a bad one, and not only participate in the

elections, but also go into the Duma."[41] While arguing that the revolution was still alive, he also, notably, insisted that the "majority of the members of the party" would decide the issue and that "the minority must submit to it in its political conduct while retaining the right to criticize and to advocate a settlement of the question at the next congress."[42] On the basis, then, of "democratic centralism," which the congress would make official RSDLP organizational policy for the first time, the Bolsheviks would be obligated to carry out the Menshevik line if it won majority support. One can only wonder, therefore, if Lenin's messages weren't really directed at the Bolsheviks who wanted to boycott the Witte Duma. Subsequent events would suggest so.

As Lenin pointedly reminded the Mensheviks a few months later, prior to the Duma elections the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks issued a joint statement saying that "both sides agreed with the idea of a boycott and disagreed only about the stage [in the various rounds of the elections] at which it should be carried out." Also, "not a single Menshevik in any Menshevik publication advocated going into the Duma" should a party member actually win an election in, presumably, the second stage.[43] That silence would soon confront the RSDLP with an awkward situation.

Before the Fourth Congress began in Stockholm, April 10–25, the first set of staggered elections for the Duma got under way. The returns, which Lenin closely analyzed in an eighty-page pamphlet (his penchant for statistics was on display once again), indicated that the left-liberal Cadet party would be the principal winner with the largest bloc of deputies. The data and the assessments of others explained why: "All agree that the election returns are not so much a vote *for* the Cadets as a vote *against the government*. The Cadets achieved their victory largely *because they were. . . the most extreme Left party in the field*. The genuinely Left parties were kept out of the field by violence, arrests, massacres, the election law, and so forth. By the very force of circumstances, by the logic of the election struggle, all the discontented, irritated, angry and vaguely revolutionary elements were compelled to rally around the Cadets."[44] Much of the vote for the Cadets was, in other words, a protest vote.

Most significantly, Lenin began to visualize in his pamphlet what it would be like when political reality dictated the "humdrum life" of parliamentary work for the RSDLP, functioning in such a Duma with its own deputies. "In those circumstances, it would be our bounden duty to support the Cadet Party in parliament against all parties to the right of it. Then, too, it would be wrong categorically to object to election agreements with this party in joint elections . . . (if the elections were indirect). More than that. It would be the duty of the Social-Democrats

in parliament to support even the Shipovites [moderate liberals who advocated for a constitutional monarchy known as the Octobrists] against the real, brazen reactionaries [such as the Black Hundreds]."[45] For Lenin then, temporary electoral alliances with the lesser of the two evils, the liberals, would be permissible in order "to isolate reaction"—in the language of the *Address of 1850*, "alliances but not unity."

But to make clear that tactical maneuvers in the parliamentary arena did not mean restraining revolutionary politics, Lenin employed a metaphor of Engels: "Our task is not to support the Cadet Duma, but to use the conflicts within this Duma, or connected with it, for choosing the right moment to attack the enemy, the right moment for an insurrection against the autocracy. What we have to do is to take account of how the political crisis in the Duma and around it is growing. As a means of testing public opinion and defining as correctly and precisely as possible the moment when 'boiling point' is reached, this Duma campaign ought to be of enormous value to us, but only as a symptom, not as the real field of struggle . . . Our task is to be at our post when the Duma farce develops into a new great political crisis; and our aim then will be . . . the overthrow of the autocratic government and the transfer of power to the revolutionary people."[46] For Engels, as noted in Chapter 1, "universal suffrage is the gauge of the maturity of the working class. It cannot and never will be anything more in the present-day state; but that," he continued, "is sufficient. On the day the thermometer of universal suffrage registers boiling point among the workers, both they and the capitalists will know where they stand."[47] Lenin was faithful to Engels's metaphor.

The more Lenin, I argue, had to grapple with electoral politics, the more conscious he was about how "West-European Social-Democrats" comported themselves in that arena. His most explicit comments to date came in this text. Those parties considered, just as had Marx and Engels, "the parliamentary struggle as the main form of struggle . . . only when . . . insurrections" were no longer on the agenda. The "opportunists" in social democracy, such as the "Bernsteinians" in the German party, were the problem. They "accepted and accept Marxism *minus* its directly revolutionary aspect. They do not regard the parliamentary struggle as one of the weapons particularly suitable for definite historical periods, but as the main and almost the sole form of struggle making "force," "seizure," "dictatorship," unnecessary."[48] "Orthodox" Marxists in the Russian party had to guard against that distortion being "smuggled into Russia 'on the sly.'" In hindsight, this may signal the beginning of the fight that would culminate in 1914.

Lenin ended his pamphlet very prophetically: "We have no reason to be envious of the Cadets' successes. Petty-bourgeois illusions and faith in

the Duma are still fairly strong among the people. They must be dispelled. The more complete the Cadets' triumph in the Duma, the sooner will this be done. We welcome the successes of the Girondists ['the bourgeois moderates'] of the great Russian revolution! They will be followed by the rise of broader masses of the people; more energetic and revolutionary sections will come to the fore; they will rally around the proletariat; they will carry our great bourgeois revolution to complete victory, and will usher in the era of socialist revolution in the West."[49] As was often the case with Marx and Engels, Lenin may not have gotten the arithmetic correct, but the algebra was nonetheless elegant. The Cadets' day in the sun, as events would soon reveal, lasted only about three months. But it would take the proletariat another decade or so to verify Lenin's prescience.

Prior to the agenda items on the Duma and the elections at the Fourth Congress, Lenin had to address the long-term prospects of a revolution in an overwhelmingly peasant society—of relevance, given his basic premise that electoral politics was only a means to an end. In what is arguably the most prophetic of all his forecasts so far, he said that "the Russian revolution can achieve victory by its own efforts, but it cannot possibly hold and consolidate its gains by its own strength. It cannot do this unless there is a socialist revolution in the West. Without this condition restoration is inevitable . . . Our democratic republic has no other reserve than the socialist proletariat in the West."[50] Engels, it may be recalled, said as much in his last major pronouncement on the Russian question.[51] What Lenin asserted here—and repeated, it should be noted—goes a long way in explaining the outcome of October 1917.

As Lenin anticipated—and no doubt hoped for, I contend—the Fourth Congress, with the Mensheviks in a majority, voted to participate in the Duma elections and to form a party group or fraction in it should RSDLP candidates be elected. The very practical problem was that most of the elections had already taken place in the long-drawn out process. The Bolsheviks noted this in their defeated resolution—written by Lenin, Lunacharsky, and Ivan Skvortsov-Stepanov—as well as in the accompanying report given by Lenin, which continued to defend the boycott. But Lenin pointed out that "when people [the Mensheviks] talk about our 'self-elimination' from the elections, they always forget that it was the political conditions and not our desire that kept our Party out; kept it out of the newspapers and meetings; prevented us from putting up prominent members of the Party as candidates."[52] They criticized the Mensheviks for having illusions in the Cadet victory and for having entered into electoral agreements with them in some of the elections.

The resolution correctly foresaw what would come of the Cadet victory, calling for a prohibition: "[I]n view of the possibility that the government will dissolve the State Duma and convene a new Duma, this Congress resolves that in the subsequent election campaign no blocs or agreements shall be permitted with the Cadet Party or any similar non-revolutionary elements; as for the question whether our Party should take part in a new election campaign, it will be decided by the Russian Social-Democrats in accordance with the concrete circumstances prevailing at the time."[53] If Lenin had been open to electoral blocs with the Cadets as his pamphlet on their victory indicated, this suggests that his two Bolshevik comrades forced him to retreat. Nevertheless, his points rejecting "self-elimination" from the elections and promoting a likely "new election campaign" clearly held open the possibility of Bolshevik participation in a future Duma. The clearest affirmation of this was Lenin's response to the request from the delegates from the Caucasus region. "We voted for the amendment moved by the comrades from the Caucasus (to participate in the elections where they have not yet taken place, but not to enter into any blocs with other parties)."[54] According to Robert Service, "we" meant a minority of Bolsheviks.[55] Lenin, who evidently broke discipline with his Bolshevik faction, still had his work cut out for him.

The Congress then turned to the somewhat awkward matter of what to do with Menshevik candidates, such as those in the Caucasus region—mainly rural areas—who might win in the few remaining elections. Should they take their seats and form a Duma fraction? Prior to the elections, as already noted, "not a single Menshevik . . . advocated going into the Duma." Their "semi-boycott" tactic—that is, of later rounds—meant only limited participation in the elections.[56] Their solution to this apparently unforeseen situation, to now permit the formation of a Duma fraction, was, in the Bolshevik view, deficient. To ensure the group's authority, Lenin argued, it would be necessary "to ask the workers whether they wish to be represented in the Duma by those they did not participate in electing"; "nine-tenths of the class-conscious workers," he noted later, "boycotted" the elections.[57] Elsewhere he wrote, "I pointed out that the great bulk of the class-conscious proletariat had not voted. Would it be advisable under these conditions to impose official representatives of the Party on this mass of workers?"[58] That Lenin would be concerned about the party appearing to "impose" itself on the working class must certainly sound strange to anyone who accepts as gospel the lie spun by his bourgeois critics and others that he was an authoritarian.

To try to make sure a RSDLP Duma fraction actually represented the working class, the Bolsheviks tried to amend the Menshevik resolution.

Drawing on "the experience of the socialist parties in Europe . . . particularly their Left wings," Lenin advocated for the same "*triple control*" they demanded that parities have "over their members of parliament: first, the general control that the party exercises over all its members; secondly, the special control of the local organizations who nominate the parliamentary candidates in their own name; and thirdly, the special control of the Central Committee, which, standing above local influences and local conditions, must see to it that only such parliamentary candidates are nominated as satisfy general party and general political requirements." Given Russia's reality, where "our Party organizations cannot exercise open and public control over their members . . . we unquestionably require far greater prudence than that prompted by the experience of the revolutionary Social-Democrats of Western Europe."[59] As early as 1879 Marx and Engels in their *Circular* to the leadership of the German party had noted (discussed in Chapter 1) the problem of Reichstag deputies becoming increasingly unaccountable to the party ranks. It was no accident that Lenin looked to the "Left wings" of European social democracy for solutions to this problem; he would learn later of the *Circular* and make use of it.

To appreciate the significance of what Lenin was addressing, fast forward to Europe circa 2008 until the present day. Since the official onset of the world capitalist crisis that year, European social democracy has been in the forefront of implementing the austerity drive to effectively lower the standard of living of Europe's working class—capitalism's plutocratic answer to the crisis. Emblematic of this social democratic attack on workers is the Pasok Party of Greece, whose now disgraced head, former prime minister George Papandreou, continues to be the president of the Socialist International, social democracy's transnational body, and successor to the Second International. Like Pasok, S-D parties in Spain, Portugal, and Iceland also led the offensive against workers and have paid a political price with the working classes in each country. Could these parties have pursued such policies if they had been accountable to their rank and files? Opinion polls suggest otherwise. Whether the "triple control" could have made them so is beyond the purview of this book, but the problem Lenin sought an answer to is as current as ever.

The Bolsheviks didn't garner enough votes for their resolution; the congress passed the Menshevik resolution, which "declared it desirable that a Social-Democratic parliamentary group in this Duma should be formed." Lenin was far from despondent and no doubt felt the Bolshevik objections had had an impact, as he explained in a postcongress report. Although "unfortunately" not included in the published proceedings of

the meetings, "The Congress instructed the Central Committee to inform *all* Party organizations specifically: (1) whom, (2) when, and (3) on what conditions it has appointed as Party representatives in the parliamentary group, and also to submit periodical reports of the activities of these Party representatives. This resolution instructs the local workers' organizations to which the Social-Democratic deputies in the Duma belong to keep control over their 'delegates' in the Duma."[60] Lenin took delight in the howls of protests against this instruction from Cadets like the one-time "Marxist" Struve. For "bourgeois politicians" like him, the idea that parliamentary deputies should be under the control of party organizations was ridiculous. Unaccountability was the norm of bourgeois parliamentary politics, as Lenin saw it—exactly what the working class had to avoid.

For the record, especially for those Bolsheviks who may have been despondent, Lenin wrote, "We must and shall fight ideologically against those decisions of the Congress which we regard as erroneous. But at the same time we declare to the whole Party that we are opposed to a split of any kind. We stand for submission to the decisions of the Congress . . . We are profoundly convinced that the workers' Social-Democratic organizations must be united, but in these united organizations there must be wide and free discussion of Party questions, free comradely criticism and assessment of events in Party life."

As for "submission to the decisions of the Congress," Lenin was referring to the historic organizational decision of the RSDLP. "We"—that is, Bolsheviks and Mensheviks—"were all agreed on the principle of democratic centralism, on guarantees for the rights of all minorities and for all loyal opposition, on the autonomy of every Party organization, on recognizing that all Party functionaries must be elected, accountable to the Party and subject to recall."[61] Along with the second sentence in the previous paragraph, Lenin spells out here the essentials of democratic centralism, the basic organizational norm of the RSDLP—"freedom of discussion, unity of action." Its democratic content, not just on paper, was commendable and apparently without equal in comparison to other parties in Russia. Never should it be forgotten that democratic centralism began as a joint project of the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks.[62]

Having lost on the Duma fraction vote—as well as on the agrarian question—Lenin was, understandably, concerned about ensuring the "freedom of discussion" side of democratic centralism. The norm was crucial when it came to programmatic questions. In the case of electoral politics, however, "the situation is somewhat different. During elections there *must* be complete unity of action. The Congress has decided: we will *all* take part in elections, wherever they take place. During elections

there must be no criticism of participation in elections. *Action* by the proletariat must be united. We shall all and always regard the Social-Democratic group in the Duma, whenever it is formed, as *our* Party group."[63] Armed with democratic centralism, Lenin now had license to lead the Bolsheviks, some of them kicking and screaming, into the "humdrum" parliamentary arena—what he clearly had wanted to do for some time.

"What Thou Doest, Do Quickly": A Brief but Instructive Existence

After the defeat of the Moscow uprising in December 1905, the regime no longer felt the need to play its soft-cop card. The concessions it had made regarding the Duma began to be compromised. In February it moved to have the Imperial Council, the long-existent autocratic advisory body to the Czar, become the upper chamber to the Duma with veto powers over its decisions. In April it revamped the Fundamental Laws, effectively the Czar's constitution. Article 87 gave the monarch the right to dissolve the Duma and to enact emergency measures when it was not sitting. Further, the regime increasingly played its hard-cop card with the use of state terror. "In all, it has been estimated that the tsarist regime executed 15,000 people, shot or wounded at least 20,000 and deported or exiled 45,000 between mid-October and the opening of the first State Duma in April 1906."[64] Whatever pretense therefore that the August and October Imperial Manifestos would institute substantive representative democracy was dispelled for most Russians when the Duma finally convened on April 27. That only a handful of Bolsheviks like Lenin saw any value in participating in the Duma's deliberations is understandable. "Indeed there is no more accurate reflection of the Duma's true position than the fact that whenever it met in the Tauride Palace [its official site] a group of plain clothes policemen could be seen on the pavement outside waiting for those deputies to emerge whom they had been assigned to follow and keep under surveillance."[65] Soon, however, it would become clear why Lenin did think it important to partake in what most of his Bolshevik comrades saw as a charade.

The First Duma Convenes

Once the Duma convened, it didn't take Lenin long to go on the offensive. But effective Duma work had to be linked to mass work. The day before, the Bolsheviks began publishing a legal daily in St. Petersburg titled *Volna* [*The Wave*], thus taking advantage of the remaining political space. About a week after the ceremonial opening session that Nicholas disdainfully

addressed, Lenin's first article in the daily ridiculed the Cadets who "think that they are the hub of the universe . . . [and] dream about peaceful parliamentarism." Despite the Cadets having the largest bloc of deputies, about 180 out of 480, real history, he asserted, would be made by the "people," "the crowd." He then offered advice: "Let us hope that the minority in the Duma, the 'Trudovik Group' and the 'Workers' Group,' will take a stand different from that of the Cadets . . . [and] concentrate all their efforts and all their activities on helping in some way to promote the great work ahead."[66] Lenin would not leave the fulfillment of that goal, shortly to be concretized, to chance.

By the "minority in the Duma" he meant, first, the 90 or so peasant deputies that grouped themselves loosely in what came to be known as the Trudovik party and, second, the 15 deputies that had been belatedly elected and authorized by the Fourth Congress as its Duma fraction. That he appealed to both Duma groups was no accident. They were the potential representatives of "the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry," the coalition for the Russian revolution that Lenin proposed in his *Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution* pamphlet, written on the eve of the April 1905 Bolshevik congress. Because the regime assumed that the peasantry was loyal to the monarchy, it permitted them a surprisingly large number of deputies, who it expected to align in the Duma with representatives of the nobility/landlord class. Lenin's appeal to them and the "Workers' Group" was his opening shot at trying to prevent that from happening.

As for the "Workers' Group," Lenin soberly explained who the 15 were and how they got into the Duma in his first major article on the Duma a day later: "They were not nominated by workers' organizations. The Party did not authorize them to represent its interests in the Duma. Not a single local organization of the R.S.D.L.P. adopted a resolution (although it might have done) to nominate its members for the State Duma. The worker deputies got into the Duma through non-party channels. Nearly all, or even all, got in by direct or indirect, tacit or avowed, agreements with the Cadets. Many of them got into the Duma in such a way that it is difficult to tell whether they were elected as Constitutional-Democrats or as Social-Democrats. This is a fact, and . . . [t]o hush it up, as many Social-Democrats are doing today, is unpardonable and useless . . . because it means keeping in the dark the electorate generally, and the workers' party in particular. Useless, because the fact is bound to come out in the course of events."[67] To be dishonest about how these deputies got elected and who they might be accountable to, would, in

effect, miseducate the working class and therefore undermine the potential value of parliamentary work—not the way to begin.

Lenin also argued that the Fourth Congress of the party inadequately addressed this problem when it voted to authorize the deputies to be the RSDLP Duma fraction. But "in fairness," the congress did adopt the previously quoted "instructions" that the Bolsheviks insisted on to make the fraction accountable to the party. And because the Menshevik majority Central Committee failed to publish the "instructions"—"unfortunately," as he once put it—Lenin gladly filled in the "very serious gap in the Central Committee's publication" by reproducing the three provisions for his readers.

More important, Lenin continued, was the present situation and what to do. "On entering the Duma, Mikhailichenko, the leader of the group, proclaimed himself a Social-Democrat. Through him the Workers' Group clearly expressed its desire to dissociate itself from the Cadets and become a genuine Social-Democratic group. Such a desire is worthy of all sympathy. At the Congress we were opposed to the formation of an official parliamentary group. Our motives are set out precisely and in detail in our resolution published yesterday." This refers to the previously discussed proposal for "triple control" over Duma deputies. Publicizing it was part and parcel of Lenin's strategy for revolutionary parliamentary work; being able to do so underscored the importance of having an organ, especially a daily one like *Volna*. "But it goes without saying that the fact that we did not think it opportune to form an official parliamentary group does not in the least prevent us from encouraging *any* desire of *any* workers' representative to *shift* from the Constitutional-Democrats [Cadets] towards the Social-Democrats." In other words, despite its birth defect, including its all-Menshevik composition, the fraction should be embraced if its pro-social democratic declarations were sincere. This is the hand that the political reality of Russia in 1906 has dealt us, Lenin might have said, and it is our obligation to try to play it to our advantage.

Lenin cautioned his readers, his most important audience, about what was ahead: "It is not enough to proclaim oneself a Social-Democrat. To be a Social-Democrat, one must pursue a genuinely Social-Democratic workers' policy. Of course, we fully understand the difficulties of the position of parliamentary novices. We are well aware of the need to be indulgent towards the mistakes that may be made by those who are beginning to pass from the Constitutional-Democrats to the Social-Democrats. But if they are destined ever to complete this passage, it will only be through open and straight forward criticism of these mistakes. To look at these mistakes through one's fingers would be an unpardonable transgression against the

Social-Democratic Party and against the whole proletariat." Principled and constructive criticism along with magnanimity is what Lenin promised—what the "novices" got their first dose of in the next paragraph.

Deigning to give a brief address to the opening session of the Duma, Nicholas made clear that his autocracy was not about to relinquish its privileges and power. Having the gauntlet thrown down before its feet, the Cadets, the Duma's leading party, had to respond in a way that would placate and dupe most peasant masses without riling a monarchy that could, under Article 87, summarily end their parliamentary hopes. Trying to strike the golden mean with their Address to the Throne, the Cadets angered both the right and the left—a bad omen for their future prospects. The RSDLP fraction abstained. That, Lenin said, was a "mistake."

> Over the heads of the Cadets, it should have openly and plainly stated for all to hear: "You, gentlemen of the Cadet Party, are taking the wrong tone. Your address smacks of a deal. Drop that diplomacy. Speak out loudly and say that the peasants are demanding all the land, that the peasants must obtain all the land without compensation. Say that the people are demanding complete freedom, and that the people will take full power in order to ensure real freedom, and not merely freedom on paper. Do not trust written 'constitutions,' trust only the strength of the fighting people! We vote against your address."

This would only be the first time Lenin offered advice to RSDLP Duma fractions. It encapsulated his most basic ideas about revolutionary parliamentary work. At its core was an effort to utilize the parliamentary arena to mobilize "the crowd" to think outside the box of that arena and plant the seeds for the "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry."

Finally, Lenin took on the Mensheviks, not the novice deputies but their daily organ *Nevskaya Gazeta*, which began publication in early May. Their commentary about the dilemma the Cadets found themselves in sounded, to Lenin's ears, sympathetic, specifically regarding the fear that the regime would invoke Article 87: "This is the wrong tone. It is unseemly for Social-Democrats to pose as people who can in any way be responsible for the Duma. If the Social-Democrats had a majority in the Duma, the Duma would not be a Duma, or else the Social-Democrats would not be Social-Democrats. Let the Cadets bear all the responsibility for the Duma. Let the people learn to cast off constitutional illusions at their expense, and not ours." He ended with a piece of advice that recalled Marx and Engels's critique of the "parliamentary cretinism" of the Frankfurt Assembly: "We must not appraise the revolutionary situation in the country from the standpoint of what goes on in the Duma. On the contrary, we must appraise questions and incidents that arise in the Duma

from the standpoint of the revolutionary situation in the country."[68] This is the criteria he employed from here on in assessing the Duma, at least when it was in session. His point about the improbability of a social democratic Duma—that is, one composed of real social democrats—is also instructive. It suggests that like Marx and Engels, he too thought that a capitalist regime would never permit such an outcome. The fate of the First Duma, as we'll see, offers powerful evidence for his assumption.

While *Volna* was Lenin's principal venue for linking Duma work with the far more important struggle going on outside its walls, he had the rare opportunity on May 9 to address a mass audience of three thousand in St. Petersburg, the majority of whom were workers. It was a debate with a Menshevik and another left opponent on the discussion taking place in the Duma about the Cadets' response to Nicholas. Under the pseudonym "Comrade Karpov," he used the event to put pressure on the Duma fraction, some of whom were probably in attendance, to stand firm when dealing with the Cadets. According to the *Volna* account, no doubt written by Lenin, he argued, "Exposing the Cadet Party . . . was . . . the necessary and most advisable means of drawing the broad masses of the people away from the liberal bourgeoisie . . . to the revolutionary democratic bourgeoisie, which was preparing for a decisive struggle for power . . . Of course, the time when the conflict will set in does not depend on our will but on the behavior of the government, and on the degree of the political consciousness and the temper of the masses of the people."[69] The revolution, in other words, could not be willed. It depended on the readiness of the masses—exactly what his parliamentary strategy sought to ensure.

At the end of his intervention, Lenin, never one to waste such an opportunity, proposed that the meeting adopt a resolution that he drafted. After criticizing the Cadets for their vacillating behavior vis-à-vis the monarchy, it ended,

> This meeting calls upon the Peasant ("Trudovik") and Workers' Groups in the State Duma resolutely to state their respective demands, and the full demands of the people, absolutely independently of the Cadets. This meeting calls the attention of all those who value the cause of freedom to the fact that the behaviour of the autocratic government and its utter failure to satisfy the needs of the peasants, and of the people as a whole, is making inevitable a decisive fight outside the Duma, a fight for complete power for the people, which alone can ensure freedom for the people and meet their needs. This meeting expresses confidence that the proletariat will continue to be at the head of all the revolutionary elements of the people.[70]

What the resolution, "carried almost unanimously,"[71] did therefore was to rectify the "mistake" the Duma fraction had made in failing to criticize the Cadets' Address to the Throne. A mass meeting made up primarily of workers went "over the heads of the Cadets" and "plainly stated" what it supported—the essence of the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry. What Lenin carried out with his intervention was a model of revolutionary parliamentary work—taking the parliamentary debate to "the crowd" outside and in real time. The regime would make sure, as long as it was in power, that he would never have such an opportunity again.[72]

Three more deputies joined the 15-member RSDLP fraction as a result of belated election returns from the Caucasus region. Unlike the others, they had been elected on the basis of the Fourth Congress decision that required approval of party organizations and no electoral agreements with the Cadets. Therefore, Lenin said, "all of us, as members of a united party, will do all we can to help them to fulfill their arduous duties." But he advised sobriety, once again:

> In times such as Russia is now passing through, the participation of Social-Democrats in the elections does not at all mean that the masses really become stronger in the course of the election campaign. Without unfettered newspapers, without public meetings and without wide agitation, the election of Social-Democrats often expresses, not a consolidation of the proletarian and fully Social-Democratic Party, but only a sharp protest of the people. In such circumstances, large sections of the petty-bourgeoisie sometimes vote for any anti-government candidate. Opinions on the value of the boycott tactics for the whole of Russia, if based on the returns of the Tiflis elections alone, would be much too rash and ill-considered.

He cautioned that the RSDLP could become the beneficiaries of the protest vote just as the Cadets had been, particularly in the absence of sufficient democratic space where competing political perspectives could be openly debated. Lenin's instrumental approach to democracy explains his invocation at the end to the new deputies: "Let us wish our comrades from the Caucasus, deputies to the Duma, for the first time to speak from this new platform in full voice, to speak the whole, bitter truth, to expose ruthlessly belief in words, promises and scraps of paper, to fill the gaps in our newspapers, which continue to be restricted and persecuted for speaking frankly, and to call upon the proletariat and the revolutionary peasantry to pose their problems clearly and distinctly and to settle the impending final contest for freedom outside the Duma."[73] Thus he revealed another reason a Duma fraction was so needed. In the face of diminishing political space, its immunity gave a relatively

safe "platform" from which to make the call for the only guarantee of real democracy—the empowerment of the working class and peasantry "outside the Duma."

Campaigning for the Worker-Peasant Alliance

Without the "support" of the peasantry, "the proletariat cannot even think of achieving the complete victory of our revolution." "The land question," as Lenin explained to *Volna* readers, "is the one that is most of all worrying the masses of the peasants; and the peasants have now become the principal and almost the sole allies of the workers in the revolution. The land question will show better than anything else whether the Cadets, who call themselves the party of people's freedom, are loyally serving the cause of people's freedom." To make his case Lenin closely followed the Duma deliberations and sought to influence the actions of not only the RSDLP fraction but the Trudoviks as well.

The Cadets offered a solution to the land question, which they submitted to the government in response to Nicholas's curt and unyielding address: "The greater part of the population of the country, the toiling peasantry, awaits with impatience the satisfaction of its urgent need for land, and the First Russian State Duma would not be fulfilling its duty if it did not draw up a law for the satisfaction of that vital need by requisitioning to that end state, appanage, cabinet and monastery lands, and by the compulsory expropriation of privately owned lands."[74] Trying to preempt the radical left and assuming the regime still felt the heat of 1905, the Cadets no doubt thought they had taken a bold stance. Not so, said Lenin: "Instead of a demand, they drew up a timid request." The fact that they didn't protest the regime's refusal to receive a deputation, when they tried to present their address, only confirmed, Lenin opined, their lack of spine.

Nevertheless, the Cadets called for a debate on the land question in the Duma. For Lenin it was an opportunity to broadcast the revolutionary socialist position. Just as he had done on countless occasions, he defended peasant demands for land, explaining in the process why it was in the interests of the working class to do the same. But real land reform, he insisted, could not be achieved in the absence of a democratic republic. And this was one of the two major problems with the Cadets' own program of "requisitioning" and "compulsory expropriations." It relied on the very undemocratic institutions of the state for its implementation. The other problem was that the Cadets' plan called for compensation to the landlord class; a similar policy in 1861 resulted in "ruining the peasants, enriching the landlords and strengthening the old state power."[75] Whatever the case, the "bureaucratic

government ['headed by some of the richest landlord-bureaucrats'], of course, refuses to consider even a Cadet agrarian reform."

The Trudovik fraction had yet to formulate its position. "Let us hope that at least on this occasion [it] . . . will come out quite independently of the Cadets." In the meantime, and most importantly, "the socialist workers . . . should enlarge their organization in general, and their contacts with the peasantry in particular. They should explain to the peasants—as widely, clearly, minutely and circumstantially as possible—the significance of the question of compensation and of whether they can put up with leaving the agrarian reform in the hands of the old authorities."[76] These were the most concrete recommendations Lenin provided so far for "the socialist workers," the Duma fraction. There was no greater priority than that of winning the peasantry, and he did all he could to advance that process.

As Lenin predicted, on May 13 the regime rejected the Cadets' "timid request." He reproduced for his *Volna* readers the main passages of the government's statement and distilled their essence: "Neither land nor freedom." The ball, Lenin wrote, was back now not in the Cadets' court but that of the real protagonists. "We shall see whether the deputies to the Duma learn anything from this declaration. The Cadets will certainly learn nothing from it. The Trudovik and Workers' Groups must now show whether they have become at all independent of the Cadets—whether they have realized that it is necessary to give up petitioning—whether they are able to talk straightforwardly and clearly to the people."[77]

Lenin, of course, was not disposed to wait to "see" if the deputies "learn anything" or to "see" if "they are able to talk straightforwardly and clearly to the people." Through the pages of *Volna* he campaigned to make that a reality. "This is not," contrary to what the Cadets claimed,

> a parliamentary conflict, and the Duma itself is far from being a parliament as yet . . . It is only an indicator and a very feeble reflector of the people's movement, which is growing outside or independently of the Duma. The Duma's conflict with the government is only an *indirect* indication of the conflict between all the fundamental and mature aspirations of the masses of the peasantry and the working class and the whole intact power of the old regime . . . The Trudovik and Workers' Groups in the Duma must know that only by dissociating themselves from the Cadets, only by rising above schoolroom lessons in constitutionalism, only by loudly proclaiming all the demands and needs of the people, only by speaking the whole bitter truth, can they make their greatest contribution to the struggle for real freedom.[78]

Marxist as opposed to liberal civic lessons—this is what Lenin provided through positive encouragement to the "novices" he wanted to influence.

Again, he took advantage of the remaining political space to forge the worker-peasant alliance.

When the Trudoviks tried to get a vote on a bill abolishing capital punishment but were thwarted by the Cadets, Lenin immediately came to their defense. He quoted two of the Trudovik deputies, one of whom was a priest, and applauded what they proposed. It was "perfectly clear: appeal to the people, make demands and not requests, ignore the bureaucratic regulations, don't drag out questions, and don't send them to committees." Employing, however, what the Cadet Chair of the Duma said were the "rules of parliamentary procedure," the Trudovik initiative came to naught. "The Cadets prevented the Duma from appealing to the people . . . Evidently the Trudovik Group again yielded to the opportunities and threats of the Cadets, and did not keep to the resolute position it at first took up. The people, who realize the meaning of the struggle for freedom, must protest the Cadets' behavior in the Duma and call upon the Trudovik Group resolutely and emphatically to declare that it will appeal to the people and to *do so*!"[79] While denouncing the Cadets, Lenin displayed patience with the Trudoviks. Sidetracking them was just the most recent example for him of Cadet appeasement of the regime, and he continued to try to make them pay a price. To that end he publicized in *Volna* that the progovernment press gloated over the fact that the Cadets had outmaneuvered the Trudoviks.[80]

As Lenin had predicted, "the Cadets will certainly learn nothing from" the regime's rejection of their address. He responded with ridicule to the outrage of Struve, the one-time "Marxist" and now Cadet leader, over the government's dismissal. "They Won't Even Bargain!," the title of his sarcastic commentary on Struve's article, highlighted what caught Lenin's eye and got his ire up. Struve admitted that the Cadets had tried unsuccessfully to negotiate with the government over the demands in their address, including those in both the "political" and "economic spheres." The former referred to civil liberties, universal suffrage, and amnesty, and the latter to the land requisitions and confiscations. Had the government, Struve complained, shown more "statesmanship," a deal could have been reached. "Mark that well, workers and peasants!" warned Lenin; "the Cadet gentlemen believed 'statesmanship' to consist in striking a bargain with [D.F.] Trepov [Governor of St. Petersburg] over a curtailment of the people's demands expressed in the Address." No deal was possible, he argued, because the "conflicting interests" of the "proletariat and peasantry" on one side and those of the "old regime" on the other could never be reconciled. "That is precisely why the gentlemen who are trading in the people's freedom, and who serve as brokers during the revolution and as diplomats

in time of war, are doomed to be disappointed again and again."[81] The prescience of Lenin's words would soon become evident.

About three weeks after the Duma convened, the "Workers' Group" issued an appeal "To All Workers of Russia." *Volna* printed it and Lenin added commentary: "We warmly welcome the manifesto of the Workers' Group of Duma deputies, who stand closer to us in their convictions than any other group. This is the first appeal that Duma deputies have made, not to the government, but directly to the people. The example of the workers' deputies should, in our opinion, have been followed by the Trudovik, or Peasant, Group in the Duma." Though I can't prove it, the appeal was likely the first concrete fruit of Lenin's Duma work.[82] Ten days earlier, in his very first advice to the fraction, he hoped that it—and the Trudovik fraction as well—would "take a stand different from that of the Cadets." Their appeal was a step in that direction and he applauded them. But along with positive reinforcement came constructive criticism: "[T]o strive to make the Duma prepare for the convocation of a constituent assembly," as the statement put it, was problematic—one of its "flaws." Only the Trudoviks and not the rest of the Duma parties, specifically the Cadets, should be looked to for the realization of a constituent assembly. "[T]he Russian liberals are too unreliable. The workers would, therefore, do better to concentrate on supporting the *peasant deputies*, in order to stimulate them to speak out independently, and to act like real representatives of the revolutionary peasantry."

Then Lenin called attention to the all-important "outside." The working class was "mustering its forces to launch another determined struggle, but to launch it only together with the peasantry. The workers' deputies are therefore right in calling upon the proletariat not to allow itself to be provoked by anyone, and not to enter, unless really necessary, into isolated collisions with the enemy. Proletarian blood is too precious to shed needlessly and without certain hope of victory."[83] Crucial in understanding Lenin's politics in this moment, especially his attitude toward the Duma, is exactly this fact—the very real probability of a new upsurge in the revolution. But to avoid what happened in Moscow in December—a defeat—coordinated action of both the proletariat and peasantry was necessary this time; thus his admonition, "launch it only together with the peasantry." What isn't certain is whether this is what was actually being organized or whether this is what Lenin was hoping would be organized. Whatever the case, Lenin, in pointing to the "workers' deputies," clearly felt that they could play a key role in helping to forge a worker-peasant alliance for the next upsurge and thus guarantee its success.

The Workers' Group manifesto illustrated another advantage of Duma work. The debates within Tauride Palace—unlike, sometimes, those on the outside—required competing parties to clarify and articulate their views, a necessary step for Lenin in the political education of the masses. "The more frequent and sharp these collisions become, the more definitely the masses of the people see the differences between the liberal landlords, factory owners, lawyers and professors—and the peasants."[84] Thus he was pleased when on or about May 23 the Trudoviks finally formulated their positions on not just the agrarian question but the political one as well—exactly what he had urged in applauding the Workers' Group for issuing its appeal a few days earlier. In a most didactic article for *Volna* readers, he was able to compare and contrast Cadet, RSDLP, and Trudovik views and, hence, provide advice for the Workers' Group. Regarding their "political programme . . . The Trudovik Group accepts almost in its entirety the workers' minimum programme, including an eight-hour day, etc. Obviously . . . the workers' party must support the Trudoviks in opposition to the Cadets."

While the Trudoviks, on the land question, "*go further* than the Cadets in the struggle against landlordism, and against the private ownership of land in general," they err as do the Cadets in thinking that the "landlord state" can be utilized for real agrarian reform. Yet it would be a "gross error" for the workers' party to "not support [them] in opposition to the Cadets. The fact that both parties are mistaken should not serve as an excuse for refusing to support the genuinely revolutionary bourgeois democrats." The Trudoviks are also mistaken to believe that "equalization" of land is the solution for small peasants, since this would be "impossible so long as the rule of money, the rule of capital exists." Lenin then put the differences between them and the Cadets in long-term perspective: "The Cadet illusions are an obstacle to the victory of the bourgeois revolution. The Trudoviks' mistakes will be an obstacle to the immediate victory of socialism (but the workers are not uselessly dreaming about an immediate victory for socialism). Hence the vast difference between the Cadets and the Trudoviks; and the workers' party must take this difference strictly into account."[85] Note that his advice was meant not just for the Duma fraction but the party as a whole—essential to his electoral strategy. Lenin's qualifier "but" underscores, once again, that for him it was the bourgeois revolution that was on Russia's agenda and not, as is so often alleged, the overturn of capitalism.

A day or so after the Trudoviks revealed their program, 35 of their deputies signed on to a motion that called for "for the immediate establishment of land committees, local, freely elected committees for settling the land question." The Workers' Group, Lenin proudly reported, "to a

man took the side of the peasants against the bureaucrats and liberals." Although the Cadets were eventually successful in convincing the 35 to withdraw the motion, Lenin saw their "success" as a victory for the campaign for the worker-peasant alliance. "We compelled them to admit in public that *they do not want to give the peasants complete freedom and all the land, and that they seek to aid the bureaucrats against the peasants*."[86] Clarifying and sharpening the political differences was, again, what the Duma arena could provide, thus increasing the political maturity of the working class.

One of the advantages Lenin had in appealing to the Trudoviks is that the Socialist Revolution Party boycotted the Duma. Founded in 1901, it was, as noted in Chapter 2, essentially the Narodniks reinvented with a socialist veneer. Their audience, in theory, was the peasantry and hence why land equalization was one of their shibboleths. But by maintaining their boycott—terrorism was their preferred modus operandi—the Socialist Revolutionaries allowed the Bolsheviks free reign in bringing a social democratic agenda to the peasantry in the electoral arena.

THE FIGHT OVER THE DUMA MINISTRY

In the previously mentioned admission, Struve didn't say what the government put, if anything, on the table for negotiations with the Cadets over their address. And though Lenin didn't have access to the particulars, he was right to assume that they were doing exactly as he had charged—"trading in the people's freedom." Documents unearthed years later revealed that the regime pursued a two-prong bargaining strategy with the Cadets, with neither of the two sets of parties aware what the other was doing—why, in part, the negotiations collapsed.[87] The issue in contention had to do with a key demand in the Cadet address—the call for a council of ministers responsible to the Duma. While an executive branch of government responsible to the legislative branch was the norm in parliamentary government, the Duma, as Lenin never ceased to remind the working class and peasantry, was only an illusory parliament; only a constituent assembly, he had long argued, offered a chance for a real parliament. The Cadets, Lenin charged, wanted to put the cart of the parliament before the horse of the democratic republic. Nicholas, too, gave a reality check in his terse remarks to its opening session: Russia was an "autocracy" that he would defend "with unwavering firmness." Because the last thing the Cadets wanted to do was mobilize the "crowd" on the "outside," Nicholas's stance was the real reason for the unsuccessful negotiations and the eventual downfall of the Cadets. Lenin welcomed every bit of news, sometimes

prematurely, that confirmed the Cadets' deal-making efforts. "What thou doest, do quickly," he advised the "Cadet gentlemen." It would only accelerate the political education of the proletariat and peasantry.

The Cadets, nevertheless, tried to garner support from other parties for a Duma ministry that effectively would have become a Cadet-led ministry, since they were the largest party in the body. Their efforts struck a responsive chord with some of the Mensheviks. Lenin therefore had to wage a campaign against the Menshevik line both in and outside the Duma. This was no mean feat since the Mensheviks constituted a majority of the RSDLP Central Committee, which in theory guided the work of the Duma fraction. Fighting for the ear of the fraction meant using not only his writings but—it should be assumed, since Lenin was now based in St. Petersburg—face-to-face contacts with its members.

The debate with the Mensheviks was not about the character of the coming Russian Revolution. Both wings of the party agreed that it would be a bourgeois democratic one. The heart of the debate concerned who among the bourgeois forces the working class should look to ally with to bring it about. Lenin argued—his 1905 *Two Tactics* pamphlet being his most detailed elaboration—that only the peasantry, bourgeois to the core owing to their quest to become individual land owners, had the interest and capability of being loyal allies. With Plekhanov leading the way, the Mensheviks, on the other hand, looked to the liberal bourgeoisie and therefore the Cadets. For Plekhanov, Lenin's denunciation of the Cadets for their "treachery" in its negotiations with the regime was ill timed. It threatened to undermine the legitimacy of the Cadets and thus the Duma itself. As the regime increasingly sent signals that it might "disperse" the Duma, Plekhanov and other Mensheviks felt even more compelled to defend the Cadets and the Duma. Not for want did Lenin accuse them of becoming cheerleaders for the Cadets and "chasing the *shadow* of parliamentarism." In so doing Plekhanov was providing "bad advice" for both the working class and the Duma fraction. "Comrade Plekhanov has wholly and completely taken on the likeness of the average German Cadet in the Frankfurt Parliament. Oh, how many matchless speeches these windbags delivered on the political consciousness of the people! How many magnificent 'constructive' laws they drafted for this purpose!" Parliamentary cretinism had claimed another victim. And then strikingly prophetic, drawing on the fate, again, of the Frankfurt Assembly in 1850, Lenin wrote, "And how nobly they protested when they were dispersed *after* they had bored the people to death and had lost all revolutionary importance."[88] He probably didn't know, once again, how imminent his forecast was.

In a direct challenge to the Menshevik line of the Central Committee on the Cadets, the St. Petersburg Committee of the RSDLP, where the Bolsheviks had a majority, adopted a resolution drafted by Lenin that opposed the Cadets' call for a ministry responsible to the Duma. "For the Cadets use the demand . . . as a screen to hide their desire to strike a bargain with the autocratic government and to weaken the revolution, to hamper the convocation of a constituent assembly." Instead of a Duma ministry, the resolution resolved "that the proletariat supports the idea of forming an Executive Committee consisting of representatives of the revolutionary elements in the Duma, for the purpose of coordinating the activities of the local free organizations of the peoples."[89] The Duma then, for Lenin, could be a site for organizing the worker-peasant alliance—his first explicit suggestion.

The St. Petersburg Committee resolution, not surprisingly, provoked an internal party debate on procedural issues. Lenin argued, against the opinion of the Central Committee, that party local committees could "work out independently . . . their own directives" as long as they were consistent with the resolutions adopted at the Fourth Congress. At issue was not only the substantive question regarding the Cadets and the Duma but also the need to sustain internal party democracy. "The St. Petersburg worker Social-Democrats know that the whole Party organization is now built on a *democratic* basis. This means that *all* the Party members take part in the election of officials, committee members, and so forth, that *all* the Party members discuss and *decide* questions concerning the political campaigns of the proletariat, and that *all* the Party members *determine* the line of tactics of the Party organisations."[90] Democratic centralism, as this debate revealed, was clearly a work in progress.

Nothing for Lenin demonstrated more the need to shatter "constitutional illusions" about the Duma than the pogrom from June 1 to 3 in Belostok (Bialystok) in Polish Russia, in which more than eighty people were killed, almost all Jews. Lenin's June 3 article in *Vperyod* [*Forward*] (the Bolsheviks' new daily since *Volna* had been shut down by the regime), "The Reaction is Taking to Arms," put the slaughter in context. "The Social-Democratic press has long been pointing out that the vaunted 'constitutionalism' in Russia is baseless and ephemeral. So long as the old authority remains and controls the whole vast machinery of state administration, it is useless talking seriously about the importance of popular representation and about satisfying the urgent needs of the vast masses of the people. No sooner had the State Duma begun its sittings—and liberal-bourgeois oratory about peaceful, constitutional evolution burst forth in a particularly turbulent flood—than there began an increasing number of attacks on peaceful demonstrators, cases of setting fire to halls

where public meetings were proceeding, and lastly, downright pogroms—all organised by government agents." The Belostok pogrom was the most horrendous attack so far.

After disparaging the usual way in which the "investigation" of pogroms had been carried out, Lenin struck a positive note: "The Duma did the right thing by immediately discussing the interpellation on the Belostok pogrom, and sending some of its members to Belostok to investigate on the spot. But"—Lenin's now-familiar "but"—"the government's take on what took place and the Duma's discussion of it were appallingly lacking given the history of such 'investigations.'"

> Judge for yourselves. The authors of the interpellation say: "The inhabitants *fear* that the local authorities and malicious agitators may try to make out the victims themselves to be responsible for the calamity that has befallen them." "False information on these lines is being circulated." Yes, the downtrodden and tormented Jewish population is indeed apprehensive of this, and has every reason to be. This is true. But it is *not the whole truth*, gentlemen, members of the Duma, and authors of the interpellation! You, the people's deputies, who have not yet been assaulted and tormented, know perfectly well that this is not the whole truth. You know that the downtrodden inhabitants will *not dare* to name those who are *really responsible* for the pogrom. *You must name them*. That is what you are people's deputies for. That is why you enjoy—even under Russian law—complete freedom of speech in the Duma. Then don't stand *between* the reaction and the people, at a time when the armed reaction is strangling, massacring, and mutilating unarmed people. Take your stand *openly and entirely* on the side of the people . . . *Indict the culprits in unequivocal terms—it* is your direct *duty* to the people. Don't ask the government whether measures are being taken to protect the Jews and to prevent pogroms . . . Indict the government openly and publicly; call upon the people to organize a militia and self-defense as the *only* means of protection against pogroms.
>
> This is not in keeping with "parliamentary practice," you will say . . . Don't you realize that the people will condemn you if, even at a time like this, you do not give up playing at parliaments and do not dare to say straightforwardly, openly and loudly what *you really know and think*?

The speeches of some of the Cadet deputies, Lenin insisted, justified his impatience. He applauded "Citizen Levin" for pointing out how "the whole system," including the police who distributed leaflets, was involved in organizing the pogroms. "Quite right, citizen Levin! But while in newspapers we can only speak of the 'system,' you in the Duma ought to speak out more plainly and sharply . . . [Y]ou should have said in your interpellation: does the government think that the Duma is not aware of

the commonly-known fact that the gendarmes and police send out those leaflets?" Last, he pleaded with the "gentlemen of the Duma . . . *to associate the reactionary government with the progromists!*"[91]

Noteworthy, immediately, about Lenin's impassioned plea in defense of Russian Jewry is that it was directed at mainly the Cadets. Before, his Duma audience had always been the workers and/or peasant deputies. It may be recalled that in his pamphlet on the Cadet Duma victory he entertained the possibility of joint work with the Cadets in order "to isolate reaction." For the particular issue of effectively opposing pogroms, an alliance with the liberal bourgeoisie was a necessity. His efforts signaled, to be confirmed shortly, increasing recognition that the unique potential value of the Duma as a political space—freedom of the press, for example—was shrinking. But that possibility had to be fought for—exactly what he was doing here.

THE DUMA'S FINAL DAYS: A NEW ROLE FOR THE FRACTION

"The Social-Democratic Group in the State Duma is on the eve of taking action. Undoubtedly, this Group can now render the cause of the working-class movement and of the revolution a great service by its bold and consistent utterance, by proclaiming with unmistakable clarity the demands and slogans of *consistent* democracy and of the *proletarian* class struggle for socialism." With this Lenin informed *Vperyod* readers on June 10 that the Duma fraction would now play a more central role in RSDLP tactics. "And we think that our Caucasian comrades were quite right to sign the notorious 'solemn pledge' of the members of the State Duma and to state in the press in this connection that 'we are signing this in order to be able to fulfill the mission with which the people have entrusted us, and we emphasise that the only political obligations we recognise are obligations to the people.'" The "solemn pledge" was basically an oath of fealty to the Czar that all Duma deputies were required to make. But since the Duma didn't have real power, no principles were at stake. More important, the fraction, by signing on, could with its immunity be the effective voice for the party as political space was diminishing.

As rumors grew that the regime was about to pull the plug on the Duma, accompanied by a new upsurge in rebellion in the countryside and in the barracks, the fraction came under increasing pressure from the Cadets and thus the Mensheviks to come to its defense. Lenin therefore had to be especially vigilant about the Menshevik-dominated Central Committee's instructions to the fraction. Careful not to appear sectarian or to violate the norms of democratic centralism, his modus operandi vis-à-vis the fraction was a combination of positive reinforcement and

constructive criticism: "We regard it as our duty to note their successes in the Duma and to criticize—in a business-like way—their mistakes." He agreed, for example, with the advice in *Kuryer* [*Courier*], the Menshevik daily (*Nevskaya Gazeta* had been shut down by the government), that the fraction should avoid getting sucked into the minutia of law making: "Such activities, customarily called 'constructive' are certainly *harmful*. They are harmful 'because instead of presenting striking contrasts that everyone can see, such Bills *hopelessly confuse* the mind of the public with a welter of clauses and paragraphs' . . . This is quite true . . . This project-mongering obscures, blunts and corrupts the mind of the public, for 'in any case, these laws will never be put into operation. Before that can be done, *power must be wrested* from the hands of those who now hold it [in order to] . . . put in the place of the Duma itself a *far more powerful and democratic institution*.'" Rather than the Cadets' "project-mongering" and their bills, social democracy could be more effective by means of "'decrees,' 'proclamations' and appeals to the people through the medium of the Social-Democratic Group in the Duma (and, under certain conditions, with Trudoviks acting in conjunction with it), and by issuing those 'calls to the people to form a popular militia, which alone will be capable of protecting their lives and honour.'"[92] Lenin advised the Mensheviks that taking such action would ensure not just party "unity" but the "unity of the political actions of the proletariat."

The next day Lenin offered more positive reinforcement—with a "but." For the first time he quoted extensively and approvingly the intervention of a fraction member, one of the Caucasus comrades, in the Duma deliberations. "Comrade Ramishivili" declared that the Duma was increasingly becoming irrelevant and that what was taking place on the "outside" would, prophetically, in "a month from now, perhaps" be decisive. The ineluctable tendency of the Cadets to seek "conciliation" with "the old regime," Lenin argued, explained what the comrade accurately noted. Any support therefore for their demand for a Duma ministry was to be complicit in their effort to cut a deal with the regime—a "peaceful solution" to the crisis—and, thus a betrayal of the "fighting people." Hence the "but." "Yesterday we pointed out that the comrades of *Kuryer* were right in stating that the Bills drafted by the Cadets were stupid and harmful. Today it is to be regretted that these same comrades are advocating support for a Duma Cabinet, that is to say, a Cabinet that will carry through these stupid and harmful Bills!"[93] It's not that Lenin was surprised at the support the "comrades" offered to the Cadets. He knew there was a fundamental political divide that separated him from the Mensheviks—two very different assessments of which component of the bourgeoisie to look to, the peasantry or the liberal bourgeoisie. And until

most workers recognized that fact, he had to at least appear to be comradely. Their actions were merely "regretted"—at least for now.

A day or so after accusing the Cadets of trying to find "a peaceful solution" to the crisis, *Vperyod* was shut down by the regime. Readers of the new Bolshevik daily *Ekho* [*Echo*], which debuted on June 22, learned that Lenin tried unsuccessfully to have the RSDLP fraction employ a draft he wrote for its first major public declaration in the Duma. It emphasized, among other well-known Bolshevik views, the necessity of the worker-peasant alliance and the international character of the RSDLP. But the fraction rejected Lenin's document and instead read from one drafted by the Central Committee. He admitted that from a "formal point of view"—that is, the party rules on organization—and from a "factional point of view," the Menshevik-dominated Central Committee had every right to insist that its version be read. But from a "Party point of view," he argued that the Bolshevik document was more faithful to the resolutions adopted at the Fourth Congress. All party members were asked to weigh the not-too-subtle differences of the two, especially concerning what attitude to take toward the Duma: "an organ of the popular movement" in the Central Committee version versus "*an instrument of the revolution*" in the Bolshevik version.

In what Lenin had hoped the fraction would read, he made an important admission: "In spite of the autocracy's gerrymandering electoral law, its massacre, torture and imprisonment of the finest fighters for freedom, the State Duma, after all, turned out to be hostile to the autocracy."[94] About a week later Lenin offered an explanation for this unanticipated outcome. In a continued defense of the boycott, he contended that the tactic required the government to "fight *for* the convocation of the Duma," and with its attention directed against the boycotters it made it possible for the "liberal bourgeoisie and non-party revolutionaries . . . to [get] into the enemy's rear and stealthily [make] its way into the Duma, penetrating the enemy camp in disguise."[95] The autocracy also recognized what Lenin admitted to—thus its need, increasingly, to pull the plug.

The phenomenon that radicalized the young Lenin, famine, was afflicting Russian peasants once again and with deadly consequences, though not of the same magnitude as the famine of 1891. This time he was in a position to possibly shape its outcome through the Duma fraction. "First of all we will remind the reader that the question that originally arose in the State Duma was the following: Would it be right to grant money to the government of pogrom-mongers, or should the Duma itself take the whole business of famine relief into its own hands?" He, as well as the fraction, applauded the leading Trudovik deputy for wanting to do the latter. But unfortunately the Cadets, through parliamentary maneuvering, derailed

that initiative. Lenin faulted the fraction deputies, "a mistake," for not coming to the aid of the Trudoviks in that moment. He charged the Cadets with wanting to trade off real famine relief for posts in the cabinet. "The Duma refused to become the instrument of the revolution in this matter."

Since the Cadets could not be expected to offer a real solution to the famine, the "Social-Democratic deputies," Lenin wrote, would have to take the lead in alliance with the Trudoviks, whose constituents were most affected by the crisis. He then outlined a set of proposals for the fraction on how to effectively discuss the question in the Duma—his most detailed and context-specific instructions to date for the fraction. They revealed how savvy he was about the legislative process, including his knowledge about the Duma committees. Lenin was under no illusion that the crisis could be resolved without a fundamental reordering of Russian society—just as he had concluded some 15 years earlier. But at least "[v]oices will then be heard from the rostrum of the Duma relentlessly exposing the double game the Cadets are playing, exposing all the 'secrets' of the Russian Budget of the police pogrom-mongers—a Budget which squanders tens and hundreds of millions on assistance for landlords and capitalists, on military adventures, on 'relief' for spies and gendarmes, on rewarding all the high-placed heroes of the Manchurian tragedy [the Russo-Japanese War], and on maintaining a horde of thieving officials who tyrannise over the people"—a necessary step in that reordering.[96]

A few days later Lenin applauded the fraction for its intervention and resolve in the debate on the famine. "They spoke on the lines we suggested the other day"—the first fruit of his efforts to employ the parliamentary rostrum for revolutionary ends. The fraction's vote against channeling famine funding through the government may be explained by the fact that about a week earlier the St. Petersburg Committee in which Lenin and the Bolsheviks were dominant "decided to establish a permanent liaison between [it] . . . and the Social-Democratic Group in the Duma."[97] Particularly gratifying was that "the Trudoviks voted with the Social-Democrats." The only problem for Lenin, ever the stickler for details, was that "a roll-call vote was not taken."[98] In trying to forge the worker-peasant alliance, he needed the names of individual deputies.

In countering the pro-Cadet sympathies of the Mensheviks, Lenin had to address the all-very-familiar "lesser of two evils" or "shouldn't we be grateful for a few crumbs" argument. Isn't a Cadet ministry a lesser evil than the autocracy's ministry? Aren't some reforms better than none at all? "This is how all the opportunists, all the reformists argue; unlike the revolutionaries . . . all over the world. To what conclusions does this argument inevitably lead? To the conclusion that we need no revolutionary program, no

revolutionary party, and no revolutionary tactics. What we need are *reforms*, nothing more." Two very different assumptions, Lenin explained didactically, informed the reformist and revolutionary perspectives, and the logic of the latter called for independent working-class political action:

> Only by such tactics can real progress be achieved in the matter of important reforms. This may sound paradoxical, but its truth is confirmed by the whole history of the international Social-Democratic movement. Reformist tactics are the *least* likely to secure real reforms. The most effective way to secure real reforms is to pursue the tactics of the revolutionary class struggle. *Actually*, reforms are won as a result of the revolutionary class struggle, as a result of its independence, mass force and steadfastness. Reforms are *always* false, ambiguous . . . they are real only in proportion to the intensity of the class struggle. By merging our slogans with those of the reformist bourgeoisie we *weaken* the cause of revolution *and, consequently, the cause of reform as well*, because we thereby diminish the independence, fortitude and strength of the revolutionary classes.

These were the lessons that "many Menshevik comrades tend to forget" in their support to the Cadet ministry. "Only if we pursue such ['revolutionary'] tactics will history say about us what Bismarck said about the German Social-Democrats: 'If there were no Social-Democrats there would have been no social reform.' Had there not been a *revolutionary* proletariat there would have been no October 17" and hence no Duma.[99] If Lenin's argument strikes a contemporary chord, it's because it helps explain the reformist outcome, with the German party in the lead, of Western European social democracy, a phenomenon whose early signs he witnessed and whose consequences resonate today. Not for naught did he feel compelled to wage a fight against the "Russian Bernsteinians."

Outside the Duma things were heating up. The "peasant war on the manors had revived in the spring with a ferocity equal to the previous autumn's."[100] Sailors and soldiers were becoming restless, and workers met to plan their next assault. This was the context for the Social Revolutionaries' proposal to reinstitute the Soviets of Workers' Deputies, the bodies that led the uprisings in St. Petersburg and Moscow in the fall. George Khrustalev-Nosar, the Menshevik chair of the St. Petersburg Soviet, supported the SR call; Trotsky, his deputy but real chair, was still in jail. The Bolshevik-led St. Petersburg Committee disagreed with the proposal and passed a resolution to that effect.

Nevertheless, *Ekho* opened its pages to Khrustalev-Nosar to make his case, and in the same issue Lenin explained what was wrong with reviving the Soviets. Basically, it was premature to do so. Soviets, he argued, were

instruments designed to organize a proletariat in battle. The overriding task of the moment, he contended, was to organize the peasantry to do battle *together* with the proletariat. October and December 1905 taught that unless the proletariat is accompanied in struggle by the peasantry, the overwhelming majority of Russia's producing class, the proletariat could not be victorious. Revolutionary restraint was what was required of the proletariat in order to bring the peasantry on board, to make sure the "rearguard" caught up with the "vanguard." And to that end Lenin pointed to the resolution the St. Petersburg Committee adopted on June 5, its alternative to the Cadet ministry: "to support the idea of forming an Executive Committee representing the Left groups in the Duma for the purpose of coordinating the activities of the free organizations of the people."[101] The Duma, in other words, or more correctly a portion of it, would be the site for organizing the next stage of the revolution. This strikingly registers how far Lenin had shifted his views about the utility of the Duma.

On June 20 the regime threw down the gauntlet again; as always, the land question loomed large. In its "appeal to the people," and not the Duma—a not-too-subtle hint about what it thought of the crowd in Tauride Palace—the autocracy made clear that it was not about to give an inch to satisfy the land needs of the peasants. In Lenin's assessment, "It is an actual declaration of war on the revolution. It is an actual manifesto of the reactionary autocracy saying to the people: We shall tolerate no nonsense! We shall crush you!" The Cadets, with the Trudoviks "unfortunately" in tow, a few weeks later read drafts of their "appeal to the people" to the Duma—that is, their responses. "What a miserable, truly pitiful impression these two drafts create! . . . For shame, gentlemen, representatives of the people!" Obviously, Lenin was not impressed. If not a gauntlet, he issued a challenge: "But there are the Social-Democrats in the Duma; will they not come to the rescue?" He then offered a social democratic "appeal to the people" in five paragraphs addressed to "Peasants!" It called on them to recognize "that the Duma is powerless to give you land and freedom . . . Utilize your deputies in the Duma . . . unite more closely and solidly all over Russia and prepare for a great struggle . . . Peasants! We are doing all we can for you in the Duma. But you must complete the job yourselves." Lenin ended with another challenge: "Let the Cadets' appeal, the Trudoviks' appeal and our appeal be read at any peasant meeting! We will hear what the peasants say in answer to the question: Who is right?"[102]

The debate in the Duma the next day, July 5, encouraged Lenin, because the "intrinsic nature of the different political parties was revealed with a clarity that left nothing to be desired." He felt his articles, especially the one the day before, contributed to that clarification. They provided "the

whole Left wing of the Duma" with needed ammunition to "come to the rescue." "Lednitsky," a Polish deputy, "even employed one of the sharpest expressions that we employed yesterday, and said that the proposed appeal was '*pitiful*.'" A Trudovik deputy argued just as Lenin had done in the aforementioned article on reforms and revolution: "'Did the State Duma come into being as the result of peace and tranquility?' And, recalling the October struggle, the speaker, amidst the applause of the Left, exclaimed: 'It is due to these "disorders" that we are here today.'" The debate, Lenin contended, marked real progress for social democracy in the Duma. "In spite of all the efforts of the Right-wing Social-Democrats, up to now there has not resulted any support of the Cadets, but what has resulted fortunately, is an independent policy of the proletariat backed by a section of the peasant deputies." The only shortcoming of the fraction—Lenin, ever vigil—was not to have read its own "appeal to the people." In the next session he urged them to do just that: "A Social-Democratic draft of an appeal to the people, even if it remains only a draft read in the Duma, will have an extremely valuable effect in uniting and developing the revolutionary struggle, and will win over to the side of Social-Democracy the finest elements of the revolutionary peasantry."[103] They wouldn't get that opportunity.

On the following day the government issued a none-too-veiled threat through one of its dailies that not only would it pull the plug on the Duma if it persisted in an "appeal to the people," but it would also invite the armies of Austria and possibly Germany to enter Russia to finally put an end to the revolution. While the Cadets, not surprisingly, quickly retreated, Lenin advanced:

> [W]e too have our powerful international reserve: the socialist proletariat of Europe, organised in the three million-strong party in Germany, in the powerful parties of all the European countries. We welcome the appeal of our government to the international reserve of reaction: such an appeal will, in the first place, open the eyes of the most ignorant people in Russia and do us a valuable service by destroying faith in the monarchy, and, in the second place, such an appeal will better than anything else extend the basis and field of action of the Russian revolution by converting it into a world revolution. All right, Mr. Trepov & Co.! Open fire! Call on your Austrian and German regiments against the Russian peasants and workers! We are for an extension of the struggle, we are for an international revolution![104]

I suspect Lenin knew this would be the last issue of *Ekho*. Not unlike the famous last issue of Marx and Engels's *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* in the final days of the 1848–49 revolutions, he decided to go out with a bang. Whether he actually believed "our international reserve" was prepared to defend the

Russian revolution is impossible to know; I think not. But such a scenario accurately pointed out that proletarian internationalism was the way forward for the revolution's survival—not only then but in 1917, as I'll argue—and Lenin had nothing to lose and much to gain in making such a boast.

A day later *Ekho*, indeed, was shut down. A similar fate awaited the Duma. On July 8, the following day, the autocracy ended, unceremoniously, the brief but instructive life of Russia's first ersatz parliament. It cannot be said with certainty if Lenin's increasingly confrontational interventions explain the timing of the regime's dissolution of the Duma. But because it had for some time been looking for an excuse to do so, he may very well have provided them that opportunity.

Totally surprised by what happened, the Cadets retreated to Vyborg in Finland to lick their wounds. The best they could muster was a manifesto registering their indignation and a few false threats. Just as Lenin had so accurately predicted—"how nobly they protested when they were dispersed *after* they had bored the people to death and had lost all revolutionary importance"—their brief moment in the sun ended ignominiously. It recalls Engels's forecast about a similar party of liberals (that included Alexis de Tocqueville) who were also unceremoniously dismissed by an autocrat—Louis Bonaparte when he dissolved the French National Assembly in 1851. They would "hide themselves in the darkest corner of their houses, or be scattered like dead leaves before the popular thunderstorm."[105] Such insight served Lenin well in his first real test in the cauldron of revolution.

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It took Lenin almost a month, owing to the crackdown, to get something into print that assessed what happened. In a twenty-page pamphlet, he began with the obvious: "The dissolution of the Duma has most strikingly and clearly confirmed the views of those who warned against being obsessed with the external 'constitutional' aspect of the Duma . . . the constitutional surface of Russian politics during the second quarter of 1906 . . . Note this interesting fact: the Duma has been dissolved *on strictly constitutional grounds*. It has not been 'dispersed.' There has been no infringement of the law. On the contrary, it has been done strictly in accordance with the law, as under any 'constitutional monarchy' . . . The logic of life is stronger than the logic of textbooks on constitutional law. Revolution teaches." Because the Cadets' Duma delegation counted so many professors among its ranks, Lenin, who never tired of doing so, got a dig in on those reared on "textbooks," not unlike Engels's cutting critique of the "professors" in the Frankfurt Assembly in 1849.

Yet despite having been proven right by "life," Lenin declined to gloat: "The Social-Democrats will neither exult (we made some use even of the Duma) nor lose heart. The people gained . . . by losing one of its illusions . . . All laws and all deputies are *naught* if they possess no power. That is what the Cadet Duma *has taught* the people. Let us then sing praises to the eternal memory of the deceased, and take full advantage of the lesson it has taught." Lenin held the deep conviction that the working masses had the capacity to learn, and that his task was to make sure that happened.[106]

Lenin's admission that "we made some use even of the Duma" speaks to a still more important lesson: "The Cadet Duma imagined that it was a constitutional organ, but it *was* in fact a revolutionary organ (the Cadets abused us for regarding the Duma as a stage or an instrument of the revolution, but experience has fully confirmed *our view*)." Thus the Duma did in fact—through Lenin's efforts—become a useful "instrument" in the revolutionary process, which is why it was dissolved. Unlike his response to the boycott of the First Duma, Lenin, to be seen in the next chapter, actively opposed fellow Bolsheviks who wanted to boycott the Second Duma exactly because of what the first experience had demonstrated: the potential utility of the Duma in the "revolutionary task of the struggle for *power*."[107]

Commenting some nine decades later on the Cadets' fall from grace, historian Orlando Figes—no friend of Lenin—confidently described their subsequent trajectory: "Never again would the Kadets place their trust in the support of 'the people.' Nor would they claim to represent them. From this point on, they would consciously become what in fact they had been all along: the natural party of the bourgeoisie. Liberalism and the people went their separate ways."[108] But that's the benefit of hindsight. In real time such wisdom wasn't so apparent. Not every RSDLP leader saw as Lenin did what the Cadets "had been all along." He was able to do so because he had so thoroughly grasped the lessons Marx and Engels bequeathed. This required knowing how to apply these lessons to concrete situations—that is, comprehending their methodology. And not the least important lesson, that of the 1848–49 European Spring, was that the liberal bourgeoisie could no longer be expected to carry out the bourgeois democratic revolution. The example of Plekhanov taught, tragically, that being familiar as he was with their teachings did not guarantee wisdom; they had to be mastered. In the end, the rich arsenal Marx and Engels left behind and the actual behavior of the Cadets are what gave Lenin the deserved confidence to say on more than one occasion about them, "Whatever thou doest, do quickly."

Though brief in existence, the First Duma allowed Lenin to cut his teeth on parliamentary work. That would serve him well for round two.

Chapter 4

From Revolution to "Coup d'État"

The Second Duma

In his ukase dissolving the Duma on July 8, 1906, Nicholas decreed that another would be convened the following year on February 20. This chapter begins by describing Lenin's response to that decree: he took the necessary steps to avoid the "awkward" situation the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party found itself in when the First Duma convened. He was determined that this time the Bolsheviks would contest the elections and be prepared to form a party fraction or group should they be successful. Indeed, the party as a whole made significant gains, and Lenin made every effort to use the Duma "rostrum" to advance what was left of the revolution in order to forge the worker-peasant alliance. Only in hindsight was it clear that not much of the revolution remained in place. The Czar's dissolution of the Second Duma after only three months in existence registered that fact—the end of the Revolution of 1905.

Toward the Second Duma

Within days of the Czar's decision to pull the plug on Russia's first experiment with parliamentary government, the half-year-long simmering from below boiled over. Sailors at Sveaborg near Helsingsfors (Helsinki) and Kronstadt mutinied. Lenin and the St. Petersburg Committee did all they could to put a lid on it—"to secure a postponement of action"—or at least try to provide some leadership. For Lenin, the rebellion, along with the jacquerie in the countryside, meant that the revolution that began 18 months earlier on "Bloody Sunday," January 1905, had not been exhausted. But without revolutionary restraint such actions were doomed to fail until the "rearguard" caught up with the "vanguard." The election

campaign for the Second Duma and the conduct of the party's Duma fraction offered a potentially valuable opportunity and means to ensure such an outcome. Though the Czar's government didn't set a date for the elections for the Second Duma, Lenin went into campaign mode almost immediately.

From Boycott to Guerrilla Warfare and/or Elections

After assessing the significance of the dissolution of the First Duma, Lenin, in his first pronouncement, addressed the "what next" question. Insurrection, in his opinion, was still on the agenda, especially given what the regime had just done. But how could it be organized? Success would depend not only on timing but on the assurance that local uprisings could be coordinated. "Influential members of the Duma among the Social-Democrats and Trudoviks could also help to make simultaneous action successful."[1] His suggestion about "influential members of the Duma" reveals how much the parliamentary arena had become part of his revolutionary strategy. It's easy to understand why. "The peasants," he wrote shortly afterward, "have learned more from the Duma than anyone . . . The Cadets were unmasked, the Trudoviks were consolidated—such were the most important gains of the Duma period." As evidence he noted that "revolutionary manifestos" that called for insurrection after the dissolution, "'To the Army and Navy,' 'To All the Peasants' . . . were signed by the 'bloc' of all revolutionary organizations, including the Trudovik Group."[2] A new Duma therefore offered the possibility of deepening those gains.

Not for naught was Lenin's next major writing titled, six weeks after the dissolution, "The Boycott." By now he had a new or, more correctly, a revived organ, *Proletary*, an illegal weekly published in Finland; like the rest of the Left opposition, the Bolsheviks had to play hide and seek with the government censors. Because *Proletary* was a weekly, Lenin's published responses to developments on the ground came less often than what a daily could have offered. The very first sentence of the "Boycott" article made clear its purpose: "The Left-wing Social-Democrats must reconsider the question of boycotting the State Duma." After reviewing how the Russian party as a whole had employed the boycott and arguing why it had been advantageous to do so, he admitted that the Duma experience provided unexpected "lessons" and that it would be "pedantic obstinacy" to not acknowledge that fact. "History has shown that when the Duma assembles opportunities arise for carrying on useful agitation both from within the Duma and around it . . . [H]istory has undoubtedly proved that that institution is of some, although modest, use to the

revolution as a platform for agitation, for exposing the true 'inner nature' of the political parties, etc." Therefore, "[t]he time has now come when the revolutionary Social-Democrats must cease to be boycottists. We shall not refuse to go into the Second Duma when (or 'if') it is convened."

In making a case for participation, Lenin was under no illusion about what was involved. Although the regime said there would be a new Duma, that couldn't be taken for granted, especially since in setting a date for its convening, February 20, it "did not fix—*contrary to the law*—the date of the elections." The government was understandably keeping its options open, he argued, and the temperature of the class struggle would be determinative. If the masses were in an insurgent motion, as he expected, the regime might see elections as way to divert that energy. If not, then they might decide there was no need for a potentially bothersome Duma. Nor, he noted very presciently, would it be known "what the electoral laws will be like." Whatever the case, the party needed to prepare for such eventualities by having a new congress. And high on the agenda had to be a discussion and decision about electoral blocs, since the Stockholm or Fourth Congress ruled them out. Lenin, not surprisingly, already had a position: "[T]here we shall resolve that *in the event of elections taking place*, it will be necessary to enter into an electoral agreement, for a few weeks, with the Trudoviks . . . And then we shall utterly rout the Cadets."[3] A few weeks later he was more explicit—"my own personal opinion" and, presumably, not necessarily that of the other Bolsheviks: "I would advocate the following at the Fifth Congress: no blocs or agreements whatever between the Social-Democrats and any other parties to be tolerated at the lowest stage of the elections. We must appear before the masses at election *time* absolutely independently. At the highest stages agreements with the Trudoviks may be permitted exclusively for the proportional distribution of seats and on the condition that we *'make'* the non-party Trudoviks party men, counterposing the opportunists among them and the semi-Cadets (Popular Socialists, 'Popular Socialist Party,' etc.) to the revolutionary bourgeois democrats."[4] The experience of the First Duma taught that a worker-peasant electoral bloc was a real possibility; it could even result in a Duma majority. But note the all-important qualifier "for a few weeks" in the earlier comment. In other words, and in the spirit of Marx and Engels's *Address of March 1850*, an "electoral agreement" with petit bourgeois forces was not only permissible but a necessity—as long as it didn't entail unity. Independent working-class political action, what the "lowest stage of the elections" made possible, had to be ensured.

In calling for an end to the boycott, Lenin continued to defend its usage against the Witte or First Duma. Because he initially opposed the

tactic and conceded to the majority to support it, but then later, in 1920, said it had been a mistake, it is difficult to say with any certainty how sincere was his defense. I suspect that despite what he wrote, Lenin continued to harbor doubts about, if not outright opposition to, the boycott of the Witte Duma; that he moved so quickly to reject the tactic when the opportunity presented itself is suggestive. But being loyal to a decision he didn't agree with probably made him more effective in convincing those Bolsheviks who supported the boycott (the vast majority) to abandon it for the Second Duma. To have said at this moment that he disagreed with the boycott risked making him sound like an "I-told-you-so." He resisted that temptation and thus enhanced his argument.[5]

Lenin began to see signs that suggested the regime would play its hard-cop card in regard to the new Duma. Petr Stolypin, now head of the Council of Ministers and architect of the dissolution, had already stepped up the repression. Peasant revolts and opposition attacks, including a Socialist-Revolutionary attempt on his life, gave Stolypin the convenient pretext to do so. On August 19 he instituted the notorious and much-hated field-court trials, which basically allowed for summary executions. "[N]early 60,000 political detainees were executed, sentenced to penal servitude or exiled without trial during his first three years in office."[6] When the leader of the industrial capitalist Octobrist Party gave his stamp of approval to Stolypin's crackdown, Lenin, on September 30, issued a warning: "Workers! Be prepared for the promulgation by the government of a Black-Hundred electoral law by the time of the elections! Peasants! Beware, the government is planning to change the electoral system so that peasant deputies, Trudoviks, *cannot* be elected to the Duma!"[7] Lenin's forecast was accurate. Stolypin did indeed carry out what Lenin called a "coup d'état"—but nine months later when he dissolved the Second Duma and instituted, in violation of the law, new electoral rules that ensured a much more friendly Third Duma. Again, it was elegant algebra, but wanting arithmetic. Lenin, a revolutionary and not a mathematician, was obligated to prepare for the worst rather than wait to see if his calculations were correct.

In a context of increasing repression in which an insurgency still seemed on the agenda, Lenin turned his attention to guerrilla warfare. Nothing he wrote at this time was fundamentally different from his earlier and briefer comments on the topic as discussed in Chapter 2. Rather than a strategy, guerrilla warfare, like parliamentary work, was simply one of many tactics that social democrats employed, depending on the situation. Most important, it had to be seen as part of and coordinated with the mass movement: "Guerrilla warfare is an inevitable form of struggle

at a time when the mass movement has actually reached the point of an uprising and when fairly large intervals occur between the 'big engagements' in the civil war . . . [G]uerrilla actions must conform to the temper of the broad masses and the conditions of the working class movement."[8] And to avoid it becoming an end in itself—the more than forty-year-old guerrilla wars in Colombia might be Exhibit A for what's wrong when that happens—party "control" was necessary.

To underscore the fact that for Lenin guerrilla warfare had to be part of a larger movement, the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (RSDLP) actively sought to recruit soldiers and sailors—"peasants in uniform," as they sometimes called them. At the end of 1906 they had 33 newspapers in various localities—just for the military![9] To coordinate military recruitment, the party held a couple of conferences in November 1906 that mapped out plans for deepening its influence among the armed forces. These meetings were significant because Stolypin used them to justify the dissolution of the Second Duma.

If the regime was able to hedge and keep its options open regarding the new Duma, Lenin could be just as agile. Exactly at the moment when he was thinking through armed struggle, he was writing his first detailed election campaign strategy document—just as Marx and Engels had provided both an electoral and an armed strategy in their *Address of March 1850*. Lenin's twenty-page pamphlet, *The Social-Democrats and Electoral Agreements*, brought together for the first time all his views on electoral work. Its central theme detailed his position about electoral "blocs" or agreements. In the first round of elections, again, he advised complete independence for social democracy, even from the Trudoviks, and only in later rounds could agreements with other parties be permitted. Lenin also advised social democrats on how they should comport themselves at both stages: "[S]peak simply and clearly, in a language comprehensible to the masses, absolutely discarding the heavy artillery of erudite terms, foreign words and stock slogans, definitions and conclusion which are as yet unfamiliar and unintelligible to the masses. Without flamboyant phrases, without rhetoric, but with facts and figures, they must be able to *explain* the questions of socialism and of the present Russian revolution." Finally, "we must take advantage of the election campaign to *organize the revolution*, i.e. to organize the proletariat and the *really* revolutionary elements of bourgeois democracy."

Given the uncertainty and difficulty involved in not only getting but keeping his ideas in print, Lenin understandably had no qualms about repeating what he had published elsewhere. The pamphlet, published in St. Petersburg, November 1906, served as a convenient handbook for

social democratic electoral work. The regime evidently saw it that way, too. In 1912 it was banned and "the remaining copies were destroyed at the printing press of the city authorities."[10]

"Splitting the Vote" and the "Black Hundred Danger": The Lesser of Evils Conundrum

In his pamphlet Lenin addressed for the first time an issue that has bedeviled many a working-class party in multiparty elections—the "danger of splitting the vote." Marx and Engels first raised the issue in their *Address*. In calling for the proletariat to put forward its own candidates in elections, even though "there is no prospect whatever of their being elected . . . they must not allow themselves to be bribed by such arguments of the democrats . . . that by so doing they are splitting the democratic party and giving the reactionaries the possibility of victory. The ultimate purpose of all such phrases is to dupe the proletariat. The advance which the proletarian party is bound to make by such independent action is infinitely more important than the advantage that might be incurred by the presence of a few reactionaries in the representative body." To these kernels of wisdom, Lenin added the necessary body.

The "few reactionaries" Lenin had to deal with were the fascist-like "pogrom mongers," the Black Hundreds. And for that reason the issue of vote splitting had to be taken "seriously": "It cannot be denied," he admitted, that in the absence of a "bloc of the Lefts," "Black-Hundred electors may be elected . . . And there is no doubt that the general public will take this [possibility] . . . into account; they will be afraid of splitting the vote, and because of that will be inclined to cast their votes for the most moderate of the opposition candidates."

The first thing that had to be taken into account, he said, was "the present electoral system in Russia." Elections were held in two to four rounds in four curia or electoral colleges, for landowners, urban dwellers, peasants, and workers. In the initial rounds the voting was for electors who eventually elected the deputies to the Duma. (The following figures make clear that due to the law of December 11, 1905, there was nothing representative about the elections: "one elector to every 2,000 voters in the landowner curia, one to each 7,000 in the urban curia, one to 30,000 in the peasant curia and one to 90,000 in the worker curia."[11]) In the first round, Lenin argued, when the mass of "primary voters go to the poll," the conundrum of vote splitting was most pronounced. In the subsequent rounds "when the elected representatives [or electors] vote, the general engagement is over; all that remains is to distribute the seats

by partial agreements among the parties, which *know* the exact number of their candidates and their votes." The Black Hundreds were likely only to be elected from the cities, which contributed less than 10 percent of the seats to the Duma; in the countryside the electoral process was generally nonpartisan.

So should social democracy enter into electoral agreements in the first rounds—that is, have joint lists of candidates with other parties, especially Cadets, to block the election of the Black Hundreds? For Lenin that would be a mistake: "We would undermine the principles and the general revolutionary significance of our campaign for the sake of gaining a seat in the Duma for a liberal! We would be subordinating class policy to parliamentarism instead of subordinating parliamentarism to class policy. We would deprive ourselves of the opportunity to gain an estimate of *our* forces. We would lose what is lasting and durable in all elections—the development of the class-consciousness and solidarity of the socialist proletariat. We would gain what is transient, relative and untrue—superiority of the Cadet over the Octobrist."[12] Furthermore, the "arithmetic possibility of splitting the vote," he argued, based on an analysis of the returns for the First Duma, was minimal. But in later rounds, again, electoral agreements were not only permissible but necessary to block the Black Hundreds. That meant, more specifically, blocs with the Trudoviks to defeat the Cadets and blocs with the Cadets to defeat the Black Hundreds. This was Lenin's ranking of the evils, from lesser to greater.

Given the Mensheviks' orientation toward the Cadets—on full display in the First Duma—it is not surprising that they objected to Lenin's call for a prohibition on electoral agreements in the first rounds of voting. Such a policy, in their view, would be an obstacle to their pas de deux with the liberals. At a party conference in Tammerfors (Tampere), Finland, November 3–7, the Menshevik-dominated Central Committee had enough delegates to adopt a resolution that allowed for electoral agreements with the Cadets in the first rounds. Because it was a conference, the decisions, as Lenin pointed out later, were only "advisory." The Bolsheviks submitted, for discussion in local organizations, a "dissenting opinion" that reiterated their call for a ban on electoral agreements in the first rounds, but with a qualification: "Exceptions to this rule are permissible only in cases of extreme necessity and only in relation to parties that fully accept the main slogans of our immediate political struggle, i.e., those which recognize the necessity of an armed uprising and are fighting for a democratic republic. Such agreements, however, may only extend to the nomination of a joint list of candidates, without in any way restricting the independence of the political agitation carried on by the

Social-Democrats." But there was an exception to this exception: "*In the workers' curia the Social-Democratic Party must come out absolutely independently and refrain from entering into agreements with any other party.*"[13] If Lenin was willing to be a bit flexible on the general stricture on blocs in the first rounds of elections, that didn't apply to the arena devoted exclusively to the proletariat—the one place where social democracy had to be pure and unadulterated in order to accurately assess its support. More than anything to date, the differences at Tammerfors revealed the collision course the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks were on.

The "Black-Hundred danger," the Mensheviks insisted, justified first-round electoral agreements with the liberal Cadets—a claim that has a very familiar ring to it for anyone acquainted with Left politics in advanced capitalist countries since the Second World War. Lenin took this head-on in "Blocs with the Cadets," his first major writing after Tammerfors.

There were three basic "flaws" with the Menshevik argument. The first is that it assumed an alliance with the Cadets would actually lessen the Black Hundred danger. But there was nothing, he pointed out, in the track record of the Cadets that warranted such a claim. Look, he said, at their behavior in the First Duma. As a liberal-monarchist party, the Cadets were apologists for the Czar—"*the known leader of the Black Hundreds*. Therefore, by helping to elect Cadets to the Duma, the Mensheviks are not only failing to combat the Black-Hundred danger, but are hoodwinking the people, are obscuring the real significance of the Black-Hundred danger. Combating the Black-Hundred danger by helping to elect the Cadets to the Duma is like combating pogroms by means of the speech delivered by the lackey [Cadet] Rodichev: 'It is presumption to hold the monarch responsible for the pogrom.'"

"The second flaw . . . is that . . . the Social-Democrats tacitly surrender hegemony in the democratic struggle to the Cadets. In the event of a split vote that secures the victory of a Black Hundred, why should *we* be blamed for not having voted for the Cadet, and not the *Cadets* for not having voted for us?" Social democrats "must not allow themselves to be bribed"—as Marx and Engels counseled in their *Address*—by what had always happened whenever they embarked on independent working-class political action in the electoral arena, "the howling and barking of the liberals, *accusing the socialists of wanting to let the Black Hundreds in.*" Why should the Cadets be allowed to pose as democrats? To the contrary, they had to be fought: "Now or later, unless you cease to be socialists, you will have to fight independently, in spite of the Black-Hundred danger. And it is easier and more necessary to take the right step now than it will be later on . . . But the *real* Black-Hundred danger, we repeat, lies not in

the Black Hundreds obtaining seats in the Duma, but in pogroms and [field] military courts; and you are making it more difficult for the people to fight this real danger by putting Cadet blinkers on their eyes." Ceding "hegemony in the democratic struggle to the Cadets" was to miseducate the masses and therefore disarm them in waging the "real" fight.

The "third flaw" was related to the second—"its inaccurate appraisal of the Duma and its role." Implicit in the Mensheviks' "tactics of partial agreement," as they called them, was the assumption that what transpired within the elegant walls of Tauride Palace was decisive in the class struggle. Trying to utilize the "Duma as a whole, i.e. the Duma majority"—again, in their own words—was the best way for "fighting the autocratic regime." It was just the opposite for Lenin and the Bolsheviks: "We think it is childish to imagine that the elimination of the Black Hundreds from the Duma means the elimination of the Black-Hundred danger." The Black Hundred danger, he argued, would be overcome in the only place it could—in the streets. The Mensheviks, Lenin charged, had succumbed to "parliamentary cretinism"—not the first and not the last well-intentioned revolutionaries to have met such a fate.

Although Lenin's answer to the vote-splitting/lesser-evil conundrum took into account the then existent electoral rules in Russia, there is nothing to suggest that it would have been qualitatively different for a different set of rules. At the heart of his position was a cost-benefit calculation informed by the assumption that what took place outside the parliamentary arena was decisive in politics. To the extent that participation in the electoral arena advanced independent working-class political action then it was worth taking part. If, however, such involvement interfered with that course, then the costs outweighed the benefits. Forming a bloc with the Cadets in the first round of elections incurred, in his view, an unjustifiable cost—the miseducation of the working class and its allies. It would be better to abstain—as the Bolsheviks did with the Bulygin Duma proposal—than to risk such an outcome. Even in the likelihood of the Black Hundreds obtaining a majority in the Duma, Lenin would have had the same answer; the Third and Fourth Dumas bear that out. However frightening that prospect might have been to some, Lenin knew that in the final analysis the "real" fight with the Black Hundreds had to take place outside Tauride Palace. "Everywhere we have a single policy: in the election fight, in the fight in the Duma, and in the fight in the streets—the policy of armed struggle. Everywhere our policy is: the Social-Democrats with the revolutionary bourgeoisie"—that is, the peasantry—"against the Cadet traitors."[14] Nothing distinguished the Bolsheviks more from the Mensheviks than that stance.

LENIN IN CAMPAIGN MODE

"Comrade workers, and all citizens of Russia! The Duma elections are approaching. The Social-Democratic Party, the party of the working class, calls upon you all to take part in the elections and so help to rally the forces that are really capable of fighting for freedom . . . Comrade workers, and all citizens of Russia! Vote for the candidates of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party!" Thus read the opening and closing paragraphs in Lenin's first explicit election campaign literature. Published on November 23, in *Proletary*, it came two weeks before the government set a date, February 6, 1907, for the Second Duma elections. Lenin couldn't wait to get out of the starting blocks.

A few days later he produced his first campaign poster, "Whom to Elect to the State Duma," included in the same issue of *Proletary*. Under the unwieldy subtitle, "Citizens See to It That the Whole People Clearly Understand What the Chief Parties are that are Fighting in the Elections in St. Petersburg and What Each of Them Strives for!" it explained, laid out in three and two columns, respectively the differences between the social democrats, the Cadets, and the Black-Hundreds on the one hand and between the social democrat and Trudovik parties on the other (see Appendix C). His not-too-subtle message drew strict lines between social democrats and Cadets while underscoring the vacillating character of the still inchoate peasant parties. The poster's text adhered strictly to his advice that "Social-Democrats must speak simply and clearly, in a language comprehensible to the masses."

The Stolypin administration sought to discourage enthusiasm for a campaign like Lenin's. No sooner had it announced the date for elections than it began to undermine them. "The other day [December 12]," Lenin reported, "an *order* was promulgated prohibiting the issue of election forms to unregistered parties." Effectively, this meant that only the Black-Hundred parties could get the forms. Also, "newspapers are being more and more summarily suppressed. Arrests are becoming more and more frequent. Premises are being raided and searched with the most transparent object of obtaining the names of electors and influential voters, in order to 'remove' them. In short, the election campaign is in full swing, as the witticism of Russian citizens puts it." This was why Lenin had no patience with those who "reduce the Black-Hundred danger to the danger of a Black-Hundred victory in elections"—elections "faked by the government!"[15] The government itself aided and abetted the Black Hundred danger. But Lenin would not be deterred. Three weeks before elections began he wrote that "there is still no doubt that the mood of the masses will decide the elections, and the decision will certainly not to

be in favor of the government and its Black Hundreds."[16] In St. Petersburg in particular, the claim that a split in the Cadet and social democratic vote would lead to a Black Hundred victory was "an obvious absurdity . . . a *deception of the people* spread by the Cadets, the 'radicals' and the opportunists of every brand."[17]

Lenin threw himself into the electoral campaign because he anticipated, correctly, that in spite of the stepped-up repression, these would be the most democratic elections Czarist Russia would ever permit. Most important, social democracy was openly, for the first time, contesting the elections—hoping to both expose and win the masses to its program. A teaching moment unlike any in the history of Russia was being offered, and ground zero was St. Petersburg, to where "the eyes of all Russia are now turned . . . [and] the pulse of political life beats faster . . . than elsewhere." Two weeks into the month-long election process, Lenin wrote, "The election campaign in St. Petersburg has already provided an amazing abundance of political-educational material, and *day by day* continues providing more. This material must be assiduously studied. It must be systematically collected, and serve to bring out in the greatest possible relief the *class* basis of the various parties. And this live, direct knowledge, which interests and agitates everybody, must be carried to the broadest possible strata of workers and to the most remote rural areas."

What he called the "third stage" of the process was clearly what he enjoyed the most—the opportunity to assess and shape "the mood of the masses":

> The election campaign begins. Election meetings are being held. The Mensheviks, who very, very rarely speak at these meetings, blather timidly about agreements with the Cadets. The Bolsheviks, who speak at all meetings, call upon proletarians and semi-proletarians to join a united workers' party—the Social-Democratic Party; they call upon all revolutionary and democratic voters to form a united revolutionary bloc against the Black Hundreds and the Cadets. The Cadets are shouted down, while the Bolsheviks are applauded. The democrats in the city—the workers and the petty bourgeoisie—are swinging towards the Left and shaking off the Cadet yoke.[18]

Lenin, no doubt, attended—incognito, I suspect, for security purposes—and participated in these meetings. It helps explain why his assessment about gains for the Left at the expense of the Cadets proved to be accurate. He was able to experience what Plekhanov, the Menshevik leader, missed by remaining in Geneva.

Again, the elections were indirect. Duma deputies were elected by electors who in turn were elected in four different arenas or curia, for landowners, peasants, urban dwellers, and workers. And in each curia there were rounds or stages—two for landowners and urban dwellers, three for workers, and four for peasants—thus the possibility of electoral agreements or blocs. The meetings he was describing were those in St. Petersburg leading up to the first round elections for its curia. And very much on the agenda in those meetings was the vote-splitting/Black Hundred–danger/lesser-evil conundrum—what middle-class "democrats in the city" were especially sensitive to.

The debate between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks regarding electoral agreements came to a head at a conference of the St. Petersburg RSDLP on January 7. The majority of the 71 delegates voted for the "dissenting opinion" submitted to the Tammerfors meeting by the Bolsheviks that prohibited blocs with the Cadets in the first rounds. The 31 Menshevik delegates "walked out" in disagreement. Effectively, this meant that there would be no uniform RSDLP policy on this question for the elections about to take place. Their deputies to the Second Duma would be elected in different ways, some completely independent and others in agreement with Cadets or Trudoviks and/or Social Revolutionaries. The latter, who had boycotted the First Duma, realized by now that they needed to take part this time; otherwise the social democrats would have unfiltered access to their constituents—the peasantry.

Lenin later revealed that the Bolsheviks themselves had differences on electoral agreements. While the "purists" didn't want agreements with any party, the "dissenters" like himself argued that "the socialist proletariat cannot refuse the non-socialist petty-bourgeois masses *to follow its leadership* in order that it may emancipate them from the influence of the Cadets." He was able to convince the "purists" to offer the Trudoviks and Social Revolutionaries, in return for their support to a joint "Left bloc" list in the first round, the following distribution of the six seats to the Duma allocated to St. Petersburg: "two places to the worker curia, two to the Social-Democrats, and two to the Trudoviks."[19] It was crucial, he argued, to defeat the Cadets in St. Petersburg, and having a social-democrat-Trudovik list separate and apart from a Cadet list—unlike what the Mensheviks wanted—would not enable victory for a Black Hundred list. Lenin thus waged war on a number of fronts, and the only power he had at his command was that of persuasion.

Though the details can't be gotten into here, Lenin's description of the democratic decision-making procedures the St. Petersburg Conference employed is instructive. His informative reports on the meeting

constitute key documents in the history of democratic centralism.[20] It's worth noting his observation about RSDLP norms versus those of opponent organizations: "The bourgeois parties settle big political questions from case to case by a simple ruling of one or other party 'authority,' which secretly concocts various political nostrums for the people. Only the workers' Social-Democratic Party actually practices democracy in organization, in spite of the enormous difficulties—and even heavy, sacrifices—which this entails for an illegal party."[21] According to Lenin then, the democratic credentials of the RSDLP were more deserved than those of any other party, including the liberal Cadets.[22]

Bolshevik participation in campaign meetings was of utmost importance given that the regime placed severe limits on their ability to make their case in print. As an illegal weekly (and then later semimonthly), *Proletary* could not be easily circulated. They did manage to publish a legal weekly, *Ternii Truda* [*Thorns of Labor*] for two weeks before it was closed down by the government and then another, *Zreniye* [*Vision*].[23] Though the latter's existence was even briefer, Lenin wrote two key campaign literature articles for its two and only issues.

"How to Vote in the St. Petersburg Elections: Is There a Danger of the Black Hundreds Winning the St. Petersburg Elections" was the lead article in the first issue on January 25. A most didactic piece, it presented the Bolshevik arguments in very accessible language. As for the main Cadet/Menshevik claim that if the social democrats put forward their own list it would allow the Black Hundreds to win, "*This is not true.* We are going to prove to you that even in the *worst possible* case of a split vote, i.e., even if the votes are *evenly* divided between the Cadets and the Social-Democrats in *all* election wards of St. Petersburg—even in that case a Black-Hundred victory in St. Petersburg is *impossible*." For proof, Lenin examined the returns for the First Duma elections in St. Petersburg that were won by the Cadets at the expense of the Black Hundreds. What if the social democrats had been on the ballot and split the Cadet vote? Would that have allowed a Black Hundred victory? Lenin presented the data for each ward in the city and concluded, "These figures show clearly that even in the most unfavorable case of a split in the Cadet vote, the Black Hundreds would have been successful in the 1906 elections *in only three* wards out of the *twelve*. . . This means that the Black Hundreds *could not* have been elected to the Duma at the first elections even if the Cadet vote had been split equally between the Cadet and the Social-Democratic candidates in *all* wards . . . *Thus, those who are trying to scare the voters with the possibility of a Black-Hundred victory if the Cadets and Social-Democrats split the vote*, **are deceiving the people**." Lenin then

offered what he said was the real reason for the scare tactic: "The Cadets are deliberately spreading false rumors of a 'Black-Hundred danger' so as to deter the voters from voting for the *socialists*." He argued, looking at the ward data, that it "is *quite possible* for the Social-Democrats in St. Petersburg to gain a victory over the Black Hundreds and the Cadets."

Unlike his earlier-cited article about the Black Hundred danger, written mainly for a proletarian audience, "How to Vote" was directed at the urban petit bourgeois democrat. The detailed attention to election return data and probabilities of outcomes recognized that the latter was more susceptible to the vote-splitting/Black Hundred danger claim, and therefore a case had to be made to allay its fears. For the proletariat, Lenin appealed to their instinct for independent working-class political action. Therefore, as well as fighting for the proletariat, Lenin sought to win over the middle class—at least those who were capable of being won over. There was another reason they were susceptible to the Cadet argument: "Taking advantage of the government's ban on Social-Democratic newspapers, the Cadet newspapers are dinning into their readers' ears that a Social-Democratic victory at the elections is inconceivable without the aid of the Cadets."[24] Though limited, the Bolsheviks were at least able to challenge that din in St. Petersburg. In Moscow, they didn't even have a newspaper. But again, Lenin would not be discouraged.

Analyzing the Election Results: The Workers' Curia and St. Petersburg

"The elections of workers' delegates are an extremely important event in the political life of Russia and in the history of our labor movement, an event that has not yet been properly appreciated." Lenin was referring to the workers' curia elections. The Czar's feudal-like electoral system, he recognized, offered the Bolsheviks a unique opportunity—unlike any, probably, in the history of the communist movement. The proletariat, a nonexistent estate in feudal society, wasn't, it may be remembered, included in the regime's original electoral procedures. Eventually it was, because the regime felt the heat of working-class insurrection in December 1905.

The three-stage workers' curia elections involved, first, the selection of representatives by workers at the factory level who then chose electors that later voted for the Duma deputies. An enterprise with 50 to 1,000 workers could have one representative and additional ones for every thousand workers. At the last stage, the workers' curia electors met with those from other curia to elect the Duma deputies. Under the law, "workers ['male'] themselves were permitted to decide whether a plurality

or a majority was required to elect a delegate, and whether voting would take place by ballot, a show of hands, or some other method."[25] The process, especially at the first stage, was indeed unique, as Lenin explained in his first assessment of the outcome of the first two stages of the elections in St. Petersburg: "For the first time *all* parties with any standing among the proletariat have come *before the masses* of the workers, not with general programs or slogans, but with a definite practical question: *to the candidates of which party* will the masses of the workers entrust the defense of their interests?"[26] Trade unions, as Victoria Bonnell describes in her classic work on the subject, played a key role in this regard: "The Petersburg Central Bureau of Trade Unions set the general tone when it urged that 'representatives of the socialist parties be given every assistance in explaining their program' . . . Election literature and lists of socialist party candidates were circulated through union channels."[27]

To appreciate the significance of the workers' curia elections, imagine what it would be like for a communist today to be able to debate every credible opponent before an audience composed exclusively of industrial workers, in their own workplaces. This is exactly what the Bolsheviks were able to do for two or more months throughout the Russian empire at the beginning of 1907. This probably has never happened before or since, anywhere. Engels would have been ecstatic; recall his chiding Paul Lafargue for not appreciating how elections could be used for revolutionary purposes.[28] Why would the regime allow such a process? Lenin, employing Marx and Engels's historical materialist method, would have had no difficulty in explaining as suggested in his discussion of the differences between the outcomes of the elections in "Russia proper and Poland"—the backwardness of the regime. In a more advanced capitalist country, the bourgeoisie would never have permitted communists to have such an opportunity. For Lenin, the elections were so significant that he issued the first of a frequent appeal to local Bolshevik leaders: "Unless our Party officials, and especially the advanced workers themselves, undertake the necessary and extremely important task of *studying* the course and the results of the elections in the worker curia, we can definitely say that we shall lose extremely valuable and necessary material for the future development of Party work and Party agitation."

As for the big picture, the elections confirmed Lenin's most basic political premise. "The general impression produced by the elections in the worker curia in Russia is unanimously summed up by all newspapers as follows: complete victory for the extreme Lefts, primarily the Social-Democrats, the Socialist-Revolutionaries coming second." The results "have fully borne out the fundamental thesis of Social-Democracy: as a

class, the proletariat is revolutionary. The proletarian *masses* are Social-Democratic in their aspirations and sympathies. The proletariat is the most revolutionary class in Russia." But there was a disturbing fact about the outcome, one that caused "despondency" among some Bolsheviks. The Social Revolutionaries did far better than expected. "In Moscow the Social-Democrats gained a complete victory over the Socialist-Revolutionaries. According to some reports, not yet fully verified it is true, about 200 Social-Democratic delegates were elected, as against a mere 20 Socialist-Revolutionary delegates!" But the situation was different in St. Petersburg to where, again, "the eyes of all Russia are now turned." Estimates suggested that the Social Revolutionaries had won a third of the delegates, which if true was "*actually* a defeat for the Social-Democrat in the capital." It was a defeat because elsewhere, as in Moscow, the social democrats had trounced them. "This is a fact of tremendous importance. In St. Petersburg the extreme Left bourgeois democrats deprived the socialists of their *overwhelming* preponderance in the worker curia. It is our duty to give this fact the closest attention. *All* Social-Democrats must set to work to study this phenomenon carefully and find the correct explanation for it."

Preliminary reports allowed Lenin to conclude that "(1) it was at the *biggest* factories, the strongholds of the most class-conscious, the most revolutionary proletariat, that Socialist-Revolutionaries inflicted the most telling defeat on the Social-Democrats; (2) the Socialist-Revolutionaries defeated *mostly* and in the main the *Menshevik Social-Democrats*. Where a Socialist-Revolutionary candidate opposed a Bolshevik Social-Democratic candidate, the Social-Democrats were far more often, *in most cases in fact*, victorious." Social Revolutionaries' gains, thus, came at the expense of the Mensheviks and not the Bolsheviks. "The supreme significance of both these conclusions is obvious. We must therefore take good care that these are not mere impressions but *conclusions* drawn from exact and verified data that can leave no room for two interpretations."[29]

Details in an accompanying article about the elections in the Neva district, one of the major industrial suburbs in the capital, allowed Lenin to offer an explanation for the difference in the Bolshevik-Menshevik vote. The elections began a day after the Mensheviks walked out of the January 7 RSDLP conference; they wanted, as it was later learned, to resume their negotiations with the Cadets for an electoral agreement. This angered the most class-conscious workers, who hated the Cadets, and it was the Menshevik candidates who reaped that opprobrium. They penalized the Mensheviks by voting for other "socialists"—that is, Socialist Revolutionaries—not knowing, as Lenin pointed out, that they too,

covertly, were engaged in negotiations with the Cadets. In the factories where the Bolsheviks were in the leadership, their candidates didn't suffer such a fate.

Before any definite conclusions could be drawn, details about other elections had to be gathered "so as not to gloss cravenly over our mistakes and short comings, but subject them to Party criticism and exert all our efforts to eliminate them. We *cannot* conduct consistent Social-Democratic work in St. Petersburg unless we pay close attention to the way in which the *masses of the workers* have voted for the candidates of the various parties. For the bourgeois parties it is important only to win so many seats. For us it is important for the masses themselves *to understand* the tenets and tactics of *Social-Democracy* as distinct from all petty-bourgeois parties, even though they may call themselves revolutionary, socialist parties. We must therefore strive to obtain exact and complete data on the voting at the elections in the St. Petersburg worker curia."[30] To that end Lenin drew up a questionnaire that was circulated to all local RSDLP units that asked for specific data about the elections, such as the number of workers who actually voted, the political identity of the candidates they voted for, and the actual number of votes for each candidate. The data confirmed by and large the preliminary conclusions he had drawn about the reason for the relative success of the Social Revolutionaries: "[T]he opportunist Social-Democrats"—that is, the Mensheviks—"are discrediting Social-Democracy in the eyes of the advanced proletariat."

In the meantime the workers' curia elections were entering their final stage. By mid-January all the factory elections had taken place. A total of 272 delegates had been elected with more than half (147) social democrats, more than a third (109) identified to one degree or another as Social Revolutionaries, and the remainder of various hues. The Bolsheviks then set out to win the delegates to their Left bloc that was formed on January 25, consisting of Bolsheviks, Trudoviks, and Social Revolutionaries. Except for a minority of them, the Mensheviks continued to "grovel at the feet" of the Cadets. At a meeting of 200 to 250 factory delegates on January 28, a resolution was passed overwhelmingly that supported the Left bloc—"fully endorsing *the tactics of the Bolsheviks*," as Lenin reported—and requested "that our Menshevik Social-Democratic comrades should enter into agreement with the Lefts and contribute to the success of the Left lists in the St. Petersburg elections." The request was spurned. A few days later the social democrat factory delegates met with the St. Petersburg RSDLP committee to select the 14 candidates for the Left bloc electors list, "published in all newspapers on the eve of the elections," that took place on February 1. The results were "a victory for the

united Social-Democrats. *The St. Petersburg Committee's list was elected in toto.* All fourteen electors are Social-Democrats! . . . *eight* are Bolsheviks, four are Mensheviks [representing the minority who supported the Left bloc]," and the remaining two were unaligned social democrats.[31]

The outcome, in other words, was a clear victory for Lenin's strategy of independent working-class political action, a vindication of his "intransigence," as his opponents labeled it. This is no doubt the moment when the Bolsheviks assumed leadership of St. Petersburg's proletariat. Until then the Mensheviks had been more influential; their majority on the Central Committee registered that fact. Therefore the elections for the Second Duma, specifically those for the workers' curia, are when the Bolsheviks bested the Mensheviks, a defeat from which they never recovered. As Lenin was so fond of saying, "revolution teaches."

The St. Petersburg urban curia elections had yet to be completed. But three days before the results were in, Lenin wrote, "At the beginning of the election campaign in St. Petersburg the whole opposition, all the Lefts, were opposed to the Bolsheviks. Everything possible or conceivable was done against us. *Yet everything turned out as we said*." He was relishing the fact that the arguments in his 1905 book, *Two Tactics*, regarding "the government's attitude towards the liberals and the attitude of the petty-bourgeois democrats towards the proletariat" had been confirmed by events leading up to the elections. The failure of the Cadets to put together an electoral bloc to oppose what the Bolsheviks sought to build was not unexpected. Stolypin was the main obstacle, and the other was the wavering of the petty bourgeoisie, the peasant parties, between the Cadet and Bolshevik alternatives. Confident in their politics, the Bolsheviks maintained a steady course. "And all who were *capable of fighting* followed us. The Left bloc became a fact. The hegemony of the revolutionary proletariat became a fact. *The proletariat* led *all* the Trudoviks and a large part of the Mensheviks, even intellectuals. The banner of *the proletariat* has been raised at the St. Petersburg elections. And whatever the outcome of the first serious elections in Russia in which all parties have participated—the banner of the independent proletariat, which is pursuing its own line, has already been raised. It will be held high in the parliamentary struggle and in *all other* forms of struggle that will lead to the victory of the revolution." The confidence Lenin and the Bolsheviks gained in this phase of the "dress rehearsal" of 1905–7 goes a long way in explaining, I argue, their success in 1917.

While the elections were underway in St. Petersburg on February 7, Lenin assessed the returns that had come in from elsewhere: "We have before us a Duma that is undoubtedly more Left than the previous

one . . . and [thus] a new even more formidable and more unmistakable *revolutionary crisis*. . . A new clash is inexorably approaching—either the revolutionary people will be victorious, or the Second Duma will disappear as ingloriously as the First, followed by the repeal of the election law and a return to the Black-Hundred absolutism *san phrases.*" The challenge now was how to temper revolutionary ardor. "We shall do all in *our* power to make this new struggle as little spontaneous and as conscious, consistent, and steadfast as possible . . . Therefore," as Engels would have advised, "no premature *calls* for an insurrection! No solemn manifestos to the people. No pronunciamentos, no 'proclamations.' The storm is bearing down on us of its own accord. There is no need of sabre-rattling."[32] The previous two years had amply demonstrated why behaving otherwise was now inadvisable. Two days before Lenin counseled revolutionary restraint, he wrote, "*In September 1870, six months before* the [Paris] Commune, Marx gave a direct warning to the French workers: insurrection would be an act of desperate folly . . . Marx knew how to warn the leaders against a premature rising." But his advice "was that of a practical advisor, of a participant in the struggle of the masses," and not that "of an intellectual philistine who moralizes: 'It is easy to foresee . . . they should not have taken up'" arms, as he charged Plekhanov with having done about the unsuccessful uprising in December 1905 in Moscow.[33]

Lenin summarized the St. Petersburg returns once they were all in: "The Cadets won the elections, but it must be stressed that the Left bloc polled 25 per cent of the total number of votes in St. Petersburg and that they were victorious in the Vyborg District. In many districts the Cadets won by a very small majority. In five districts it would have been enough to gain a further 1,600 votes to ensure a victory for the Left bloc . . . The Mensheviks, therefore, prevented a victory of the Left parties in St. Petersburg; nevertheless, the revolutionary Left is, in general, stronger in the Second Duma than it was in the First."[34] On one issue he felt especially vindicated—the Black Hundred danger: "The elections have proved that it was non-existent. Our repeated declarations and warnings, reiterated in all Bolshevik publications . . . have been fully confirmed. The Black Hundreds could not have won in St. Petersburg, no matter how the votes had split between the Cadets and the Lefts!"[35] As for the surprising number of votes for the Socialist Revolutionaries, "such results can only fortify our conviction that today, more than ever, our duty and the guarantee of our success lie in joint work, not with the liberal bourgeoisie, who want to put an end to the revolution, but with the democratic peasantry, against the baseness and treachery of the bourgeoisie."

Finally, the relatively close vote between the Cadets and the Left bloc in half of the districts was encouraging. For Lenin, the glass was half full: "If we work tirelessly . . . we *can* win, in every district, hundreds of shop-assistants, clerks, etc., from the party of the bourgeois liberals who are bargaining with Stolypin . . . The Cadets will not survive another election struggle against the Left bloc in St. Petersburg! They will be completely routed under the present electoral law." Winning social layers beyond the industrial proletariat and peasantry, in other words, was a necessity for success for the bourgeois democratic revolution. As for the "present electoral law," Stolypin no doubt read or knew what Lenin was thinking, reinforcing the conclusions about it that he had already drawn.

THE SECOND DUMA CONVENES

"The primary task of the Social-Democrats entering the Second Duma is to wrest away from the liberals those democratic elements that are still under their sway; to become the leader of those democrats; to teach them to seek support in the people and join ranks, with the masses down below; to unfurl *our own* banner before the whole of the working class and before the entire impoverished and famine-stricken peasant masses." In other words, "this Party must show it is the vanguard of the entire democratic movement."[36] Thus were Lenin's instructions to the just-elected social democratic fraction in the first issue of the new Bolshevik daily, *Novy Luch* [*New Ray*], launched on the day the Second Duma convened—just as they did when the First Duma commenced. This time, though, the regime tolerated their organ for only a week—an early sign of what was ahead.[37]

AGAINST THE "CRIMINAL MENSHEVIK POLICY"

The Second Duma that convened on February 20 was indeed, as Lenin predicted, much more to the left than the First. Of the 518 deputies, 65 were social democrats, 47 more than in the First. The almost 97 percent of all the workers' curia electors who either were or sympathized with the social democrats explains in part their success: "Despite the false assertions of the liberals who want to depict it as party of revolutionary intellectuals, the Russian Social-Democratic Party is, therefore, a real *working-class* party."[38] Of the social democratic deputies, 36 were Mensheviks—who continued to do well among oppressed nationalities in the Caucasus and elsewhere—and 18 were Bolsheviks, with the remaining not formally attached to either wing of the party.[39] The largest peasant party, the Trudoviks, increased its presence from 85 to 120 deputies, while the smaller

Social Revolutionaries who boycotted the First Duma now had 37, giving the peasant parties a total of 157 deputies, the largest group in the Second Duma. The gains of the Left bloc, especially those of the social democrats, came at the expense of the Cadets—"despite the tremendous power of the Cadet daily press, the legal status of the Cadet organization, the Cadet falsehood about the danger of a Black Hundred victory and despite the illegal status of the Lefts."[40] Cadet numbers declined by almost half, from 184 to 99. Also, it was clearly a more polarized Duma; the combined Black Hundred parties increased their presence from 45 to 64 deputies.

The first test for the social democrat fraction was the vote on the presidium, the chair and two vice-presidents of the Duma. As the party learned in the First Duma, these were not unimportant posts; their occupants decided who could speak in a Duma session. The Menshevik majority of the fraction, with some of the Bolsheviks reluctantly in tow, blocked with the Cadets to elect two of their deputies to the chair—F. A. Golovin—and one of the vice-president posts, and a Trudovik to the other one. The rationale they gave was the need to prevent a Black Hundred presidium.[41] Lenin disagreed and pointed to an article in the previous issue of *Novy Luch* that demonstrated that the Black Hundreds didn't have the votes to capture the presidium if the Left bloc voted against the Cadets. Their error was a learning opportunity for the inexperienced fraction. A crucially important principle, independent working-class political action, was at stake and needed to be defended if they were to successfully navigate their way through the new Duma and avoid the mistakes made by the previous fraction:

> What must the policy of the Social-Democrats be? Either abstain, and, as socialists, stand aside from the liberals, who betray liberty and exploit the people, or give the lead to the democratic petty bourgeoisie that is capable of struggle, both against the Black Hundreds and against the liberals. The former policy is obligatory for socialists when there is no longer any substantial difference between *any* of the bourgeois parties from the standpoint of the struggle for democracy. That is what happens in Europe. There is no revolution. All the bourgeois parties have lost the ability to struggle for democracy, and are struggling only for the petty, selfish interests of big *or small proprietors*. Under such circumstances, Social-Democracy *alone* defends the interests of democracy, and in so doing persistently unfolds its own socialist views to the masses. The latter policy is obligatory when the conditions of a bourgeois-democratic revolution obtain, when, in addition to the working class, there are certain bourgeois and petty-bourgeois strata capable of struggle for the democracy that is essential to the proletariat. In present-day Russia the second policy is obligatory. Without ever forgetting their socialist agitation and propaganda, and the organization of the

> proletarians into a class, Social-Democrats must, *jointly* with the democratic petty bourgeoisie, *crush* both the Black Hundreds and the *liberals*, as the situation may demand.

Lenin then showed how these general principles—one of his best concise explanations of the different tasks of social democracy vis-à-vis liberal democracy—would have been applied for the vote on the presidium:

> [T]he Social-Democrats should have said: we do not want our own presidium. We support the *whole* list of Lefts or Trudoviks *against the Cadets*, that is, we support all three candidates for the presidium, against the Cadet candidates, and will abstain if the Trudoviks follow in the wake of the Cadets, despite our warnings. In any case it would be essential to put up a candidate from the Lefts even though there would be no chance of his being elected; at the first voting, the number of votes given for him would show what forces the Social-Democrats could rely on in the event of a struggle against the Cadets. And if it should turn out that he obtained more votes than the Cadet, even if it were less than the absolute majority required for election, the voting would show the people clearly that this is not a Cadet Duma, and that the Cadet *is not everything* in the Duma.[42]

His advice was designed to extract the maximum advantage for independent working-class political action in the parliamentary arena and a guide for future fraction work. The presidium vote therefore wasn't "mere bagatelle."

The Menshevik-dominated Central Committee, despite the disapproval of the proletariat in St. Petersburg, persisted in courting the Cadets. It undermined, Lenin lamented, the work the Duma fraction should be doing: "This is just what is so *criminal* about the Menshevik policy in the Duma—they will not, or cannot, tell the people from the Duma platform the whole truth about the class nature of the various parties," particularly the reality of the Cadets and the deals they were willing to cut with the Stolypin government.[43] To help the readers of *Die Neue Zeit*, the German party journal, understand the division in opinion in the Russian party on the Cadets, Lenin provided one of his clearest explanations of the Bolshevik position:

> One wing (the Minority, or "Mensheviks") regard the Cadets and liberals as being the progressive urban bourgeoisie as compared with the backward rural petty bourgeoisie (Trudoviks). It follows from this that the bourgeoisie is recognized as the motive force of the revolution, and a policy of support for the Cadets is proclaimed. The other wing (the Majority, or "Bolsheviks") regards the liberals as representatives of big industry, who are

> striving to put an end to the revolution as quickly as possible for fear of the proletariat, and are entering into a compromise with the reactionaries. This wing regards the Trudoviks as revolutionary petty-bourgeois democrats, and is of the opinion that they are inclined to adopt a radical position on a land question of such importance to the peasantry, the question of the confiscation of the landed estates. This accounts for the tactics of the Bolsheviks. They reject support for the treacherous liberal bourgeoisie, i.e., the Cadets, and do their utmost to get the democratic petty bourgeoisie away from the influence of the liberals; they want to draw the peasant and the urban petty bourgeois away from the liberals and muster them behind the proletariat, behind the vanguard, for the revolutionary struggle. In its social-economic content, the Russian revolution is a bourgeois revolution; its motive force, however, is not the liberal bourgeoisie but the proletariat and the democratic peasantry. The victory of the revolution can only be achieved by a revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry.[44]

The differences had immediate implications for Duma work as well as for the eventual fate of Russian social democracy.

To counter the Mensheviks' unrequited wooing of the Cadets, Lenin took the opportunity to reply to an article in the short-lived Trudovik legal daily *Noviye Sily* [*New Forces*]—it lasted two issues longer than *Novy Luch*—about his criticism of the presidium vote. The author objected to "our 'hackneyed' division of the bourgeoisie into petty, revolutionary and liberal" in assessing the Cadets; for Lenin, it was another teaching moment. After patiently explaining the class roots of the Cadets, "the liberal bourgeoisie" and "liberal landlords"—and later the "bourgeois intelligentsia"—and why it was "inevitable" and not "fortuitous" that they had turned increasingly rightward, Lenin discussed how class analysis informed Bolshevik tactics in relation to the Cadets and Duma politics. As for the presidium vote, the "Social-Democrats had to *wrest* the Trudoviks *away* from the Cadets, either by voting for the Trudoviks or by demonstratively abstaining from voting and giving a reason for the abstention. *Noviye Sily* now admits that it was a *mistake* for the Left to take part in a conference with the Cadets [where the agreement to block with them was entered into]. This is a valuable admission. *Noviye Sily*, however, is sadly mistaken in thinking that 'it was a mistake of practical expediency and not of principle.' This opinion, as we have shown, arises out of a misunderstanding of the fundamentals, principles and tactics of the socialist proletariat in the bourgeois revolution."

Lenin ended with a comradely retort that allowed him to sketch out social democratic tactics for the most familiar component of parliamentary work—tabling bills:

> Legislative work "must inevitably be placed in the hands of the Constitutional-Democrats." Nothing of the sort. The Cadets, as leaders of the liberal "Centre" in the Duma, have a majority over the Black-Hundred group, without our support. We must therefore table our own Social-Democratic bills, not liberal and not petty-bourgeois, bills that are written in revolutionary language, not in official jargon, *and must put them to the vote*. Let the Black Hundreds and the Cadets turn them down. We shall then go over to a ruthless criticism of the Cadet bill and regularly submit amendments. When the amendments end we shall abstain from voting on the Cadet bill as a whole, leaving the Cadets to defeat the Black Hundreds, thereby taking no responsibility on ourselves before the people for the poverty and worthlessness of Cadet pseudo-democracy.

If Lenin could be patient and comradely with an unknown Trudovik writer, that wasn't true when dealing with a known Menshevik. His favorite polemical tactic, sarcasm, was on full display in response to the attempt of "Comrade D. Koltsov" to defend Menshevik support for the Cadets with the *Communist Manifesto*: "From the bottom of our heart we welcome this Menshevik turn to the study of the *fundamental* principles of our disagreement on tactics. It is high time." He then dared the "comrade" to put in writing as a resolution to be debated at the much anticipated Fifth Congress that the "Cadets are *the progressive urban bourgeoisie* and the Trudoviks *the backward rural bourgeoisie*." Because "the peasant struggle for land" is the key issue in the Russian revolution and "without the democratic reorganization of the state the peasants cannot overcome the feudal-minded landlords," the resolution would have to offer evidence that the Cadets and not the Trudoviks were capable of advancing such "reorganization." But nothing in the Cadet's recent history, such as their performance in the First Duma, even hinted at such a possibility. "We therefore welcome the frankness and directness of Comrade Koltsov, and repeat our challenge: let the Mensheviks try to formulate *these* ideas concerning the Cadets and the Trudoviks, and express them clearly and unequivocally."[45]

On a Collision Course

Only a week after its convening, the "papers are full of news, rumors and surmises about the imminent dissolution of the Duma." Six months earlier Lenin had warned workers and peasants to be prepared for Stolypin doing exactly that. The task now for social democracy, especially the Duma fraction, was how to respond to the "rumors." "They should tell the people, simply and clearly, *from the rostrum of the Duma, the whole truth*, including the reason why the dissolution of the Duma, a coup

d'état, and a return to pure absolutism are inevitable. The government *need* [sic] silence on this. The people *need* to know it. The representatives of the people—while they still are representatives of the people!—should say this from the rostrum of the Duma."[46]

The "rumors" began to subside when Stolypin addressed the Duma on March 6 to defend his government's iron hand after the dissolution of the First Duma and to present its legislative agenda, the most important moment in the short life of the Second Duma. The olive branch he held out to the body along with the unsheathed sword gave, as intended, the Cadets a ray of hope and new determination to not rock the boat. Leading up to the speech, they tried to orchestrate a nonconfrontational response—specifically, to not have a no-confidence vote on Stolypin's government. They proposed to the Left that his address be greeted with silence and a motion to pass immediately on to the regular order of business. The social democrats disagreed, saying Stolypin, with all the blood on his hands, had to be confronted, and they would do so, if necessary, alone: "Some Kadets with the approval of the Social-Revolutionaries suggested that all fractions leave the hall in protest against the Social-Democratic speech, but the Trudoviki and Popular-Socialists [the right wing of the Trudoviks] objected"—the first time in the session that the Trudoviks deserted the Cadets to support the social democrats.[47]

The social democrats differed on how they should respond to Stolypin's address. While the Bolsheviks wanted, like the Mensheviks, a statement that clearly indicted the regime for its crimes, they felt it should also include the social democratic program. The Menshevik majority, with the backing of the Central Committee, objected, contending that it would be repetitious, since the party had already laid out its program in the First Duma.[48] When the fateful day arrived, I. G. Tsereteli, the Menshevik faction leader from Georgia, along with two other Menshevik deputies, roundly denounced Stolypin's soft-cop/hard-cop message—much to the discomfort of the Cadets. G. A. Alexinsky, the Bolshevik faction leader and also from the Caucasus, added more fire. But Stolypin, who sat stoically through the denunciations, would not be intimidated: "These attacks count on paralyzing the will and thoughts of the government. They all come down to two words directed at authority: 'hands up.' To these two words, sirs, the government with complete calm, with a consciousness of its uprightness can reply in two words: 'you will not frighten us' (*ne zapugaete*)."[49] This scenario, more than any other, encapsulated the fate of the Second Duma—two irreconcilable parties on a collision course.

Lenin had drafted a statement for the fraction, "Apropos of Stolypin's Declaration," but it was rejected by the Menshevik majority. While it

repeated some of the main points in Tsereteli's statement about all that was wrong with the regime, it challenged the prime minister in a way that the Mensheviks were not prepared to do. Lenin correctly knew what would be missing in Stolypin's feigned attempt at conciliation: "There is one thing this announcement does not say and which must be said to the people by those deputies they sent to the Duma and who remain faithful to the people's interests—the government does not say that its announcement signifies an irrevocable and inevitable decision to dissolve the Second Duma without even giving it an opportunity to express the will of the people, to express the needs of the peasants, workers and soldiers, of all working people, and to express anything the people included in the mandates they gave the deputies when they sent them to the Duma." And then, Lenin reminded the deputies why they were there in the first place, his most basic claim about parliaments: "Duma deputies and an entire Duma capable of helping the people are meaningless without the people. If Russia has obtained even tiny liberties for a short period, if Russia has been granted popular representation even if only for a brief period, this is only because it has been won by the struggle of the people, the selfless struggle for liberty by the working class, the peasantry, the soldiers and the sailors."[50]

That Mensheviks in the Duma like Tsereteli were willing, early in the life of the Second Duma, to make the Cadets uncomfortable (if not to the extent Lenin was) is noteworthy. Unlike the Menshevik-dominated Central Committee of the party, and Plekanov in particular, they had a more intimate and thus informed opinion of the Cadets owing to almost daily contact. The combination of Lenin's vigilance of the conduct of the fraction, I suspect, and the incessant tendency of the Cadets to bend to Stolypin at the expense of workers and peasants goes a long way in explaining why they increasingly found themselves closer to Lenin's politics than those of the Central Committee. It also explains Lenin's more comradely critique of the fraction than that of the Central Committee. He recognized that the fraction deputies, despite the Menshevik label for most of them, were teachable—just as those in the First Duma.

Three weeks after Lenin called attention to the "rumors" about the dissolution of the Duma, he wrote that the situation had changed: "The government will not dare dissolve the Duma without a budget and an agrarian law the latter has approved. The government is *afraid* to dissolve the Duma and, at the same time, is vociferating about dissolution and is putting into motion the entire Black-Hundred machinery . . . so as to scare the timid and incline the wavering to compliance. It wants to try and drag concessions out of the Duma by gagging it with the threat of dissolution."[51] Under the Fundamental Laws, the government's budget

had to be approved by the Duma. Though a provision allowed the government to continue with the prior budget if approval wasn't obtained, having the Duma sign on facilitated the regime's ability to borrow from lenders outside Russia. "Whether the European financial magnates' faith in the durability and solvency of the firm of Stolypin & Co. will be strengthened or weakened, depends to a great extent on the Duma."[52]

The Debate on the Agrarian Question

But first, there was the land question, the most important agenda item for the Second Duma—just as for the First. This time there was greater urgency, because following the dissolution of the First Duma, Stolypin, acting under the emergency provisions of Fundamental Law 87, embarked on his own solution. Lenin characterized it as "the Prussian type" as opposed to "the American type"—that is, an agrarian revolution from above. Essentially, his "reforms" involved the dismantling of the peasant commune by creating a class of rich peasants or kulaks financed by the state. It effectively meant that Russia, like Prussia, would not experience a bourgeois democratic revolution with all the implications for the worker-peasant alliance and socialist revolution. But Stolypin needed the Duma to implement and legitimize his scheme. Lenin pointed to articles in the Cadet organ *Rech* that hinted Stolypin had reached a deal with them and issued a warning: "Trudoviks of all shades—do not allow yourselves to be tricked! Stand guard over the interests of the people! Prevent this filthy deal between the Cadets and the government! Social-Democrat comrades! We are certain you will understand the situation, that you will stand at the head of all revolutionary elements in the Duma, that you will open the eyes of the Trudoviks to the shameful treachery of the liberal-monarchist bourgeoisie. We are sure that from the rostrum of the Duma you will loudly and boldly expose this treachery to the whole people."[53]

To do exactly that, Lenin wrote a speech on the agrarian question for Alexinsky, the Bolshevik faction leader when the first sustained debates began on March 19. Owing to time constraints, he couldn't deliver every word of Lenin's thirty-page document, but the summary of the stenographic account reveals that he presented its essence.[54] Fully on display in Lenin's draft was his more than decade-long research on the question, but it was written in a most accessible and didactic manner. The peasant deputies were his primary audience, and with characteristic sarcasm and ridicule he enjoyed ripping into the Right/Black Hundred deputies who defended what amounted to "*serf* farming" despite the "emancipation" of 1861. "And those gentlemen on the Right benches talk about the

Jews exploiting the peasants, about Jewish usury! But thousands of Jewish merchants would not skin the Russian muzhik in the way the true Russian, Christian landlords do! The interest claimed by the worst usurer is not to be compared with that claimed by the true Russian land lord, who hires a muzhik in winter for summer work or who forces him to pay for a dessiatine [2.7 acres] of land in labour, money, eggs, chickens, and God alone knows what else!" The Right's defense revealed the essence of the debate—"whether or not to preserve landed proprietorship."

> And I must give special warning to the peasants and the peasant deputies—evasion of *the real substance* of the issue must not be allowed. You must trust in no promises no fine words, until the *most important* thing has been made clear—will the landed estates remain the property of the landlords or will they pass into the peasants' hands? *If they remain the property of the landlords, labour service and bondage will remain*. Constant hunger and want for millions of peasants will also remain. The torment of gradual extinction from starvation—that is what the retention of landed proprietor ship means for the peasants.[55]

But the main thrust of Lenin's attack was reserved for the Cadets. Given the Menshevik majority in the Central Committee and fraction and their reluctance to expose the Cadets, and the democratic centralist norm for doing Duma work, Lenin had been prevented from taking on the Cadets. But owing to a breach of the agreement the Mensheviks had with them to not attack the Trudoviks and social democrats but only the Right in the debates on the land question, Lenin now had license. One of the Cadet fraction members, apparently to the surprise of the rest of his comrades, did exactly what the agreement prohibited, charging that the Trudovik and social democrat proposals were, respectively, "impractical" and of "the greatest injustice." Lenin relished the opportunity to go after him because it allowed him to take on, indirectly, the Mensheviks who had been cozying up to the Cadets.

With a Marxist scalpel, Lenin methodically dissected "what Deputy Kutler, in his argument against my Party comrade [Tsereteli], called 'the greatest injustice.' 'It seems to me . . . that the abolition of private property in land [the key plank in the Social Democratic program on the agrarian question] would be the greatest injustice, as long as other forms of property, real and personal estate, still remain! . . .' And then farther: 'Since nobody proposes to abolish property in general, it is essential that the existence of property in land be in every way recognized.'" This was red meat for Lenin. "This is the first time I have been confronted by a liberal, and such a moderate, sober, bureaucratically-schooled liberal at

that, who proclaims the principle of '*everything or nothing*'! For, indeed, Mr. Kutler's argument is based entirely on the principle of 'everything or nothing.'" Or, as Lenin put it more concisely in the first issue of the new Bolshevik legal daily, *Nashe Ekho* [*Our Echo*], a few days later, "Since we cannot take two steps forward *this very day*, then 'it is essential' to refuse to take a simple step forward! Such is the logic of the liberal. Such is the logic of landlord avarice."[56] Kutler's absolutist stance, what liberals like him often accused the Bolsheviks of adopting, invited tongue-in-cheek sarcasm: "I, as a revolutionary Social-Democrat, must positively declare against such a method of argument."

Very didactically—again, the peasantry and its Duma deputies were his real audience—Lenin offered an analogy to show what was wrong with Kutler's argument while making ever-so-clear social democracy's position on the agrarian question:

> Imagine, gentlemen, that I have to remove two heaps of rubbish from my yard. I have only one cart. And no more than one heap can be removed on one cart. What should I do? Should I refuse altogether to clean out my yard on the grounds that it would be the greatest injustice to remove one heap of rubbish because they cannot both be removed at the same time?
>
> I permit myself to believe that anyone who *really* wants to clean out his yard *completely*, who sincerely strives for cleanliness and not for dirt, for light and not for darkness, will have a different argument. If we really cannot remove both heaps at the same time, let us first remove the one that can be got at and loaded on to the cart immediately, and then empty the cart, return home and set to work on the other heap. That's all there is to it, Mr. Kutler! Just that and nothing more!
>
> To begin with, the Russian people have to carry away on their cart all that rubbish that is known as feudal, landed proprietorship, and then come back with the empty cart to a cleaner yard, and begin loading the second heap, begin clearing out the rubbish of capitalist exploitation!
>
> Do you agree to that, Mr. Kutler, if you are a real opponent of all sorts of rubbish? Let us write it into a resolution for the State Duma, using your own words: "recognizing, jointly with Deputy Kutler, that capitalist property is no more praiseworthy than feudal landlord property, the State Duma resolves to deliver Russia first from the latter in order later to tackle the former."

Lenin knew, of course, that Kutler's class position would never allow him to sign on to such a resolution. It was, rather, another way to expose the Cadets, "the so-called 'people's freedom' party." Kutler's attempted sleight of hand, to substitute "capitalist property" for "landed property," was glaringly instructive for the peasantry and those Mensheviks who

were still capable of being instructed: "Nobody in the world will agree to call or consider democrats those people who, in an epoch of struggle for freedom, qualify as 'the greatest injustice' the abolition of that which is destroying freedom, which is oppressing and suppressing freedom"—that is, "feudal, landed proprietorship."

Lenin also defended the Trudovik deputies from Kutler's charge that their "land nationalization bill" was "impractical" given the prevailing "political conditions": "Mr. Kutler's arguments in their entirety boil down to this—since ours is not a democratic state there is no need for us to present democratic land bills! No matter how you twist and turn Mr. Kutler's arguments, you will not find a grain of *any other* idea, of *any other* content, in them. Since our state serves the interests of the landowners we must not (*representatives of the people must not*!) include anything displeasing to the landowners in our agrarian bills . . . no, Mr. Kutler, that is not democracy, that is not people's freedom—it is something very, very far removed from freedom and not very far removed from servility."[57]

More important for Lenin than responding to Kutler's attacks on the social democrats and Trudoviks was a convincing critique of the Cadets' own proposals on the land question. But that wasn't easy at this stage in the debate. Rather than lay out their program, the Cadets, with Kutler again in the lead, honed in on the imprecisions in the Trudovik figures and criteria for the amount of land they demanded to be taken from "the state, crown, church and privately-owned lands" to fulfill the needs of the peasants. Lenin, again, came to the defense of the peasant deputies. The questions Kutler raised "only serve to confuse the *basic issue*; should we take 72 million dessiatines of the landlords' land for the peasants or not? . . . he simply avoided giving an answer to the question of *whether he and his party agree to hand over all the landlords' land to the peasants*. Whoever *does not agree* to hand over literally *all* the landlords' land to the peasants (remember, I made the proviso that each landowner be left with 50 dessiatines so that nobody would be ruined!) *does not stand for the peasants and does not really want to help the peasants*."

If the Cadets wouldn't say what they were for, their "silences," Lenin wrote, would have to be a stand-in. As well as avoiding the Trudovik demand for the 72 million dessiatines, their failure to say what they thought of the issues raised by "my comrade Tsereteli" was also telling. They boiled down to the following question "which Kutler evaded and confused": "will a democratic government" at both the national and local level "have to solve the agrarian problem, or should the present government?"

> And don't try to tell me that the Duma is impotent, helpless and without the necessary powers. I know all that very well . . . The matter in hand is this—the Duma must clearly, definitely and, most important of all, correctly express the real interests of the people, must tell them the truth about the solution of the agrarian problem, and must open the eyes of the peasantry so that they recognize the snags lying in the way of a solution to the land problem.
>
> The will of the Duma, of course, is still not law, that I am well aware of! But let anybody who likes do the job of limiting the Duma's will or gagging it—*except the Duma itself*!

To make clear what he was and was not expecting of the Duma, Lenin reiterated his core position about the role of the Duma in Russia's revolution: "In the final analysis, it is not the Duma, of course, that will *decide* the agrarian question, and the decisive act in the peasants' struggle for land will not be fought out in the Duma. If we really wish to be *representatives of the people*, and not liberal civil servants; if we really want to serve the interests of the people and the interests of liberty, we *can* and *must help* the people by explaining the question, by formulating **it** *clearly*, by telling them the *whole* truth with no equivocation and no beating about the bush."

Lenin reserved the last section of his draft for a comradely critique of the Trudoviks, specifically the intervention of a "Reverend Tikhvinsky . . . a peasant deputy who deserves all respect for his sincere loyalty to the interests of the peasants, the interests of the people, which he defends fearlessly and with determination." As well as respect, Lenin prefaced his comments with honesty: "The Social-Democrats do not share the views of the Christian religion . . . [W]e . . . have a negative attitude towards the doctrines of Christianity. But, having said that, I consider it my duty to add, frankly and openly, that the Social-Democrats are fighting for complete freedom of conscience, and have every respect for any sincere conviction in matters of faith, provided that conviction is not implemented by force or deception." Lenin knew that this was a unique opportunity he might not have again to forge the worker-peasant alliance, and being respectful and principled was critical for success.

The equal distribution of land was the core of the Trudovik land-reform program. Lenin quoted Reverend Tikhvinsky in its defense:

> This is the way the peasants, the way the working people look at the land: the land is God's, and the labouring peasant has as much right to it as each one of us has the right to water and air. it would be strange if anyone were to start selling, buying or trading in water and air—and it seems just as strange to us that anyone should trade in, sell or buy land. The Peasant Union and the Trudovik Group wish to apply the principle—all the

> land to the working people. With regard to compensation for the land—how the above is to be effected, by means of compensation or by simple alienation without compensation, is a question that does not interest the laboring peasantry.

Lenin, without a hint of sarcasm or patronizing, responded that though the deputy's position "springs from the most noble motives," the "error, the profound error of the Trudoviks is their *not* being interested in the question of compensation and the *ways of implementing* the land reform, although whether or not the peasantry will achieve liberation from landlord oppression *actually* depends on this question." And behind it was a more fundamental issue—the "still more burdensome, still more oppressive power over working people of today, *the power of capital, the power of money.*" Without any hint of condescension, Lenin sought to educate the deputy on the basics of the capitalist mode of production. He urged him to look beyond the countryside and recognize the pervasive power of capital to transform not only land but human "labor-power" itself into a commodity and think about the implications of that fact:

> [C]an you imagine equalitarian land tenure or prohibiting the sale and purchase of land as long as the power of money, the power of capital, continues to exist? Can the Russian people be delivered from oppression and exploitation if the right of every citizen to an equal-sized piece of land is recognized, when, at the same time, a handful of people own tens of thousands and millions of rubles each, and the mass of the people remain poor? No, gentlemen. As long as the power of capital lasts, no *equality* between land owners will be possible, and any sort of ban on the purchase and sale of land will be impossible, ridiculous and absurd. Everything, not merely the land, but human labor, the human being himself, conscience, love, science—everything must *inevitably be for sale* as long as *the power of capital* lasts.

In concluding, Lenin emphasized that the critique of the deputy was in no way meant to impugn the justice of the peasant struggle or to "belittle its significance":

> Worker Social-Democrats give their full support to the peasants against the landlords. But it is not petty owner ship, even if it is equalitarian, that can save mankind from the poverty of the masses, from exploitation and from the oppression of man by man. What is needed for that is a struggle for the destruction of capitalist society, and its replacement by large-scale socialist production. This struggle is now being conducted by millions of class-conscious Social-Democrat workers in all countries of the world. It is only by joining in this struggle that the peasantry can, having got rid of

> their first enemy, the feudal landlord, conduct a successful struggle against the second and more terrible enemy, the power of capital![58]

Nothing that Lenin wrote for Alexinsky, his most extensive intervention to date in the Duma proceedings, had not been said in previous writings and speeches. New this time is the tone and the way in which he presented his ideas. It reveals a principled and agile politician who knew how to speak to different audiences in very accessible language in a venue very different from his usual theaters of operation. Only the Duma stenographic account would reveal how much of the draft found its way into Alexinsky's intervention. Its significance, however, is that it pointed the way forward for not only what but how to say what was necessary in forging the essential alliance for Russia's bourgeois democratic revolution.

Engels often pointed to the speeches of August Bebel as models of communist speech making in the legislative arena. Relevant to my claim that Lenin's parliamentary perspective stood on the shoulders of Marx and Engels, I argue that had he lived long enough to see what he and Marx accurately anticipated about the Russian theatre, he would have pointed to this speech as well.

"An Indispensable Weapon" from the Marx-Engels Arsenal

While the evidence is strong that Lenin's parliamentary perspective was indeed informed by Marx and Engels, it's not clear if he knew about their all-important *Circular Letter of 1879* that criticized the first reformist lurch of the German party. The answer to that question came on April 6, 1907, when he wrote the "Preface" to the Russian translation of *Letters by Johannes Becker, Joseph Dietzgen, Frederick Engels, Karl Marx, and Others to Friedrich Sorge and Others*: "Of particular interest to Russian socialists in the present revolutionary period are the lessons which the militant proletariat must draw from an acquaintance with the intimate aspects of the activities of Marx and Engels in the course of nearly thirty years (1867–95)"—which is exactly what the hitherto unpublished letters made possible.[59] "And running like a scarlet thread through all these opinions is . . . a warning against the 'Right wing' of the workers' party, a merciless (sometimes—as with Marx in 1877–79—a *furious*) war against *opportunism* in Social-Democracy."

Marx's "furious war" refers precisely to the events surrounding the *Circular Letter*, which Lenin discovered for the first time. He summarized in a couple of pages the relevant correspondence and chided the then most authoritative biographer of Marx and Engels, Franz Mehring, because he "attempts to tone down Marx's attacks—as well as Engels's later

attacks—against the opportunists and, in our opinion, rather overdoes it." While one might quibble about this interpretation, more important, he said, is "Marx's assessment *in principle*, of definite *trends* in socialism in general." As for one of those trends, Lenin read the later correspondence to mean that this "forecast of Bernsteinism, made in 1882, was strikingly confirmed in 1898 and subsequent years. And after that, and particularly after Marx's death, Engels, it may be said without exaggeration, was untiring in his efforts to straighten out what was being distorted by the German opportunists."

Lenin flagged for readers a series of letters Engels wrote three years after Marx's death in which he criticized the Reichstag fraction for voting for a Bismarck steamship subsidy: "The 'philistinism' of the Social-Democratic deputies was *'colossal.'* 'A petty-bourgeois socialist parliamentary group is inevitable in a country like Germany,' said Engels . . . [I]n general, it was preferable that 'the Party should be better than its parliamentary heroes, than the other way round.'" He then summarized the significance of the correspondence:

> We thus see that for more than ten years Marx and Engels systematically and unswervingly fought opportunism in the German Social-Democratic Party, and attacked intellectualist philistinism and the petty-bourgeois outlook in socialism. This is an extremely important fact. The general public know [sic] that German Social-Democracy is regarded as a model of Marxist proletarian policy and tactics, but they do not know what constant warfare the founders of Marxism had to wage against the "Right wing" (Engels's expression) of that Party. And it is no accident that soon after Engels's death this concealed war became an open one. This was an inevitable result of the decades of historical development of German Social-Democracy.

By 1907, if not before, Lenin knew therefore that Marx and Engels had mounted a campaign against the reformist tendencies, including its parliamentary work, of international social democracy's flagship party—key evidence for one of the four arguments of this book. For Lenin, in battle against Menshevik "opportunism" vis-à-vis the Cadets, the publication of the letters was most timely. Not for naught did he say that they "should serve as an indispensable weapon for all Russian socialists."[60]

Shortly after writing the "Preface," Lenin pointed, with license now from Engels, to the "Right wing of the German Social-Democrats"—the "Bernsteinians." It came in a commentary on an article about the politics of the Second Duma in *Die Neue Zeit* written by Mehring, who "[r]eaders will, of course know . . . are ['the entire editorial board'] on the side of

revolutionary Social-Democracy." Lenin read Mehring's article—which, interestingly, employed the lessons Marx and Engels drew about the events of 1848–49—as praise for the Bolsheviks. Their "positive work" in countering the "disgusting orgy" of the Cadets vis-à-vis the Stolypin regime was not unlike what Marx and Engels had done to challenge the liberals who betrayed Germany's bourgeois democratic revolution a half century or so earlier. An article in the leading Bernsteinian organ *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, on the other hand, castigated the "Leninians" for the stance they took on the elections to the Second Duma in opposing a bloc with the Cadets. "The Mensheviks," Lenin noted, "*especially Plekhanov*," come in for praise as the "*realist wing* of Russian Social-Democracy." In addition, the article applauded the "saving the Duma" campaign of "the opposition taken as a whole" and recommended that "the socialists . . . not 'waste their forces in a completely useless struggle against the Cadets.'"

This was Lenin's clearest recognition so far that the split in the Russian party mirrored a similar one in its German counterpart and that the electoral arena figured significantly in the equation—crucial evidence for my claim that the later split in international social democracy was foreshadowed many years earlier in that very arena.

The Fifth Party Congress: The "Treachery of Liberalism"

Not long after Lenin pointedly noted that the "model of Marxist proletarian policy and tactic" had been criticized by Marx and Engels for more than a decade because of its "Right wing," he warned against blindly imitating "West-European Social-Democratic parties" and the German party in particular. The context was the opening of the Fifth Party Congress and the debate about its agenda. He disagreed with the Mensheviks who argued that "all questions of principle" should be removed from the agenda in order, supposedly, to avoid major conflict. The Russians, they contended, would be able to conduct a more "business-like" congress, like those of West European counterparts. Lenin demurred: "We must not take from the experience of other parties things that bring us down to the level of some period of everyday routine. We must take that which brings us up to the level of general questions, of the tasks of the entire revolutionary struggle of the entire proletariat. We must learn from the best examples, and not from the worst."[61]

The deep differences in the RSDLP about "questions of principle" required, as Lenin had long recognized, a congress where they could possibly be resolved. After numerous logistical challenges, often related to security—only by escaping from Siberia could Trotsky, for example,

attend—the most representative congress of the party to date took place from April 30 to May 19 in London. Of the more than three hundred delegates, each representing five hundred rank and file members, the Bolsheviks had a slight majority—a registration of what they had achieved largely at the expense of the Mensheviks since the Fourth Congress in Stockholm a year before. With the support of sympathetic delegates from the Polish/Lithuanian and Latvian parties, like Rosa Luxemburg, they were able to make sure "questions of principle" would be on the agenda—the most important being the attitude of Russian social democracy toward bourgeois or nonproletarian parties. Two-thirds of the three-week sessions were devoted in one way or another to the Duma.

The order of the agenda required a discussion on the conduct of the Duma fraction itself, which proved to be contentious, before the debate on bourgeois parties. Tsereteli and Alexinsky—absent from the Duma for three weeks—gave counter reports. Regarding the appraisal of the former that "'Even though we may have made blunders, we were not guilty of political vacillation,'" Lenin, in agreement with Alexinsky, responded, "I believe that it would be absolutely wrong to blame a young Duma group, which is only just beginning to function, for its mistakes. But the fact of the matter is that there was *vacillation* in the very policy of the group. And we must frankly admit this vacillation, and make it our business to get rid of it, not for the purpose of condemning individuals, but in order to educate the proletarian party as a whole." Because Tsereteli justified Menshevik bending to the Cadets on the basis of his reading of the events of 1848—the necessity of "some sort of alliance with bourgeois democracy"—Lenin charged him with "revisionism": "[B]oth the revolution of 1848 and subsequent historical experience have taught international Social-Democracy the very opposite, namely, that bourgeois democracy takes its stand more and more against the proletariat, that the fight for freedom is waged consistently only where it is led by the proletariat. The year 1848 does not teach us to make alliances with bourgeois democrats, but rather the need to free the least developed sections of the masses from the influence of bourgeois democracy, which is incapable of fighting even for democracy." In playing to the Cadets, Tsereteli had succumbed to "bourgeois parliamentarianism."

An example of vacillation, Lenin said, was the fraction's decision, against the objections of its Bolshevik wing, to grant voting rights to an "expert" liberal economist in its deliberations—an issue that challenged working-class delegations in the parliamentary arena from the beginning—that is, the need for information that only the educated had. "[Sergei] Prokopovich is a man of letters whose works are known to everyone. He is

the type of bourgeois intellectual who has penetrated into our Party with definite, opportunist aims. His joining the Party in the Railway District [of St. Petersburg] was sheer hypocrisy. It was a screen for work *in the Duma milieu*. And our [Central Committee] is to blame for his having used such a screen. Our Duma group is to blame for having made it easy for liberal writers collaborating with *Tovarishch* [a left Cadet organ] who do not work in the Party and who are hostile in principle to the Party, to enter our Party by the back door, making use of the Duma."[62]

Four days later the congress finally took up the central question, the "Attitude Towards Bourgeois Parties." This, Lenin began his report, "is the nub of the differences in matters of principle that have long divided Russian Social-Democracy into two camps."[63] There was nothing of substance in his report he hadn't said before, at least as for the Bolshevik position. New was a careful and concise dissection of the Menshevik position. Lenin had to be at his persuasive best. The audience included not only the most conscious of the rank and file of the RSDLP in the audience—that is, the three-hundred-plus delegates—but also the leadership of the Mensheviks like Plekhanov, Martov (the leader of the "Centre"), Trotsky, and Rosa Luxemburg (as well as one undistinguished attendee with only observer status: Stalin). If the "nub" was the "attitude to the bourgeois parties," the essence of that difference could be distilled, he wrote later, to two claims of the Bolshevks—the "treachery of liberalism ['the Cadets'] and the democratic capacity of the peasantry." The facts on the ground, he argued, confirmed the Bolshevik stance on both scores while discrediting that of the Mensheviks. The facts included what had taken place in the Duma. By the time he gave his report, May 12, Lenin had convincing evidence from not only the First Duma but almost all the Second Duma; less than three weeks later Stolypin pulled its plug. Employing Marx and Engels's method—class analysis in all its concreteness and not just genuflecting before it, as he charged the Mensheviks were prone to do—is what allowed, he said, the Bolsheviks to accurately predict the course of the Cadets and thus be persuasive.

Non-Bolsheviks, like Trotsky and Luxemburg, could agree with Lenin about the "treachery of liberalism," thus guaranteeing enough support for the Bolshevik line. They were less persuaded, it should be noted, by the essential second half of Lenin's argument—the democratic potential of the petit bourgeoisie, particularly the peasantry.[64] Lenin acknowledged such skepticism, specifically about Trudovik delegates who still vacillated, with a call to action at the end of his report:

> In all such cases we must be able to unmask the irresolute democrats openly, even from the Duma platform. "Peasants!" we must say in the Duma in

> such circumstances, "peasants! You should know that your representatives are betraying you by following in the wake of the liberal landlords. Your Duma deputies are betraying the cause of the peasantry to the liberal windbags and advocates." Let the peasants know—we must demonstrate this to them by facts—that *only* the workers' party is the genuinely reliable and thoroughly faithful defender of the interests, not only of socialism but also of democracy, not only of all working and exploited people, but also of the entire peasant masses, who are fighting against feudal exploitation.[65]

Despite "such cases," the "totality of voting in the Second Duma speaks most clearly in favor of a 'Left bloc' policy, and against the policy of support for the Cadets."[66] On balance, the peasant deputies voted more often with the social democrat deputies than with the Cadets—crucial evidence for his claim that the peasants had better democratic credentials than the latter.

The penultimate agenda item was a resolution on the Duma and the party's fraction. Basically, it reaffirmed, with minor changes, the Stockholm decisions. The last business of the meeting was the election of a new Central Committee. This time, unlike at Stockholm, the Bolsheviks won more seats than the Mensheviks: five to four. Six other seats were divided between the Bund and the Polish and Latvian parties. In many ways, Cadet "treachery" assured Bolshevik ascendancy.

"Slap and They Are Gone!": The Dissolution of the Second Duma

Shortly after the congress, Lenin pointed to an interview Struve gave that indicated that the Cadet leader was willing to abandon his party and embrace the right-wing bourgeois Octobrist Party. The move, not unanticipated, "is to our advantage, for it brings clarity and definiteness into the situation. A new landlord Duma; a new election law that separates, splendidly and with all-desirable precision, the reliable landlords and bourgeois tycoons from the unreliable peasants, urban petty-bourgeoisie and workers."[67] Stolypin, in other words, now had political cover from a wing of the Cadets to do what he had long wanted to do—to create a Duma to his own liking. Events a few weeks later would confirm Lenin's foresight.

If the debate on the land question best revealed the collision course the regime and the Duma were on—just as was true for the First Duma—that on the budget question was next in importance. Despite having little formal power for approving the government's budget, the Duma did in fact exercise influence. As Lenin explained to *Nashe Ekho* readers, "without the Duma's direct or indirect consent," it would be difficult for Stolypin et al. to have access to West European creditors. Thus "the Duma's discussion of the budget and voting on it will have double political significance":

> In the first place, the Duma must open the eyes of the people to all the methods employed in that organized robbery, that systematic, unconscionable plunder of national property by a handful of landlords, civil servants and all kinds of parasites, plunder which is called "the state economy" of Russia. To explain this from the Duma rostrum is to help the people in their struggle for "people's freedom" . . . Secondly, ruthless and *open* criticism of the budget and consistently democratic voting on it are of importance to Europe and European capital . . . Whether the European financial magnates' faith in the durability and solvency of the firm of Stolypin & Co. will be strengthened or weakened, depends to a great extent on the Duma . . . The *entire* European public will *immediately* learn of the discussion and *decisions* of the Duma, so that in this respect the voice of the Duma is of tremendous significance. Nobody else could do so much to deprive Stolypin & Co. of European financial support as the Duma can.

As for what to do, "*Only* the Social-Democrats have done their duty." He pointed to "Deputy Alexinsky's budget speech . . . [It] posed the question in a more principled manner than anybody else . . . There could be added to the declaration an exposition of the socialist view of the budget of a bourgeois class state."

Although the available archival record is opaque, it's most likely that Alexinsky's one-and-a-half-hour speech on March 22 was, like his intervention on the agrarian question, written by or received major input from Lenin. The reference, for example, to an article in the London *Economist* that indicated it closely followed the Duma's involvement in the budget deliberations smelled of Lenin's hand. That the article scandalized the Black Hundred crowd because it seemed to question the legitimacy of the Czar's dissolution of the First Duma could only have pleased him. And then there's this excerpt from a summary of the stenographic record: "The duma's task, Aleksinskii declared, was to criticize the entire budget and the financial policy of the government; to expose its true character to the West. The Kadets, he held, were as willing as ever to make an arrangement with the old order on conditions which were unfavorable to the population." If this wasn't Lenin in his own words, it was certainly his message. The only thing missing, "the socialist view of the budget of a bourgeois class state"—what Lenin meant by "there could be added"—was due to the Menshivik-headed fraction / Central Committee having enough votes to bar its inclusion.[68]

Unlike for the First Duma, where it was possible to see almost daily what Lenin was doing, the public record of Lenin's involvement in the fraction's activities in the Second Duma is less transparent. The reason is that by this time the regime understandably denied him space to maneuver. Related to this fact was Stolypin's very conscious effort to limit as

much contact as possible between the Duma deputies and the workers and peasants. Lenin thus had to be more careful. The precariousness of a legal daily—*Nashe Ekho*, for example, survived for only two weeks—also contributes to a cloudy picture. Police reports, I suspect, would confirm what I assume was Lenin's intimate work with Alexinsky and other Bolsheviks in the fraction, as the budget speech suggests.[69]

Just as was true for his agrarian proposal, Stolypin was unable to get Duma agreement for his budget. The obstinacy on the part of the regime to share with the Duma its data on the fine details of its proposal and the resistance of the Left deputies, led by Alexinsky and the Bolsheviks, resulted in an impasse. For Stolypin it was increasingly clear that the Duma irritant had to be removed. Needed was a pretext. Nicholas, in fact, suggested as much not long after the Duma convened: "One must let them do something manifestly stupid or mean, and then—slap and they are gone!"[70]

If there was one component of society the regime tried its best to prevent the Left bloc in the Duma from having contact with, it was the military. It was no state secret that the RSDLP had since the beginning of the revolution in 1905 sought to win sailors and soldiers to its ranks. Stolypin, in fact, told the Duma in March that he was familiar with the party's Stockholm or Fourth Congress resolution on winning the army to the revolution. And as noted earlier, the party had 33 army newspapers by the end of 1906.[71] Stolypin had tried to get Duma support for a law to keep "politicals" from being drafted into the military and to criminalize underground political work in its ranks. His failure to do so explains why he finally decided on April 17 to make the Second Duma history. But needed, in addition to a pretext, was a new electoral law, to be announced when the dissolution actually took place, that would allow him to get a more pliable Duma.

Given the RSDLP's history, there was nothing unusual, from its point of view, that some soldiers in early May approached the St. Petersburg committee of the party to obtain the support of the Duma fraction to intervene on their behalf to improve their situation and have closer collaboration. But once the reports of informants about the meeting reached Stolypin's desk, the prime minister decided he had found his pretext. He would confront the Duma with the information, saying that the social democrat deputies had violated at least two laws—inappropriate contact with the military and dealings with an illegal organization, the RSDLP—and demand that they be stripped of their parliamentary immunity. Assuming that the Duma would balk, he would then be in a reasonably strong political position to get rid of the thorn in his side. Also, the timing was good, because he finally had in hand proposals for a new electoral law that would guarantee the kind of Duma he wanted.

When Stolypin did confront the Duma on May 30 to demand that it surrender for arrest virtually the entire social democrat fraction, thus Mensheviks and Bolsheviks, he offered as evidence not only the aforementioned transgressions but, interestingly, the resolutions of the Fourth Congress. His prosecutor was more specific. The accused were "plotting for the violent overthrow of the established form of government by means of a popular uprising, and the creation of a democratic republic in its stead." The Duma fraction constituted a "criminal society" because it "had subordinated itself to the central committee" of an illegal organization, the RSDLP, to carry out these goals. "It had directed the activities of local criminal organizations (local Social-Democratic groups) and had sent out circular letters with the intention of inciting the population against the government, military officials, nobles, and landowners . . . Then it had entered into relations with secret organizations which aimed to arouse a mutiny in the army . . . It has served as a center for the reception of revolutionary demands calling for the convocation of a constituent assembly."[72] As Stolypin had correctly anticipated, the Duma wouldn't go along. The charges were so blatantly political that not only did the peasant deputies defend the social democrats but many of the Cadets did as well. Only the Octobrist and Black Hundred deputies were elated with the charges.

With the Czar's approval, Stolypin informed the world on June 3 that the Duma had been dissolved and a new one would replace it on November 1. Elections would take place on September 1 under a new set of procedures detailed in the decree. In a final act of defiance, the social democrat fraction issued a declaration. It "exhorted the people to give no credence to the accusations . . . [and] charged the administration with faithlessness in violating the immunity of the Social-Democratic deputies by arresting them and cutting off all protest; with violating the October Manifesto and increasing its own arbitrary power; and with an attempt to prevent the duma from thoroughly examining the budget . . . [The government] feared the rejection of the budget and its foreign obligations and therefore dissolved the duma. The Kadet policy of cooperation with the government, even at the cost of yielding basic rights for a part in legislation had failed entirely. For the government grew more arrogant and sought to regain its absolute power when it observed that the revolution was on the ebb. The policy of 'guarding' the duma only lowered its dignity . . . and weakened its ties with the population."[73] That Menshevik and Bolshevik deputies wrote the declaration registered how far the former had moved toward Lenin's position. Having had a front row seat to "the treachery of the Cadets," they epitomized his dictum that "revolution teaches."

The absence of any kind of real protest against Stolypin's "coup d'état" of June 3 signaled the end of the Revolution of 1905. The all-important energy "outside" the walls of Tauride Palace had dissipated. Many of the fraction members, including Tsereteli and Alexinsky, were arrested and brought to trial six months later and sentenced for varying years to "hard labor" or exile.[74] Of interest in the trial is the point made by one of the members about the Stockholm resolutions—especially the one on armed struggle—that had figured so prominently in the regime's charges. He noted that at the London Congress armed struggle wasn't on the agenda. "For the party realized that the revolutionary wave was receding and that if it should attempt to organize an uprising artificially it would become liable to charges of plotting . . . the party would then be guilty of digression from the real Social-Democratic policy: the political education of the masses and their organization for struggle."[75] Again, if these were not Lenin's own words, it was certainly his message.

Lenin indeed anticipated the end of the revolution at the London Congress, as his comments at the end of his speech on the "Attitude Towards Bourgeois Parties" indicate:

> Even if the revolution suffers defeat, the proletariat will learn, first and foremost, to understand the economic class foundations of both the liberal and the democratic parties; then it will learn to hate the bourgeoisie's treacheries and to despise the petty bourgeoisie's infirmity of purpose and its vacillations.
>
> And it is only with such a fund of knowledge, with such habits of thinking, that the proletariat will be able to approach the new, the socialist revolution more unitedly and more boldly.[76]

I argue that the Second Duma experience contributed significantly to "such a fund of knowledge," enabling the Bolsheviks to be successful in "the new, the socialist revolution"—October 1917.

A few months later Lenin wrote a "Preface" for a collection of his major writings to date, one of which was *What Is to Be Done?* As for the critics who claimed that the "pamphlet" had "incorrect or exaggerated ideas on the subject of an organization of professional revolutionaries," Lenin begged to differ. In light of the previous two years, "these statements look ridiculous":

> Compare our Social-Democratic Party during this whole period with the other parties in respect of unity, organization, and continuity of policy. You will have to admit that *in this* respect our Party is *unquestionably* superior to *all* the others—the Cadets, the Socialist-Revolutionaries, etc. . . . Despite the split, the Social-Democratic Party earlier than any of the other

> parties was able to take advantage of the temporary spell of freedom to build a legal organization with an ideal democratic structure, an electoral system, and representation at congresses according to the number of organized members. You will not find this, even today, either in the Socialist-Revolutionary or the Cadet parties . . . And take the elections to the Second Duma, in which all parties participated—did they not clearly show the superior organizational unity of our Party and Duma group?[77]

***

Reflecting on Stolypin's coup d'état of June 3, Alfred Levin wrote that there "was nothing in the political scene to make a serious digression from the [October] Manifesto inevitable. The changes wrought by the law of June 3, could not positively have been foreseen even though they might have been feared by the liberals and wishfully thought of by the revolutionaries."[78] In fact, the "changes" were foreseen. Nine months earlier, Lenin, in his article "A New Coup d'État in Preparation," argued that the logic of the situation required Stolypin to radically rewrite the electoral laws. Again, if Lenin, like his mentors Marx and Engels, didn't always get the arithmetic correct, it's because he employed their method and not a crystal ball. And neither did he "wishfully" hope that Stolypin would act as he did—the time-worn charge that for Lenin "the worst the better." To the contrary, he tried in that article to mount a campaign to prevent the regime from revamping the electoral laws exactly because it wasn't inevitable that they could get away with it. For Lenin it was always about how to forge the worker-peasant alliance, the masses in their majority, for the bourgeois democratic revolution—the necessary step for the socialist revolution—and having access to the Duma rostrum was critical in his strategy.

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Appendix A

Excerpt from "Address of the Central Committee to the Communist League"

Karl Marx and Frederick Engels

London, March 1850[1]

Brothers!

In the two revolutionary years of 1848–49 the League proved itself in two ways. First, its members everywhere involved themselves energetically in the movement and stood in the front ranks of the only decisively revolutionary class, the proletariat, in the press, on the barricades and on the battlefields. The League further proved itself in that its understanding of the movement, as expressed in the circulars issued by the Congresses and the Central Committee of 1847 and in the Manifesto of the Communist Party,[2] has been shown to be the only correct one, and the expectations expressed in these documents have been completely fulfilled. This previously only propagated by the League in secret, is now on everyone's lips and is preached openly in the market place. At the same time, however, the formerly strong organization of the League has been considerably weakened. A large number of members who were directly involved in the movement thought that the time for secret societies was over and that public action alone was sufficient. The individual districts and communes allowed their connections with the Central Committee to weaken and gradually become dormant. So, while the democratic party, the party of the petty bourgeoisie, has become more and more organized in Germany, the workers' party has lost its only firm foothold, remaining organized at best in individual localities for local purposes; within the general movement it has consequently come under the complete

domination and leadership of the petty-bourgeois democrats. This situation cannot be allowed to continue; the independence of the workers must be restored . . .

2. To be able forcefully and threateningly to oppose this party, whose betrayal of the workers will begin with the very first hour of victory, the workers must be armed and organized. The whole proletariat must be armed at once with muskets, rifles, cannon and ammunition, and the revival of the old-style citizens' militia, directed against the workers, must be opposed. Where the formation of this militia cannot be prevented, the workers must try to organize themselves independently as a proletarian guard, with elected leaders and with their own elected general staff; they must try to place themselves not under the orders of the state authority but of the revolutionary local councils set up by the workers. Where the workers are employed by the state, they must arm and organize themselves into special corps with elected leaders, or as a part of the proletarian guard. Under no pretext should arms and ammunition be surrendered; any attempt to disarm the workers must be frustrated, by force if necessary. The destruction of the bourgeois democrats' influence over the workers, and the enforcement of conditions which will compromise the rule of bourgeois democracy, which is for the moment inevitable, and make it as difficult as possible—these are the main points which the proletariat and therefore the League must keep in mind during and after the approaching uprising.

3. As soon as the new governments have established themselves, their struggle against the workers will begin. If the workers are to be able to forcibly oppose the democratic petty bourgeois it is essential above all for them to be independently organized and centralized in clubs. At the soonest possible moment after the overthrow of the present governments, the Central Committee will come to Germany and will immediately convene a Congress, submitting to it the necessary proposals for the centralization of the workers' clubs under a directorate established at the movement's center of operations. The speedy organization of at least provincial connections between the workers' clubs is one of the prime requirements for the strengthening and development of the workers' party; the immediate result of the overthrow of the existing governments will be the election of a national representative body. Here the proletariat must take care:

1) that by sharp practices local authorities and government commissioners do not, under any pretext whatsoever, exclude any section of workers;

2) that workers' candidates are nominated everywhere in opposition to bourgeois-democratic candidates. As far as possible they should be League members and their election should be pursued by all possible means. Even where there is no prospect of achieving their election the workers must put up their own candidates to preserve their independence, to gauge their own strength and to bring their revolutionary position and party standpoint to public attention. They must not be led astray by the empty phrases of the democrats, who will maintain that the workers' candidates will split the democratic party and offer the forces of reaction the chance of victory. All such talk means, in the final analysis, that the proletariat is to be swindled. The progress which the proletarian party will make by operating independently in this way is infinitely more important than the disadvantages resulting from the presence of a few reactionaries in the representative body. If the forces of democracy take decisive, terroristic action against the reaction from the very beginning, the reactionary influence in the election will already have been destroyed . . .

Although the German workers cannot come to power and achieve the realization of their class interests without passing through a protracted revolutionary development, this time they can at least be certain that the first act of the approaching revolutionary drama will coincide with the direct victory of their own class in France and will thereby be accelerated. But they themselves must contribute most to their final victory, by informing themselves of their own class interests, by taking up their independent political position as soon as possible, by not allowing themselves to be misled by the hypocritical phrases of the democratic petty bourgeoisie into doubting for one minute the necessity of an independently organized party of the proletariat. Their battle-cry must be: ***The Permanent Revolution.***

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Appendix B

"Sketch of a Provisional Revolutionary Government"

Setting: Tsarism in St. Petersburg struck down, the autocratic government overthrown—struck down but not utterly destroyed, not killed, *not annihilated*, not extirpated.[1]

The provisional revolutionary government appeals to the people. Workers and peasants *take the initiative.* Complete freedom. The people organise their own lives. The *government programme* = *full* republican liberties, peasant committees for the *complete* reform of agrarian relations. The Programme of the Social-Democratic Party *is a thing standing by itself.* Social-Democrats in the provisional government = people delegated, *commissioned* by the Social-Democratic *Party*.

Next—the Constituent Assembly. *If* the people have risen, they . . .[2] *may* (even though not immediately) find themselves in the majority (peasants and workers). *Ergo*, the revolutionary *dictatorship* of the proletariat and the peasantry.

Frantic resistance of evil forces. Civil war *in full sweep*—*annihilation* of tsarism.

Organisation of the proletariat grows, propaganda and agitation of the Social-Democrats increases ten thousandfold—all the government printing-presses, etc., etc. *"Mit der Gründlichkeit der geschichtlichen Aktion wird auch der Umfang der Masse zunehmen, deren Aktion sie ist."*[3]

The peasantry takes *all* agrarian relations, *all* the land, into its own hands. *Then nationalisation* becomes a fact.

Tremendous growth of productive forces—the entire rural intelligentsia, all technical knowledge, is brought into action to increase agricultural production, to get rid of fettering influences (uplifters, Narodniks, etc., etc.) . . . Gigantic development of **capitalist** progress . . .

War: the *fort* keeps changing hands. Either the bourgeoisie overthrows the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry, or this dictatorship sets Europe aflame, and then . . . ?

If we are to consider the question of revolutionary dictatorship from the standpoint of Marxism, we shall have to reduce it to an analysis of the *struggle of the c l a s s e s*.

Ergo, what major social forces should be taken into account? *Ordre de bataille*?

(α) The bureaucratic, military, and Court elements stand *for* absolutism *p l u s* the unenlightened elements among the people (a rapidly disintegrating conglomerate, yesterday all-powerful, tomorrow powerless). (Dynastic and other conflicts within inevitable.)

Degree of organisation very high—maximum

(β) The more or less big, moderately-liberal bourgeoisie.

((Here I include the liberal landlords, the top financiers, the merchants, manufacturers, etc., etc. This = σ lords and masters of a bourgeois country. "Can do anything."))

Degree of organisation very slight

Conflicts between the groupings inevitable; but all stand for a Constitution even now, and still more so tomorrow.

Ideological leaders—in abundance, from among the officials, landlords, and journalists.

(γ) The petty-bourgeois and peasant section. Tens of millions.

The "people" *par excellence*.

Degree of organisation—minimum

Greatest state of benightedness and disorganisation.

Their plight most desperate, they have most to gain *directly* from the revolution. The greatest instability (to day—for the revolution, tomorrow—for "law and order" after slight improvements).

D e m o c r a c y. Ideological leaders—a great number of democratic intellectuals. The Socialist-Revolutionary "type."

(δ) The proletariat.

Very high level of organisation, and discipline

Revolutionary-minded. Critical attitude towards the petty bourgeoisie. Has *fewer* ideological leaders than all the others—only the Social-Democratic intelligentsia and the educated Social-Democratic workers. Compared with the preceding groups numerically very much weaker, but *Kampffähigkeit*[4] very much stronger.

Object of the struggle = *Republic* (including *all* democratic liberties, the **m i n i m u m p r o g r a m m e** and far-reaching social reforms).

α—absolutely against.
β—*for* a Constitution, *against* the Republic (½ and ½). ((Bargaining.))
γ—in a revolutionary moment (not firmly) for the Republic ((the unstable elements of the struggle)).
δ—wholly and entirely *for* the Republic.

June–July 1905

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Appendix C

"Whom to Elect to the State Duma"

Citizens! See to it That the Whole People Clearly Understands What the Chief Parties Are that Are Fighting in the Elections in St. Petersburg and What Each of Them Strives For![1]

What Are the Three Chief Parties?		
The Black Hundreds	***The Cadets***	***The Social-Democrats***
They are—the Union of the Russian People, the monarchists, the Party of Law and Order, the Union of October Seventeenth, the Commercial and Industrial Party, the Party of Peaceful Renovation.	They are—the party of "people's" freedom or Constitutional-"Democratic" (in reality liberal-monarchist) Party, the Party of "Democratic" Reforms, the radicals, etc.	*The Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party*. It is the party of the class-conscious-workers of all the nationalities of Russia, of Russians, Letts, Poles, Jews, Ukrainians, Armenians, Georgians, Tatars, etc.
Whose Interests Do the Three Chief Parties Defend?		
The Black Hundreds defend the present tsarist government, they stand for the landlords, for the government officials, for the power of the police, for military courts, for pogroms.	*The Cadets* defend the interests of the liberal bourgeois, the liberal landlords, merchants and capitalists. The Cadets are a party of bourgeois lawyers, journalists, professors and such like.	*The Social-Democrats* are the party of the working class, defending the interests of all the working and exploited people.

What Do the Three Chief Parties Strive For?		
The Black Hundreds strive for the preservation of the old autocracy, the lack of rights of the people, the unlimited rule over it of the landlords, officials and police.	*The Cadets* strive for the transfer of power into the hands of the liberal bourgeoisie. The monarchy; by preserving the police and military regime, is to safeguard the capitalists' right to rob the workers and peasants.	*The Social-Democrats* strive for the transfer of all power into the hands of the people, i.e., a democratic republic. The Social-Democrats need complete freedom in order to fight for socialism, for the emancipation of labour from the yoke of capital.
What Kind of Freedom do the Three Chief Parties Want to Give the People?		
The Black Hundreds do not give the people any freedom, any power. All power is for the tsarist government. The rights of the people are: to pay taxes, to toil for the rich, to rot in gaol.	*The Cadets* want the kind of "people's freedom" which will be subordinated, firstly, to the Upper Chamber, i.e., to the landlords and capitalists; secondly, to the monarchy, i. e., the tsar with the irresponsible police and armed forces. One-third of the power to the people, one-third to the capitalists and one-third to the tsar.	*The Social-Democrats* want complete freedom and all power for the people, all officials to be elected, the soldiers to be freed from barrack servitude, and the organisation of a free, people's militia.
How Do the Three Chief Parties Regard the Peasants' Demand for Land?		
The Black Hundreds defend the interests of the feudal landlords. No land for the peasants. Only the rich to be allowed to buy land from the landlords by voluntary agreement.	*The Cadets* want to preserve the landlord system of agriculture by means of concessions. They propose redemption payments by the peasants which already once before in 1861 ruined the peasants. The Cadets do not agree that the land question should be settled by local committees elected by universal, direct and equal suffrage by secret ballot.	*The Social-Democrats* want to abolish our landlord system of agriculture. All land must be transferred to the peasants absolutely, with out redemption payments. The land question must be settled by local committees elected by universal, direct and equal suffrage by secret ballot.

What Can the Three Chief Parties Achieve if Their Whole Struggle is Successful?		
The Black Hundreds, using every possible means of struggle, can cause the people to be finally ruined and all Russia subjected to the savagery of military courts and pogroms.	*The Cadets*, using only "peaceful" means of struggle, can cause the pogrom-mongers' government to buy off the big bourgeoisie and the rich in the countryside at the cost of petty concessions, while it will chase out the liberal chatter-boxes for insufficiently servile speeches about the beloved, blameless, inviolable, constitutional monarch.	*The Social-Democrats*, using every possible means of struggle, including an uprising, can, with the aid of the politically conscious peasantry and urban poor, win complete freedom and all the land for the peasants. And with freedom, and with the help of the class-conscious workers of all Europe, the Russian Social-Democrats can advance with rapid strides to socialism.

Citizens! Vote at the Elections for Candidates of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party! Social-Democrats and the Trudovik Parties

Citizens! Anyone who wants to take an intelligent part in the elections to the State Duma must first of all clearly understand the difference between the three main parties. The *Black Hundreds* stand for pogroms and the violence of the tsarist government. The *Cadets* stand for the interests of the liberal landlords and capitalists. The *Social-Democrats* stand for the interests of the working class and all the working and exploited people.

Anyone who wants to uphold intelligently the interests of the working class and all working people must know which party is really able most consistently and resolutely to defend these interests.

Which Parties Claim to Defend the Interests of the Working Class and all Working People?		
The party of the working class, the *Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party*, based on the standpoint of the class struggle of the proletariat.	*Trudovik parties*, i.e., parties based on the standpoint of the small proprietor:	
	The Socialist-Revolutionary Party.	*The Trudovik* (Popular Socialist) Party and *the non-party Trudoviks*.

Whose Interests do these Parties Actually Defend?	
The interests of the proletarians, whose conditions of life deprive them of all hope of becoming proprietors and cause them to strive for completely changing the whole basis of the capitalist social system.	The interests of the petty proprietors, who struggle against capitalist oppression, but who, owing to the very conditions of their life, strive to become proprietors, to strengthen their petty economy and to enrich themselves by means of trade and hiring labour.
How Steadfast are These Parties in the Great World-Wide Struggle of Labour Against Capital?	
The Social-Democrats cannot allow of any reconciliation of labour and capital. They organise the wage-workers for a ruthless struggle against capital, for the abolition of private ownership of the means of production and for the building of socialist society.	*The toilers' parties* dream of abolishing the rule of capital but, owing to the conditions of life of the petty proprietor, they inevitably waver between fighting jointly with the wage-workers against capital and striving to reconcile workers and capitalists by the conversion of all the working people into petty proprietors, with equal division of land, or guaranteed credit, and so on.
What Can These Parties Achieve by Completely Fulfilling Their Ultimate Aims?	
The conquest of political power by the proletariat and the conversion of capitalist into social, large-scale, socialist production.	The equal distribution of land among petty proprietors and small peasants, in which case there will inevitably be a struggle between them again, giving rise to a division into rich and poor, workers and capitalists.

What Kind of Freedom for the People are These Parties Trying to Achieve in the Present Revolution?		
Complete freedom and full power for the people, i. e., a democratic republic, officials to be subject to election, the replacement of the standing army by universal arming of the people.	Complete freedom and full power for the people, i.e., a democratic republic, officials to be subject to election, the replacement of the standing army by universal arming of the people.	A combination of democracy, i.e., full power of the people, with the monarchy, i.e., with the power of the tsar, police and officials. This is just as senseless a desire and just as treacherous a policy as that of the liberal landlords, the Cadets.

What Is the Attitude of These Parties to the Peasants' Demand For Land?		
The Social-Democrats demand the transfer of all the landlords' land to the peasants with out any redemption payments.	*The Socialist-Revolutionaries* demand the transfer of all the landlords' land to the peasants without any redemption payments.	*The Trudoviks* demand the transfer of all the landlords' land to the peasants, but they allow redemption payments, which will ruin the peasants, so that this is just as treacherous a policy as that of the liberal landlords, the Cadets.

Citizens! Vote at the Elections for Candidates of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party!

November 23, 1906

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A Critical Review of the Relevant Literature

This book, consciously and intentionally, privileges Lenin's voice, and hopefully the reader who has read it appreciates that decision. For that reason I thought it best not to encumber the text, including the endnotes (for the most part) with other voices. Now is the time to bring the Leninologists into the conversation, given how extensive and influential their literature and voice is. But in no way does this interrogation pretend to be exhaustive. The focus here is solely on those who speak to Lenin's electoral and parliamentary strategy and differ in one way or another with what I present. Admittedly, attention is given mainly to those with most visibility, and I recognize that I may have missed voices that didn't get the attention they deserve. What I cover here could easily become a stand-alone article or even maybe a book—but not at this time. If it ends up being no more than an outline, sketch, or even an inspiration for either, then it has served its purpose. The organization of this review follows the order of the subject matter of the book and prioritizes the literature alluded to in the endnotes in reference to the text.

One body of literature neglected here, only for lack of language skills, is the Russian scholarship. What I can say is that I'm aware of its existence because it figures sometimes into the English-language scholarship, which is often about correcting the heavy hand of Stalinist orthodoxy. Thus in responding to the English-language literature, I indirectly address at least some of the Russian-language scholarship.

Chapter 1: What Marx and Engels Bequeathed

One thing, hopefully, this chapter has done is put to rest the long-standing myth as reiterated by David Lane in 1981: "Marx and Engels were principally concerned with the anatomy and dynamics of capitalism. While they both believed that inherent laws governing the system would lead to the victory of the proletariat, they said very little about the tactics of the struggle, they provided no interpretation of the ways that the proletariat

had to be organized or the kind of alliances which had to be arranged for the working class to become a ruling class. Lenin, however, was particularly concerned with these questions and with the political organization of the proletariat in Russia."[1] Thirty years later Sheri Berman made a similar claim: "[O]rthodox Marxism could not furnish them ['Parties acting in Marx's name'] with a strategy for using their power to achieve any practical goals. Orthodox Marxism in general had little to say about the role of political organizations, since it considered economic forces rather than political activism to be the prime mover of history."[2]

My book *Marx and Engels* refutes this widely held but thoroughly disingenuous orthodoxy and, more pertinent here, its blinders to their electoral/parliamentary strategy and practice.[3] This chapter distills the relevant findings of the book. One of the striking things about most standard accounts of the history of European social democratic parties is the failure to acknowledge the critical role of Marx and Engels in their origins, as I document. A notable example is Stefano Bartolini's *The Political Mobilization of the European Left, 1860–1980*, which otherwise provides a thoughtful discussion about the ideological roots of those parties.[4] There is, however, an important exception to this myopia. Two heralded books of Adam Przeworski took seriously (or appeared to) the pronouncements of the two founders of communism about electoral politics.[5] He argued, in fact, that the reformist outcome of European social democracy can be traced to their electoral strategy. Encouraging, as they did, working-class parties to enter the electoral/parliamentary arenas inevitably resulted in their class-collaborationist character. As representatives of a minority layer of society, they were forced to attenuate their demands in order to win parliamentary seats.

Prezworski's argument, which continues to be accepted as wisdom in political science, is based, however, on an egregious misrepresentation of Marx and Engels and a selective reading of the social democratic experience. I document in a 2010 article the numerous ways in which he distorted their texts—in at least one case putting words into Marx's mouth.[6] If Przeworski is to be believed, Marx and Engels, and not the subsequent leaders of social democracy, were responsible for its reformist outcome. And to try to make his case, Przeworski, in *Paper Stones*, offers apparently convincing evidence based on the actual record of those parties that such an outcome was unavoidable. But his is a selective reading of the evidence, because there is at least one social democratic party missing in his account—the party that Lenin led. This book, which details the Bolshevik experience in the electoral/parliamentary arena is—as I could only suggest in my article—therefore a refutation of Przeworski's claims.

Przeworski isn't alone in distorting Marx and Engels's electoral strategy. Others have done the same, especially when it comes to Engels. The latter is alleged to be the real author of social democratic reformism. An example is Manfred Steger's attempt, like that of Przeworski, to justify Bernstein's subsequent revisionism; see his "Friedrich Engels and the Origins of German Revisionism: Another Look," in Steger and Terrell Carver, *Engels after Marx* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999). A more recent version of this tendency is Tristam Hunt's *Marx's General: The Revolutionary Life of Friedrich Engels* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2009), 338–44. The evidence I provide in this chapter on Engels in his final years, especially his fight against opportunism, gives lie to all such efforts to defang him.

As for Marx and Engels's writings and activities in relation to the Russian movement, the last section of this chapter, the striking thing about the Marxological and Leninological literatures is the virtual absence of any mention of them. The reason, I suspect, has to do with the social democratic leanings of most of their authors, who have a vested interest in defending the alleged Chinese Wall between Marx and Engels on one side and Lenin on the other. Why until now the dots between the former and the latter, specifically the making of the Bolshevik Revolution, have never been connected is therefore understandable.

Chapter 2: Revolutionary Continuity; Lenin's Politics Prior to 1905

Allowing Lenin to speak for himself as this book does stands in sharp contrast, as discussed in the Conclusion to *LES1917*, to that of a classic Leninologist account: Alfred G. Meyer's *Leninism* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1962), particularly Chapter 3, "Democracy." While Meyer provides quotes from Lenin, easily three-fourths of the text is his voice—to prove that Lenin wasn't really a democrat despite what the quotes say. Meyer, I suspect, like so many of his kindred, is a victim of what I call in the Preface the *post hoc* fallacy—a tendency to read pre-October 1917 Lenin through the lens of what later occurred in the Soviet Union—that is, the Stalinist counterrevolution. Since he couldn't find the antidemocrat smoking gun in Lenin's words or actions prior to 1917, he had to invent it with his spin on the quotes he did provide.

Robert Service's trilogy three decades later, *Lenin: A Political Life*, is also, like Meyer's *Leninism*, a selective reading of Lenin, but because of its length, it is more elaborate and informed.[7] He included, for example, a few lines from *What the "Friends of the People" Are* but conveniently omitted any mention of Lenin's emboldened words "**Social-Democrats**" and

"**Democracy**."[8] Any evidence that Lenin took civil liberties seriously, as in his 1897 "Draft and Explanation of a Program for the Social Democratic Party," is also absent in Service's account.

More important than the Leninological misrepresentations is Hal Draper's claim that Lenin himself misrepresented Marx and Engels's "dictatorship of the proletariat," therefore "facilitating (though certainly not causing) the societal counterrevolution represented by Stalin."[9] If the Leninologist crowd hasn't found the smoking gun to make their case, then perhaps someone more capable and credible has. According to Draper, the dictatorship of the proletariat for Marx and Engels "meant nothing more and nothing less than 'rule of the proletariat'—the 'conquest of political power' by the working class, the establishment of a workers' state in the immediate postrevolutionary period."[10] But Marx and Engels were not, as Draper seems to imply, interested in the proletariat's "conquest of political power" as an end in itself but rather the use of that power to carry out socialist transformation. And the latter would require, as the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* makes all so clear, "despotic inroads" on capital and its property—that is, the use of force. In four successive locations the *Manifesto*, which, again, Lenin knew all so well, explicitly or indirectly sanctions the use of force.[11] To fault, as Draper does, Lenin for incorporating the use of force into his usage of the dictatorship of the proletariat—the misrepresentation charge—is to engage in what the latter sometimes called pettifogging or, perhaps more correctly, only a textual rather than a political analysis of what they meant by the term. Such a reading of Lenin, I argue, is what Draper is alluding to when he writes that Lenin's first take on the term is "about the Plekhanov-type *abrogation of democratic rights in specific situations* and nothing else."[12] But Draper never addresses the more important political question that Lenin in the later context of the Revolution of 1905–7 had to answer: whether "despotic inroads" includes the "abrogation of democratic rights" and therefore whether they are legitimate from a revolutionary point of view and one that Marx and Engels would have endorsed.

Less important (at least for purposes here) is Draper's other charge that Lenin's "two-class dictatorship," specifically his democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry, clashed with Marx and Engels's understanding of class politics. I disagree because, as I point out in my *Marx and Engels*, they promoted and defended the revolutionary "people's alliance" in the context of the 1848–49 upheavals, a coalition not unlike, I argue, Lenin's "two-class dictatorship."[13] To say that it "is not our present task, fortunately, to discuss the merits and demerits of this solution of Lenin's to the crucial problem of the Russian revolution"

(p. 85) sounds like a cop-out that permits textual at the expense of political analysis.[14] Draper's failure to even acknowledge—in what purports to be an exhaustive exposition of Lenin's views on the dictatorship of the proletariat, specifically the latter's most concrete defense of his formulation after its initial launching in 1905—his polemic with Martov in 1909[15] gives credence to such a characterization. It's worth noting in this context Lenin's disagreement—rightly, in my opinion—with Engels's labeling of the Paris Commune as the "dictatorship of the proletariat."[16] Exactly because Lenin had to function in the laboratory of the class struggle could he confidently do so—the only instance I know of in which he disagreed with either of the founders of the communist movement.

Lenin the putschist is another favorite hobbyhorse of Lenin bashers. This calumny derives from their time-worn misrepresentation of how the Bolsheviks led the working class to power in October in 1917. It is in turn employed to search for the smoking gun in Lenin's background, the roots of his supposed propensity for a conspiratorial-putschist minority-led revolution. But if the actual record prior to 1917 doesn't yield such evidence, as the quotes I provide on his views on terrorism and armed struggle would suggest, then its employers are compelled to invent it—exactly what Service and Figes do. While the former only hints at the culprit,[17] the latter spins a full-flung tale. The "Russian revolutionary tradition . . . of conspiratorial politics . . . [and] putschist tactics" via the Narodniks, especially Peter Tkachev (who was once the target of Engels's critique of such a modus operandi), is what really informed Lenin's politics, his Marxist protestations notwithstanding.[18] Lars Lih, who devotes six pages to the allegation, rightly concludes that the "idea that Lenin used Tkachev as a reliable guide to on-going political decisions in 1904–5 or any other time is totally absurd."[19]

When it comes to Lenin's party-building project, Leninology gets quite creative. About his first take on the subject, *The Tasks of the Russian Social-Democrats* (1897), Service writes, "He urged social-democrats to set about 'the education, disciplining and organization of the proletariat.' The imagery is trenchantly hierarchical; its bursts through all the qualifying language of the sentences around it. Discipline was always a key theme in his thought."[20] But rather than reproduce "the qualifying language of the sentences around" what Lenin actually wrote, as I do in presenting the text, Service offers his own "qualifying language." Here is the complete sentence that Lenin wrote: "[Russian social democrats] think that the fight against the autocracy must consist not in organizing conspiracies, but in educating, disciplining and organizing the proletariat, in political agitation among the workers which denounces every

manifestation of absolutism, which pillories all the knights of the police government and compels this government to make concessions"[21]—not quite the "trenchantly hierarchical" tone that Service imputes.

But innuendo isn't sufficient for Service. When the counterfactuals are all too evident, he suffers a bout of myopia. Lenin, in his *Our Immediate Task* (1899), posed two key questions about how to reconcile rank-and-file control from below with the need for a centralized party in the context of near-absolutist Czarist Russia, both of which I reproduce in full. In this instance Service is especially duplicitous. Not only does he conveniently ignore the second question, but he baldly misrepresents what Lenin actually wrote: "But significantly, [Lenin] left his cumbersome phrased question unanswered."[22] As the reader can easily verify in Chapter 2, pp. 24–25, Lenin offered very concrete proposals on how to answer both questions, suggestions that, again, challenge the standard Leninological portrait of him as the domineering ogre who sought to impose his program on the working class.

"Lenin the ogre" and the related "Lenin the Jacobin" have their origin in the aftermath of the historic Second Congress of the RSDLP in 1903, which resulted in the Bolshevik-Menshevik split. Both Trotsky and Luxemburg were their original authors—Trotsky in particular, as his biographer Issac Deutscher convincingly documents.[23] Both polemicized against Lenin's book, *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*, his assessment of the congress and defense of his position. Only in April 1917 did Trotsky put away his differences with Lenin—certainly on the organizational question—and join forces with him. As for what had been his position vis-à-vis that of Lenin, "its profound erroneousness," he wrote in 1941, "had been long ago demonstrated both in theory and practice."[24] There is no evidence that Luxemburg, unlike Trotsky, reconsidered her stance. In his response to her criticism of his book, Lenin argued that she misunderstood his approach to party organizing,[25] which lends credence to Lars Lih's argument that she actually never read the book.[26]

Perhaps the most egregious example of misrepresentation in the annals of Leninology was performed by Bertram Wolfe in his *Three Who Made a Revolution*.[27] After having begun for about a hundred pages somewhat objectively about Lenin, or at least pretending to, Wolfe had his supposed aha! moment—the proverbial smoking gun at last found. Buried in Lenin's polemic about the 1903 RSDLP conference, *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*, was the incriminating evidence. In it, page unspecified, Wolfe alleges that

> centralism becomes a revolutionary virtue *per se* for all lands and all circumstances of struggle. One looks in vain in [*OSFTSB*] for what was in the

> preceding works: some tribute to the desirability and corrective and educative force of democracy. On the contrary: "Burocratism versus democratism, i.e. precisely centralism versus autonomy, such is the organizational principle of revolutionary social democracy as against that of the opportunists. The latter principle strives to go from below upward, and therefore defends as far as possible and wherever possible autonomy and democracy . . . But the organizational principle of revolutionary social democracy strives to go from the top downward, and defends the enlargement of the rights and plenary powers of the central against the parts."

"This," Wolfe explains, "is the most naked expression of faith in hierarchy and distrust of democracy to be found in all of Lenin's writings. Only the isolation from the criticism of equals and the stubborn tendency to cherish most what was most under attack could have wrung from him such an extreme statement . . . [W]hen we seek to understand the Russian state after Lenin came to power, and when we watch the formation of the Communist International, we shall have to keep this one-sided utterance in mind, for it takes an authoritarian party to make an authoritarian state."[28] There, according to Wolfe, is the key to understanding the Stalinist counterrevolution that came in the wake of the Bolshevik triumph in 1917—this uncharacteristic "extreme statement" of Lenin in praise of "centralism" and "hierarchy" and of "distrust in democracy." I leave aside the pitfalls in Wolfe's reductionist argument about the reasons for the Stalinist counterrevolution, an issue I address in Chapter 3 in *Lenin's Electoral Strategy from 1907 to the Revolution of October 1917: The Ballot, the Streets—or Both*. The focus here is on the smoking gun that he claimed to have found.

Let's look now at what Lenin actually wrote—the full paragraph and this time with the page numbers. I embolden what Wolfe selected from the original, taking into account different translations.

> Perhaps the only attempt to analyze the concept bureaucracy is the distinction drawn in the new *Iskra* (No. 53) between the "formal *democratic* principle" (author's italics) and the "formal *bureaucratic* principle." This distinction (which, unfortunately, was no more developed or explained than the reference to the non-*Iskra*-ists) contains a grain of truth. **Bureaucracy *versus* democracy** is in fact **centralism *versus* autonomism**; it is **the organizational principle of revolutionary Social-Democracy as opposed to the organizational principle of opportunist Social-Democracy. The latter strives to proceed from the bottom upward, and, therefore, wherever possible and as far as possible, upholds autonomism and "democracy,"** [Lenin's all-important scare quotes are dropped in Wolfe's rendering] carried (by the overzealous) to the point of

> anarchism. The former strives to proceed **from the top downward, and upholds an extension of the rights and powers of the center in relation to the parts.** In the period of disunity and separate circles, this **top** from which **revolutionary Social-Democracy strove to proceed organizationally** was inevitably one of the circles, the one enjoying most influence by virtue of its activity and its revolutionary consistency (in our case, the *Iskra* organisation). In the period of the restoration of actual Party unity and dissolution of the obsolete circles in this unity, this top is inevitably the *Party Congress*, as the supreme organ of the Party; the Congress as far as possible includes representatives of all the active organizations, and, by appointing the central institutions (often with a membership which satisfies the advanced elements of the Party more than the backward and is more to the taste of its revolutionary than its opportunist wing), makes them the top until the next Congress. Such, at any rate, is the case among the Social-Democratic Europeans, although little by little this custom, so abhorrent in principle to anarchists, is beginning to spread—not without difficulty and not without conflicts and squabbles—to the Social-Democratic Asiatics.[29]

Let's "cut to the chase." The "top" that Lenin was referring to and what Wolfe inexcusably omitted was "the Party Congress"—that is, the representative body ("as far as possible" under police state conditions) of the local organizations and committees and in power "until the next Congress." In countries that enjoyed greater political liberty, the congress was composed of democratically elected delegates from the local level. Thus the centralization that Lenin fought for was the kind of organizational structure that existed in virtually all social democratic parties. At the heart of the fight with the "autonomists" was their desire to maintain or reluctance to give up the local sovereignty that they had long been accustomed to exercising and not yield to the sovereignty of a higher body—that is, the party congress. Only an honest reading of Lenin's words—all of them—conveys what he actually meant.

As far as I can determine this is the first published exposure of Wolfe's legerdemain. Even Paul LeBlanc, in his sympathetic account about Lenin, *Lenin and the Revolutionary Party* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities, 1990), and which makes a number of critical references about Wolfe's book, missed his machinations. It can't be overstated how influential the book was from its appearance in 1948—and it is still in print. It was greeted with accolades by luminaries such as Arthur Schlesinger Jr., Edmund Wilson, and Isaiah Berlin and was for decades required reading on many a university course syllabus. Again, because Wolfe was a former "insider," a functionary for Stalin, it gave his account credibility that none other had ever had. Note, also, what makes Wolfe's accusation

effective—feigned surprise at what he supposedly discovered, in such contrast to "what was in [Lenin's] preceding works" that gave "tribute to the desirability and corrective and educative force of democracy." Wolfe's tenure as a staffer in Comintern makes it hard to resist recalling the title of Trotsky's instructive book about the organization's modus operandi, *The Stalinist School of Falsification*. If anyone could distort the real Lenin, Wolfe had the requisite credentials and skills. I suspect that the reason Wolfe hasn't been detected until now is that his claim sounds credible given the mainstream narrative—informed by a *post hoc* reading of the Russian revolution.

Chapter 3: "The Dress Rehearsal" and the First Duma

J. L. Keep claims that Lenin "was exultant at the dissolution" of the First Duma, and to "many of his hearers the course which Lenin now recommended savored of 'Blanquism.'"[30] By the latter, Keep was referring to Lenin's call for the need to make preparations for a possible military confrontation with the regime. And consistent with Keep's Blanquist characterization of Lenin, the latter "advised the social-democratic deputies against trying to make contact with the electorate." Nothing could be further from the truth, as the evidence I provide, and what Keep is silent about, for Lenin's strategy for the RSDLP fraction shows. It was the regime that went to extraordinary lengths to prevent contact between the two. Keep betrays more confusion when he writes that Lenin "warned the workers with uncharacteristic caution not to strike until they were fully prepared, urging instead the formation of special committees to mobilize the peasants."[31] Only for those like Keep who didn't understand Lenin's politics was it "uncharacteristic" to advise revolutionary restraint.

It is possible to read, as Keep does, inconsistency into Lenin's tactics regarding the dissolution but only if one ignores that by end of the First Duma, as I think the evidence demonstrates and as Lenin admits, the institution had in fact—despite his initial skepticism—been of use. So the idea that he was "exultant" about its dissolution only makes sense if he hadn't changed his mind. Thus Keep is in a quandary in trying to explain why Lenin opposed boycott of the elections to the Second Duma. He, according to Keep, "seemed unsure of this position and took refuge in vague contradictory definitions of the new course. Perhaps the most plausible explanation of his change of tactics is that, although he was now aware of the improbability of an uprising in the near future, he dared not admit in public what he recognized in private"[32]—that is, "Lenin the devious." The contradictions reside only in Keep's reformist brain, which

couldn't understand Lenin's revolutionary utilitarian or, better, Marxist approach to the electoral/parliamentary process.

Keep's real sympathies are revealed in his final comments about Lenin: "In so far as Lenin's deliberate policy of 'exposing' the Kadets helped to alienate popular support from the assembly and facilitate its dissolution, his tactics toward the first State Duma in 1906 may be said to have foreshadowed his own forcible dissolution of the Constituent Assembly in 1918."[33] Not only did Lenin's actions in 1906 undermine Russia's first experiment with liberal democracy, we're told, but they explain the Stalinist counterrevolution that came in the wake of Lenin's death—two birds with one stone, and how convenient! Figes, forty years later, at least recognizes that the Cadets were their own worst enemies and didn't need a Lenin to blame.

Notes

Preface

1. V. I. Lenin, *"Left-Wing" Communism—An Infantile Disorder*, in *Collected Works*, vol. 31 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1978), p. 61. Hereafter, citations from his *Collected Works* will be designated as in this case: *31*, p. 61.
2. Like Marxologists (and unlike Marxists and Leninists), Leninologists pretend to be nonpartisan in pursuit of "objective research." The reality in both cases is otherwise; for the duplicity of the Leninologists, see "A Critical Review of the Relevant Literature." I owe the distinction to Hal Draper, *Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution*, vol. 1 (New York: Monthly Review, 1977).
3. I recognize that Lenin's portrait by his enemies is complicated. Some of them actually praise what they see as his organizing skills while disdaining his politics. A classic example is Samuel Huntington's assessment in his *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1967). Huntington's portrait may in fact be the inspiration for such neoconservatives as William Kristol; "neoconservative foreign policy thinking has all along indulged a romance of the ruthless—an expectation that small numbers of people might be able to play a decisive role in world events, if only their ferocity could be unleashed" (Paul Berman, *New York Times Book Review*, March 26, 2006).
4. At the end of his influential career, Leninologist Leopold Haimson appears to have had a greater appreciation of the Bolshevik leader. But he still couldn't resist reading him through the lens of the Stalinist outcome of the Russian Revolution. See his "Lenin's Revolutionary Career Revisited: Some Observations on Recent Discussion," *Kritika* 5, no. 1 (2004): 79.
5. See "A Critical Review of the Relevant Literature: Chapter Two" for what might be the most blatant example.
6. Richard Pipes, *The Unknown Lenin: From the Secret Archive* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996).
7. I discuss in my *Marx, Tocqueville, and Race in America: The "Absolute Democracy" or "Defiled Republic"* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2003), pp. 161–71, how these two overturns were actually linked.

   Just as I was completing the manuscript, I discovered Roland Boer's *Lenin, Religion, and Theology* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), a most informative treatment of a hitherto neglected dimension of the Bolshevik leader. I didn't have time to give it more than a cursory glance other than the references to Lenin vis-à-vis Duma politics—none of which appear to be problematic. However, I beg to differ with his claim about those who argue, like Trotsky and Krupskaya (Lenin's widow), that "Lenin was thoroughly consistent and faithful to Marx throughout his life, operating with a grand socialist narrative

that moved . . . to the glorious construction of communism. The problem with this position is not only that it must end with a narrative of disappointment, for Lenin found after the revolution that events did not turn out as expected, but also that it must smooth over the many times Lenin took an unexpected direction" (p. 7). Readers of this book and its companion volume will be able to determine if one of "many times" applied to his electoral/parliamentary strategy. Relevant here, though, is the false assumption that neither Lenin nor his mentors, Marx and Engels, were prepared for defeats or counterrevolutions. Nothing could be further from the truth. The authors of the *Communist Manifesto* recognized this reality about the class struggle in the second paragraph of the first part of the document. Proletarian defeats, a few pages later, were more common than victories. And the living class struggle, from the coup d'état of Louis Bonaparte in 1851 to the defeat of the Communards of Paris in 1871—whose lessons Lenin had internalized—made theory real.

8. Doug Jenness, *Lenin as Election Campaign Manager* (New York: Pathfinder, 1971).
9. "Marx and Engels's Electoral Strategy: The Alleged versus the Real," *New Political Science* 32, no. 3 (September 2010): 367–87.
10. *Marx and Engels: Their Contribution to the Democratic Breakthrough* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000).
11. Nadezhda Krupskaya, *Memories of Lenin* (London: Panther Books, 1970), p. 145.
12. Robert Service, *Lenin: A Political Life*, vol. 2 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), p. 353n32.

CHAPTER 1

1. V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 28 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1978), pp. 241–42. Hereafter, the designation will be as follows: *28*, pp. 241–42.
2. For another discussion of the topic, see my "Marx and Engels's Electoral Strategy: The Alleged versus the Real," *New Political Science* 32, no. 3 (September 2010): 367–87.
3. "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law," in *Marx-Engels Collected Works*, vol. 3 (New York: International Publishers, 1975–2004), pp. 28–29. Hereafter, citations from the *MECW* are designated as follows: *MECW* 3, pp. 28–29. For details on Marx and Engels's political evolution, see my *Marx and Engels: Their Contribution to the Democratic Breakthrough* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2000), ch. 1, and my *Marx, Tocqueville, and Race in America: The "Absolute Democracy" or "Defiled Republic"* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2003), ch. 1.
4. Chapter 1 in my *Marx, Tocqueville* distills Marx's path to communist conclusions based on his reading of the US case.
5. *MECW* 6, p. 333.
6. *MECW* 27, p. 271.
7. *MECW* 7, p. 3.

8. Engels reproduced a somewhat abridged version of the *Demands* in his article "On the History of the Communist League" in 1885, *MECW* 26, pp. 312–30, which did not include, for reasons not clear, the sixth demand and the accompanying clarification quoted here; it's possible that forty years later he didn't have a clean copy of the original. This might explain why Lenin, as far as I can tell, did not employ the *Demands* to support his arguments about the peasantry, specifically the alliance between workers and the small peasantry. Had he known what Marx and Engels had advocated I have no doubt that Lenin would have drawn on their authority to support his case.
9. For details, see my *Marx and Engels*, specifically the Index entries "democratic centralism," "party: internal democracy," "norms and obligations," "rules."
10. *MECW* 48, p. 425. See also Engels's more detailed comment on internal party democracy in *MECW* 49, p. 11.
11. In Cologne, at least, the League, owing to Gottschalk's opposition, boycotted the elections. Jonathan Sperber, *Karl Marx: A Nineteenth-Century Life* (New York: Liveright, 2013), p. 221.
12. *MECW* 8, p. 227–28. On the discussion within the worker's movement on this question, see Oscar Hammen, *The Red '48ers: Karl Marx and Frederick Engels* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969), pp. 360–61. Contrary to Hammen, the context for this quote makes clear that the "party" is indeed the "people's alliance" of the *Demands* and not the communist party of the *Manifesto*.
13. *MECW* 8, p. 514.
14. Ibid., pp. 288–89.
15. Ibid., p. 390.
16. Ibid., p. 391.
17. David Riazanov, *Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels: An Introduction to Their Lives and Works* (New York: Monthly Review, 1973), p. 100.
18. *13*, p. 37.
19. *MECW* 10, p. 284, my italics.
20. Ibid.
21. In my "Marx and Engels's Electoral Strategy," I criticize Adam Przeworski for flagrantly misrepresenting Marx and Engels's view on this and subsequent points.
22. For a comparison of Marx and Engels's assessment of the 1848 revolution in France and that of Tocqueville, see Chapter 5 in my *Marx and Engels*.
23. *MECW* 10, p. 137.
24. *MECW* 11, p. 79. It might be noted that this is not a translation, because the original series was in English—published in the *New York Daily-Tribune* under Marx's name.
25. *MECW* 41, p. 453. Uppercase indicates that the original is in English.
26. *MECW* 8, p. 215.
27. *MECW* 20, p. 12, my italics.
28. Ibid., p. 14.
29. *MECW* 42, pp. 54–55.

30. Ibid., pp. 92–93. Marx, in a letter to Engels in May 1865, voiced similar suspicions about the one-time Chartist leader Ernest Jones: "[B]etween ourselves, *he* is *only* trying to use our Association for electoral agitation" (Ibid., p. 155). When Jones asked Marx in November 1868 to assist his parliamentary bid, he politely declined. The GC, he said, "does not get mixed up ELECTIONEERING" (*MECW* 43, p. 166). If the reader is wondering how Marx dealt with the fact of his own class origins in his role in the IWMA, see my *Marx and Engels,* pp. 185–88.
31. *MECW* 42, p. 314.
32. *MECW* 44, pp. 100–101.
33. *MECW* 41, p. 400.
34. Ibid., p. 467. Unbeknownst to Marx at the time, the summer of 1863, Lassalle met secretly with Bismarck to effect such a quid pro quo. In his letter to the chancellor, which included the statues of the GGWA, Lassalle gloated over "the constitution of *my* empire, which perhaps you'd have to envy me! But this miniature picture will plainly convince you how true it is that the working class feels instinctively inclined to dictatorship if it can first be rightfully convinced that such will be exercised in its interests." He then proposed to Bismarck that the Crown become, in partnership with him lording over the German working class, a "social dictatorship." Hal Draper, *Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution*, vol. 4 (New York: Monthly Review, 1990), p. 55. How perceptive Marx had been in suspecting Lassalle of aspiring to be "a future working men's dictator"!
35. *MECW* 41, p. 467.
36. *MECW* 22, p. 328.
37. *MECW* 23, p. 175. Almost 25 years later Engels reiterated this point; see *MECW* 50, p. 276.
38. *MECW* 22, pp. 417–18.
39. *MECW* 22, p. 617. Henri Tolain, a French member of the IWMA who had been elected to the National Assembly "as a representative of the Working classes" prior to the outbreak of the Commune, sided with Versailles against the insurgents. Because of his actions, the IWMA expelled him as a traitor; see ibid., p. 297.
40. Ibid., p. 618.
41. Ibid., p. 427.
42. Donald Sassoon, *One Hundred Years of Socialism: The West European Left in the Twentieth Century* (New York: New Press, 1996), p. 10. Though not on Sassoon's list, I'm including the French party of Jules Guesde that Marx collaborated with.
43. *MECW* 45, p. 283.
44. Ibid., pp. 6–7.
45. Draper, *Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution*, vol. 2, pp. 516 and 600.
46. *MECW* 45, p. 403.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid., p. 405.
49. Ibid., pp. 406–7.

50. Ibid., p. 408.
51. Ibid., p. 399.
52. Ibid., pp. 423–24. As the reader probably realizes, *social democracy* had a different meaning in the Marxist movement at this stage from what it would acquire subsequently.
53. Ibid., p. 400.
54. Ibid., p. 408.
55. Ibid., pp. 413–14.
56. Contrary to what David McLellan, *Karl Marx: His Life and Thought* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), p. 438, suggests, Marx did have an opinion of Bernstein and company, at least in September 1879, which was not very flattering: "They are poor *counter-revolutionary* windbags" (Ibid., p. 413).
57. *MECW* 46, p. 42.
58. Ibid, p. 150.
59. *MECW* 45, p. 9. For useful details about the elections, see my *Marx and Engels*, specifically the Index entries "democratic centralism," "party: internal democracy," "norms and obligations," "rules." Regarding Jacoby's biography, see Hal Draper, *The Marx-Engels Glossary* (New York: Schocken Books, 1986), p. 103.
60. *MECW* 45, p. 7.
61. *MECW* 24, p. 248.
62. *MECW* 23, p. 255.
63. *MECW* 24, p. 249.
64. *MECW* 49, p. 135.
65. *MECW* 46, p. 8.
66. *MECW* 26, p. 272.
67. *MECW* 50, p. 29. For Engels's first usage of the military analogy regarding elections, see *MECW* 48, pp. 39–40.
68. See "A Critical Review of the Relevant Literature: Chapter 1" for examples of literature that subscribe to the defanged Engels allegation.
69. *MECW* 46, p. 44.
70. *MECW* 24, p. 340.
71. *MECW* 47, p. 210
72. *MECW* 48, p. 30.
73. *MECW* 50, p. 155.
74. Ibid., pp. 159–60.
75. *MECW* 47, p. 342.
76. Ibid., p. 223.
77. *MECW* 48, p. 423.
78. *MECW* 27, p. 227.
79. Ibid., p. 271.
80. *MECW* 50, pp. 486 and 489.
81. *MECW* 27, p. 519.
82. Ibid., pp. 78–79.
83. Ibid., p. 241.
84. Ibid., pp. 6 and 10.

85. *MECW* 48, p. 456.
86. *MECW* 49, p. 267.
87. *MECW* 48, p. 452.
88. *MECW* 50, p. 369.
89. *MECW* 47, pp. 201–2
90. *MECW* 50, p. 369.
91. *MECW* 49, p. 502. As for Engels's opinion of the Fabians, "its chief object is to convert your *bourgeois* to socialism and so introduce the thing *peacefully* and *constitutionally*" (*MECW* 48, p. 449).
92. *MECW* 46, p. 413.
93. Ibid., p. 82.
94. *MECW* 48, pp. 267–68.
95. *MECW* 50, p. 261.
96. Karl Kautsky, *The Class Struggle (Erfurt Program)* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1971), p. 2.
97. *MECW* 49, pp. 367–68.
98. Kautsky, *The Class Struggle*, pp. 186–88, my italics. Note that the version I employ is a "somewhat condensed English translation" of the original (p. 2).
99. Przeworski's *Capitalism and Social Democracy*, the second chapter, is the most persuasive. See also Sheri Berman, "Social Democracy's Past and Potential Future," in *What's Left of the Left: Democrats and Social Democrats in Challenging Times*, ed. James Cronin, George Ross, and James Shoch (Chapel Hill, NC: Duke University Press, 2011).
100. Maximillien Rubel and Margaret Manale, *Marx without Myth: A Chronological Study of His Life and Work* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), p. 251. This rendering compares favorably to that of *MECW* 43, p. 551.
101. *MECW* 43, p. 424.
102. Ibid., p. 450.
103. *MECW* 45, p. 103. "Longer than he expected" refers to the revolutionary upheavals in Germany that came in the wake of the Russian Revolution in October 1917.
104. *MECW* 43, p. 462.
105. *MECW* 44, p. 396.
106. Institute of Marxism-Leninism, *The General Council of the First International, 1868–1870: Minutes* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974), p. 220.
107. *MECW* 24, p. 200.
108. Ibid., p. 199.
109. Ibid., p. 359.
110. Ibid., p. 371.
111. Ibid., p. 50.
112. Ibid., p. 37.
113. Ibid., p. 252. For Marx's praise of Russian terrorists like Zasulich, see *MECW* 46, pp. 45 and 83.
114. *MECW* 45, p. 296.
115. *MECW* 24, p. 103.

116. *MECW* 46, p. 198.
117. *MECW* 24, p. 426.
118. *MECW* 48, p. 46.
119. *MECW* 46, p. 83.
120. Ibid., p. 208.
121. *MECW* 26, p. 294.
122. *MECW* 47, p. 264.
123. Ibid., p. 280.
124. Ibid., p. 281.
125. On some details about Zasulich's close relationship with Engels, especially after she moved from Geneva to London in 1894, see Jay Bergman, *Vera Zasulich: A Biography* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983), ch. 4.
126. *MECW* 27, p. 433.
127. Draper, *Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution*, vol. 2, p. 272.
128. For details, see Draper and E. Haberkern, *Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution, Vol. V: War & Revolution* (New York: Monthly Review, 2005), especially ch. 8.
129. *MECW* 48, p. 135.
130. *MECW* 27, p. 245.
131. *MECW* 50, p. 20.

CHAPTER 2

1. See "A Critical Review of the Relevant Literature: Chapter 2" in *Lenin's Electoral Strategy from 1907 to the October Revolution of 1917* (hereafter, *LES1917*) for details.
2. *Marx-Engels Collected Works*, vol. 44 (New York: International Publishers, 1975–2004), p. 396. Hereafter, citations from the *MECW* are designated as follows: *MECW* 44, p. 396.
3. Much ink has been spilt on Lenin's familial situation and its influence on his political trajectory, especially the execution of his brother Alexander, all of which is beyond the purview of this book. On his biography, Leon Trotsky's *The Young Lenin* (New York: Doubleday, 1972) is particularly useful.
4. V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), p. 540. Hereafter, citations from his *Collected Works* will be indicated as in this case: *1*, p. 540.
5. Lenin anxiously tried to get a copy as soon as it was available (*37*, p. 68). Interestingly, the Russian Narodnik Nikolar Danielson, living in St. Petersburg, appears to have been the first party contact to receive from Engels the publisher's galleys (*MECW* 50, p. 280)—another indication of the importance that he and Marx lent to the Russian movement.
6. Trotsky, *The Young Lenin*, p. 185.
7. Philip Pomper, *Lenin, Trotsky, and Stalin: The Intelligentsia and Power* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), pp. 32–33.
8. Lars Lih, *Lenin Rediscovered:* What Is to Be Done *in Context* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), pp. 377–84, correctly disputes the frequent charge that Lenin never

got over the Narodnik influence but misses an opportunity to show how Marx himself found Chernyshevsky attractive.

9. *1*, pp. 289–92, italics and bold in the original.
10. Ibid., p. 504.
11. Both documents are inconvenient for Leninologists. See "A Critical Review of the Relevant Literature: Chapter 2" in *LES1917*.
12. *MECW* 27, p. 271. In his "Appendix II," Lenin cites the relevant texts of Marx and Engels to make his case. Particularly noteworthy is the young Lenin's familiarity with the Marx-Ruge correspondence, 1842–43. These letters, underappreciated until today, reveal the process by which Marx broke with the young Hegelians, a necessary step on his road to communism. That Lenin could so early unearth them and see their significance speaks volumes about how well schooled he was in Marx's project.
13. Ibid., p. 439.
14. Lars Lih's claim that Lenin was essentially an offspring of the German Social Democratic Party, Kautsky specifically, was the target of my critique, "A Return to Lenin—But without Marx and Engels?" *Science and Society* 73, no. 4 (October 2009): 452–73.
15. *4*, pp. 92–93.
16. *2*, pp. 26–27.
17. Robert Service, *Lenin: A Political Life*, vol. 1 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), pp. 61–62.
18. *2*, pp. 117–18. See "A Critical Review of the Relevant Literature: Chapter 2" in *LES1917* for Leninological myopia about Lenin's views on civil liberties.
19. Ibid., p. 107.
20. Ibid., p. 278.
21. Ibid., p. 285.
22. Ibid., p. 328.
23. Ibid., p. 333.
24. Ibid., pp. 333–34. Subsequent quotations can be found on pages 335–38.
25. Ibid., pp. 335–37.
26. *5*, p. 343.
27. *4*, p. 239.
28. Hal Draper, *Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution, Vol. 3: The "Dictatorship of the Proletariat"* (New York: Monthly Review, 1986).
29. *6*, pp. 26–27. Plekhanov's original states, "[I]n order to effect its revolution, the proletariat must have command of political power, which will make it master of the situation and enable it ruthlessly to smash all the obstacles it will come up against on the road to its great goal. In this sense the dictatorship of the proletariat is an essential political condition of the social revolution" (Ibid., pp. 21–22). Lenin's marginal notes are intriguing: "'Master of the situation,' 'ruthlessly to smash,' 'dictatorship'??? (The social revolution is enough for us.)" Do his question marks suggest that he was uncertain about Plekhanov's usage of the term or of the term itself? His proposed rewording appears to be his effort to clarify.

30. See my "Marx and Engels's Electoral Strategy: The Alleged versus the Real," *New Political Science* 32, no. 3 (September 2010): 375 for details.
31. Lenin's comments on the *Manifesto*—4, p. 49—about the "dictatorship of the proletariat" are evidence for Draper's claims. See "A Critical Review of the Relevant Literature: Chapter 2" in *LES1917* for a discussion of Draper's position.
32. 4, pp. 211–12.
33. For the complete wording of the two demands in the Erfurt Program, see Gary Steenson, *After Marx, Before Lenin: Marxism and Socialist Working Class Parties in Europe, 1884–1914* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1991), pp. 298–99. Regarding Lars Lih's position that Lenin was a "Russian Erfurtian," see his *Lenin Rediscovered*, pp. 111–58, and my critique in "A Return to Lenin—But Without Marx and Engels?"
34. 4, pp. 238–39.
35. Ibid., p. 265.
36. Ibid., pp. 273–74. The program adopted by the Second Congress of the RSDLP in 1903 begins by calling for the "overthrow of the Tsarist autocracy and its replacement by a democratic republic, the constitution of which would ensure: 1. Sovereignty of the people—that is, concentration of supreme state power wholly in the hands of a legislative assembly consisting of representatives of the people and forming a single chamber. 2. Universal, equal and direct suffrage, in elections both to the legislative assembly and to all local organs of self-government." *1903: Second Ordinary Congress of the RSDLP, Complete Text of the Minutes* (London: New Park Publications, 1978), p. 6.
37. 4, p. 238.
38. 5, pp. 418–20.
39. Ibid., p. 512,
40. 6, pp. 187–89, 193.
41. Ibid., pp. 190–94.
42. For a discussion of this frequently made charge, see "A Critical Review of the Relevant Literature: Chapter 2" in *LES1917*.
43. 6, pp. 103–4.
44. Ibid., p. 467.
45. Ibid., p. 478.
46. In 2005 two Russian scholars, also convinced that their forbearers had democratic instincts, published a study on the elections to the first two state Dumas from the vantage of three provinces to make their case. Since the few things they say about Lenin are positive, it's unfortunate that they didn't know what he thought about elections and the details of his involvement in the RSDLP elections to the Second Duma—what I suspect they would have welcomed and another rationale for this book. See Natal'ia Borisovna Selunskaia and Rolf Torstendahl, *The Birth of Democratic Cultures in Late Imperial Russia: Reforms and Elections to the First Two National Legislatures, 1905–1907* (Stockholm: Altus History, 2012).
47. 4, p. 237.
48. 6, p. 473.

49. *7*, p. 442. Regarding "America," the extant record isn't enlightening.
50. *MECW* 44, p. 258. Again, uppercase indicates the original in English.
51. *5*, p. 18.
52. *1*, p. 320.
53. Ibid., p. 298.
54. See my *Marx and Engels: Their Contribution to the Democratic Breakthrough* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2000), ch. 2, for details on how they addressed the issue.
55. On how it came about and how it was organized, see Richard Pipes, *Social Democracy and the St. Petersburg Labor Movement, 1885–1897* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963), pp. 83–86. The editors of the *Collected Works* also provide details on its organization in *2*, pp. 546–47.
56. *5*, pp. 466–67.
57. *2*, p. 330.
58. Ibid., p. 340–41.
59. Ibid., p. 349.
60. This reading of Lenin's words is markedly different from a Leninological spin on them. See "A Critical Review of the Relevant Literature: Chapter 2" in *LES1917*.
61. *4*, pp. 217–18.
62. Service is particularly duplicitous in this regard. See "A Critical Review of the Relevant Literature: Chapter 2" in *LES1917*.
63. *4*, pp. 218–19.
64. Ibid., p. 326.
65. Ibid., p. 291.
66. Ibid., p. 328.
67. *34*, p. 57.
68. Ibid., p. 74.
69. Later correspondence with Plekhanov and Axelrod (Ibid., pp. 81–85) reveals an atmosphere of give and take when it came to editorial and substantive differences. Chapter 3 in Israel Getzler's *Martov: A Political Biography of a Russian Social Democrat* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1967) is also useful.
70. *5*, p. 423,
71. Ibid., p. 425.
72. *6*, p. 53.
73. *5*, p. 472.
74. Ibid., pp. 472–73.
75. Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *Industrial Democracy* (London: Longmans, Green, 1897); Lenin and his wife Krupskaya translated it in 1900. Karl Kautsky, *Der Parlamentarismus, die Volksgesetzgebung und die Sozialdemokratie* (Stuttgart: J. H. W. Dietz, 1893).
76. Ibid., pp. 477–82.
77. Lars Lih's *Lenin Rediscovered* is an invaluable source for a number of reasons but not the least for the context for *WITBD*. Chapter 8, "The Organisational Question: Lenin and the Underground," is especially useful.

78. Fifteen months after it was written and disseminated, Lenin recognized in January 1904 that the letter had the same standing as *WITBD* as a founding document for the organization norms he fought for.
79. *6*, p. 235.
80. Ibid., pp. 241–42.
81. Ibid., p. 240.
82. Ibid., pp. 246–47.
83. *7*, p. 208. See also *34*, p. 149.
84. *7*, p. 389.
85. Ibid., p. 267.
86. Lenin's characterization of intellectuals drew heavily on conclusions that Kautsky had reached, as can be seen on pp. 322–24 of *OSFTSB*.
87. Ibid., p. 261. See also, *1903: Second Ordinary Congress of the RSDLP*, p. 314.
88. *7*, p. 178.
89. Ibid., p. 474.
90. For details and one of the most brazen misrepresentations of Lenin's views, see "A Critical Review of the Relevant Literature: Chapter Two" in *LES1917*.
91. *7*, pp. 115–17.
92. Lenin had certainly been no saint at the congress, as he admitted in correspondence and publicly. To Potresov, he wrote, "I realize that I often behaved and acted in a state of frightful irritation, 'frenziedly'; I am quite willing to admit *this fault of mine to anyone*" (*34*, p. 164). And in *OSFTSB* he wrote, "I had admitted my personal harshness openly both in the letter to the *Iskra*-ist and at the League Congress" (*7*, p. 370).
93. Ibid., p. 395.
94. Ibid., p. 479.
95. *MECW* 48, p. 484.

CHAPTER 3

1. *Marx-Engels Collected Works*, vol. 45 (New York: International Publishers, 1975–2004), p. 278. Hereafter, citations from the *MECW* are designated as follows: *MECW* 45, p. 278.
2. Behind the scenes, as the rest of the letter reveals, Marx was doing all he could to weaken Russia's diplomatic position vis-à-vis England.
3. V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 7 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), pp. 199–200. Hereafter, citations from his *Collected Works* will be indicated as in this case: *7*, pp. 199–200.
4. *5*, p. 74. So much, then, for the oft-alleged "Leninist approach of 'the worse the better'" as repeated in the *Financial Times*, Oct. 28, 2010.
5. Orlando Figes, *A People's Tragedy: A History of the Russian Revolution* (New York: Viking, 1996), p. 171.
6. Ibid., p. 173.
7. *8*, pp. 21–22.
8. Ibid., p. 26.

9. For a general overview of the 1905 Revolution, see Sidney Harcave, *First Blood: The Russian Revolution of 1905* (New York: MacMillan, 1964). Figes is useful for more recent research.
10. *8*, p. 28.
11. Ibid., p. 208.
12. Ibid., pp. 375–78.
13. Ibid., p. 380.
14. Ibid., pp. 385–89.
15. Ibid., pp. 534–36.
16. Ibid., pp. 560–68.
17. *9*, p. 25.
18. Ibid., p. 204.
19. *MECW* 27, p. 191.
20. *9*, p. 141. As far as I can tell, it was Mary-Alice Waters who first pointed out in print Lenin's disagreement with Engels in her "The Workers' and Farmers' Government: A Popular Revolutionary Dictatorship," *New International* 1, no. 3 (1984): 44–45, 54. In what purports to be a definitive treatment of Lenin's usage of the phrase, Hal Draper's *The "Dictatorship of the Proletariat" from Marx to Lenin* (New York: Monthly Review, 1987), no mention of his correction to Engels is made.
21. *9*, p. 145.
22. See Alfred Levin, *The Second Duma: A Study of the Social-Democratic Party and the Russian Constitutional Experiment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1940), pp. 7–10, for details.
23. *9*, p. 179.
24. Ibid., p. 193.
25. Ibid., pp. 182–84.
26. Ibid., p. 258.
27. Ibid., p. 273.
28. Ibid., pp. 258–61.
29. *34*, p. 353.
30. *9*, pp. 383–84.
31. Ibid., pp. 344–46.
32. In "Tasks of Revolutionary Army Contingents," written at the end of October, Lenin elaborates a bit on the problem of "extremes . . . that should not be forgotten" (Ibid., p. 422).
33. Ibid., p. 354.
34. Ibid., p. 461.
35. Ibid., p. 431–32.
36. Figes, p. 197.
37. *10*, p. 163. For corroborating evidence from a fellow Bolshevik about how broadly the "elective principle" was applied in the new setting, see Lars Lih's "Fortunes of a Formula: From 'DEMOCRATIC Centralism' to 'democratic CENTRALISM,'" *John Riddell, Marxist Essays and Commentary* (blog),

April 14, 2013, http://johnriddell.wordpress.com/2013/04/14/fortunes-of-a-formula-from-democratic-centralism-to-democratic-centralism.

38. *10*, pp. 20–21.
39. For some details on the Tammerfors conference, see ibid., p. 527. The evidence about Lenin's change of heart comes from B. Gorev, the other Bolshevik who initially opposed the boycott; see Robert Service, *Lenin: A Political Life*, vol. 1 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), p. 149. For more sources for Lenin's about-face, see J. L. H. Keep, "Russian Social-Democracy and the First State Duma," *Slavonic & East European Review* 34, no. 82 (December 1955): 198n90.
40. *10*, p. 136.
41. Ibid., p. 143.
42. Ibid., p. 111.
43. *11*, p. 80.
44. *10*, p. 212.
45. Ibid., p. 235.
46. Ibid., pp. 237–38.
47. *MECW* 26, p. 272.
48. *10*, p. 249.
49. Ibid., p. 276
50. Ibid., p. 280.
51. *MECW* 27, p. 433.
52. *10*, p. 295.
53. Ibid., p. 293.
54. Ibid., p. 362.
55. Service, vol. 1, p. 155. Tony Cliff, *Building the Party: Lenin 1893–1914* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2002), p. 218, says "we" was a minority of one: Lenin.
56. According to Alan Woods, *Bolshevism, the Road to Revolution: A History of the Bolshevik Party from the Early Beginnings to the October Revolution* (London: Wellred Publications, 1999), p. 276, the Mensheviks "originally refused to participate in elections, but then changed their position to one of a 'semi-boycott.'" Woods is presumably referring to the aforementioned joint statement they issued with the Bolsheviks prior to the elections.
57. *10*, p. 313.
58. Ibid., p. 361.
59. Ibid., pp. 303–4.
60. Ibid., p. 362.
61. Ibid., p. 314.
62. Lenin revealed that hard bargaining with the Mensheviks took place in agreeing to the organization question—mainly about the percentage of party members needed to call a congress—but only briefly (ibid., p. 372). Though Service devotes five pages to the Fourth Congress, vol. 1, pp. 151–55, his total silence on the democratic centralism decision is deafening.
63. Ibid., p. 380.
64. Figes, p. 202.

65. Ibid., pp. 215–16.
66. *10*, pp. 398–99.
67. Ibid., p. 402. For photos of the RSDLP Duma deputies in the First and Second Dumas, see A. J. Sack, *The Birth of the Russian Democracy* (New York: Russian Information Bureau, 1918), pp. 147–48 and 153–55, respectively.
68. *10*, pp. 402–5.
69. Ibid., p. 408. *Nevskaya Gazeta* also provided an account of Lenin's speech, p. 407, and the differences with that of *Volna* are instructive.
70. Ibid., p. 409.
71. Ibid., p. 554.
72. Lenin noted a couple of weeks later that the government "has banned public meetings and has announced that it will take proceedings against those responsible for the meeting" in which he spoke (ibid., pp. 444–45).
73. Ibid., pp. 424–25.
74. Geoffrey A. Hosking, *The Russian Constitutional Experiment: Government and Duma, 1907–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), p. 19.
75. *10*, p. 457.
76. Ibid., pp. 414–17.
77. Ibid., p. 422.
78. Ibid., pp. 428–29.
79. Ibid., p. 431.
80. Ibid., pp. 440–41.
81. Ibid., pp. 432–33.
82. Definitive proof would require an analysis of *Nevskaya Gazeta* and *Kuryer* [*The Courier*], the two Menshevik dailies, to see if anyone in its camp was as active as Lenin in trying to influence the Duma fraction. I suspect not, since he made no mention of anyone in that daily doing the same; it would have been out of character for him not to do so.
83. Ibid., pp. 434–35.
84. Ibid., p. 486.
85. Ibid., pp. 458–59, and 438.
86. Ibid., pp. 486–87.
87. Hosking, p. 20.
88. *10*, pp. 449, 471, 480.
89. Ibid., p. 515.
90. Ibid., p. 501.
91. Ibid., pp. 510–13.
92. *11*, pp. 20–23.
93. Ibid., pp. 24–26.
94. Ibid., pp. 32–37.
95. Ibid., p. 79.
96. Ibid., pp. 43–47.
97. Ibid., p. 482.
98. Ibid., pp. 61–62.
99. Ibid., pp. 69–72.

100. Figes, p. 219.
101. *11*, pp. 90–93.
102. Ibid., pp. 96–100.
103. Ibid., pp. 101–4.
104. Ibid., p. 107. Hosking, pp. 20–21n25, notes the same article that Lenin referred to in the progovernment daily about an Austrian-German intervention. Unfortunately, he doesn't consider the significance of Lenin's reading of this and his response.
105. *MECW* 6, p. 382.
106. For an opinion that claims that Lenin did "gloat" and thus welcomed the Duma's dissolution, see "A Critical Review of the Relevant Literature: Chapter 3" in *Lenin's Electoral Strategy from 1907 to the Revolution of October 1917: The Ballot, the Streets—or Both*.
107. *11*, pp. 111–17.
108. Figes, p. 221.

CHAPTER 4

1. V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 11 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), pp. 130. Hereafter, citations from his *Collected Works* will be indicated as in this case: *11*, p. 130.
2. Ibid., pp. 138, 148.
3. Ibid., pp. 141–48.
4. Ibid., pp. 259–60.
5. The history of the norm of democratic centralism—still very much a work in progress at this point—would reveal that carrying out a line of action one disagreed with gave one more authority to challenge it, if necessary, later.
6. Orlando Figes, *A People's Tragedy: A History of the Russian Revolution* (New York: Viking, 1996), p. 224.
7. *11*, p. 212.
8. Ibid., pp. 219, 224.
9. See Alfred Levin, *The Second Duma: A Study of the Social-Democratic Party and the Russian Constitutional Experiment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1940), p. 280, for more details, including bibliographic sources.
10. *11*, p. 501.
11. Ibid., p. 514.
12. Ibid., pp. 284–85.
13. Ibid., p. 300, italics in original.
14. Ibid., pp. 313–16.
15. Ibid., p. 459. For details on how "from the beginning of the electoral campaign the administration actively interfered in an attempt to influence the results," see Levin, pp. 60–64.
16. *11*, p. 415.
17. Ibid., p. 465.
18. Ibid., p. 59.

19. *12*, pp. 18–19.
20. Specifically, "The Workers' Party Election Campaign in St. Petersburg," "The Social-Democrats and the Duma Elections" (both in *11*), and "The Protests of the Thirty-One Mensheviks" (in *12*). For the Menshevik view of the meeting, see Levin, pp. 57–58.
21. *11*, p. 426.
22. Recently published documents of Cadet internal deliberations ought to allow for an assessment of Lenin's claim. See Alexandra Korros, "The Kadet Party and the Elusive Ideal of Internal Democracy," *Kritika* 5, no. 1 (winter 2004): 117–36.
23. They even, apparently, had a daily, *Trud* [*Labor*], but it must have been only momentarily, since no copies have ever been found (*12*, p. 523).
24. Ibid., pp. 46–53.
25. Victoria Bonnell, *Roots of Rebellion: Workers' Politics and Organizations in St. Petersburg and Moscow, 1900–1914* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983), p. 309. Bonnell provides some useful details on how the workers' curia elections were conducted for the First Duma (pp. 309–10).
26. *12*, p. 62.
27. Bonnell, p. 314.
28. See *MECW* 50, p. 29.
29. *12*, pp. 62–65.
30. Ibid., p. 74.
31. Ibid., pp. 89–91.
32. Ibid., pp. 115–17.
33. Ibid., pp. 108–11.
34. Ibid., p. 149. Beyond St. Petersburg, "The Social-Democrats drew heavily from the suppressed minorities in the Caucasian towns, the mining population of Siberia and the Caucasus, and the great Caspian and Black Sea ports with their aggressive seamen and longshoremen" (Levin, p. 67).
35. *12*, p. 120.
36. Ibid., p. 155.
37. The Bolsheviks also began about this time an illegal organ, *Rabochy* [*Worker*], within St. Petersburg that lasted until June 1907. It's interesting to compare the tone of the two publications. *Novy Luch*, during its brief existence, was much more circumspect in an eventually unsuccessful effort to get by regime censors.
38. *12*, p. 198. This is from Lenin's article "The Elections to the Duma and the Tactics of the Russian Social-Democrats" for *Die Neue Zeit*, his most detailed analysis of the election returns. Written for a German-speaking social democratic readership, it's also didactic and provides a clear explanation of the differences between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks. That Kautsky, the editor of the organ, was willing to grant space to Lenin is noteworthy. He had denied, it may be remembered, Lenin such an opportunity in 1904 when the Bolshevik leader wanted to respond to Luxemburg and Trotsky's critique of the Bolsheviks coming out of the Second Congress of the RSDLP. The difference this time, I

suspect, is that Kautsky recognized that Lenin was writing about a real revolution in which he was an important protagonist.

39. For details on the fraction, its election, social composition, and organization, see Levin, ch. 3.
40. *12*, p. 154.
41. See Levin, pp. 92–94, for details.
42. *12*, pp. 162–63.
43. Ibid., p. 168.
44. Ibid, p. 203.
45. Ibid., pp. 189–92.
46. Ibid., p. 187.
47. Levin, p. 112n24.
48. Ibid., pp. 112–23. Though Levin makes no mention of Lenin's involvement in all of this, his draft response to Stolypin's address (see following) shows that he was indeed an actor in the drama. Why he ignores Lenin's draft in what appears to be an otherwise thorough examination of the published record is not clear. Police reports, if still extant, might fill in the gaps.
49. Levin, p. 122.
50. *12*, pp. 194–95.
51. Ibid., p. 244.
52. Ibid., p. 309.
53. Ibid., p. 248.
54. See Levin, pp. 176–85, for details about the context.
55. *12*, pp. 273–75.
56. Ibid., p. 304.
57. Ibid., pp. 282–86.
58. Ibid., pp. 296–99.
59. The German original was published in Stuttgart, 1906.
60. *12*, pp. 361–74.
61. Ibid., pp. 439–40.
62. Ibid., pp. 448–50. For more details on Prokopovich and the issue of the fraction employing "expert" opinion, see Levin, pp. 74–75. Lenin's critique of Prokopovich is reminiscent of Marx's warning about "le pedestal" for the bourgeoisie in 1865 in the First International.
63. On the report, why Lenin was able to give it, and the significance of the outcome of the vote, see his very informative article, "The Attitude towards Bourgeois Parties," *12*. pp. 489–509.
64. Lenin's most explicit statement of his differences with Trotsky on the peasant question came two years later in "The Aim of the Proletarian Struggle in Our Revolution": "Trotsky's major mistake is that he ignores the bourgeois character of the revolution and has no clear conception of the transition from this revolution to the socialist revolution." Lenin then analyzes the "mistakes" that derived from the "major" one (*15*, pp. 371–74). Part of the problem, I contend, is that Trotsky, because he was imprisoned, didn't get a chance to witness what Lenin

did—the politicization of the peasantry along the line that the latter expected beginning with the First Duma.

65. *12*, pp. 456–68.
66. Ibid., p. 506.
67. Ibid., p. 508.
68. See Levin, pp. 200–201, 210–11, for details, and *12*, p. 229, on what a "socialist view of the budget" would look like.
69. Alexinsky's speech on political terror on March 22—Levin, pp. 266–67—would be another example. The trial of the social democratic deputies, to be discussed later, revealed that the *Okhrana*, or state security, indeed had an extensive collection of documents about the fraction's activities obtained largely from informants.
70. Levin, p. 123.
71. A related issue is a set of conferences in which the party participated in November 1906 to discuss its military and armed strategy. See Lenin's "Apropos of the Minutes of the November Military and Combat Conference of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party," *12*, pp. 409–18, and Levin, pp. 282–83.
72. Levin, p. 324.
73. Levin, p. 343.
74. On their fate, see Chapter 1, *Lenin's Electoral Strategy from 1907 to the Revolution of October 1917: The Ballot, the Streets—or Both*, p. 42.
75. Ibid., p. 348.
76. *12*, p.
77. *13*, pp. 101–3.
78. Levin, p. 353.

APPENDIX A

1. Original text available at http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1847/communist-league/1850-ad1.htm.
2. Original text available at http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/index.htm.

APPENDIX B

1. Original text available at http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1905/jul/00.htm.
2. [Footnote from source] One word illegible.—*Ed.*
3. [Footnote from source] "As the thoroughness of the historic action increases, the magnitude of the mass whose cause it represents will also increase."—*Ed.* (See Marx and Engels, *The Holy Family, or Critique of Critical Critique* [Moscow: Foreign Languages Pub. House, 1956], p. 410.)
4. [Footnote from source] Fighting capacity.—*Ed.*

Appendix C

1. [Footnote from source] The leaflet "Whom to Elect to the State Duma" was written prior to the elections to the Second Duma. In the article "The Government's Falsification of the Duma and the Tasks of the Social Democrats," Lenin called this leaflet a poster "about the three *chief* parties" that took part in the Duma elections. The leaflet was printed in Vyborg by the editorial hoard of *Proletary* as a supplement to No. 5; it appeared in three editions (one in full and two abridged) in St. Petersburg in 1906. In the abridged form it was also published by the Ivanovo-Voznesensk, Kostroma, and Kharkov committees of the RSDLP; by the Ob group of the RSDLP; the Central Committee of the Social-Democrats of the Lettish Territory; and the Central Committee of the Latvian Social-Democrats. Original text available at http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1906/nov/23f.htm.

A Critical Review of the Relevant Literature

1. David Lane, *Leninism: A Sociological Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 43.
2. Sheri Berman, *The Primacy of Politics: Social Democracy and the Making of Europe's Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 13.
3. *Marx and Engels: Their Contribution to the Democratic Breakthrough* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000).
4. Stefano Bartolini, *The Political Mobilization of the European Left, 1860–1980: The Class Cleavage* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).
5. Adam Przeworski, *Capitalism and Social Democracy* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1986), and *Paper Stones: A History of Electoral Socialism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), coauthored with John Sprague.
6. "Marx and Engels's Electoral Strategy: The Alleged versus the Real," *New Political Science* 32, no. 3 (September 2010): 367–87.
7. Robert Service, *Lenin: A Political Life* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985–95).
8. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 51.
9. Hal Draper, *The "Dictatorship of the Proletariat" from Marx to Lenin* (New York: Monthly Review, 1987), p. 105.
10. Ibid., p. 26.
11. See my "Marx and Engels's Electoral Strategy," p. 375, for details.
12. Draper, *"Dictatorship of the Proletariat,"* p. 83.
13. Nimtz, *Marx and Engels*, p. 345n101.
14. Draper, *"Dictatorship of the Proletariat,"* p. 85.
15. V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 15 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), pp. 371–74. Hereafter, citations from his *Collected Works* will be indicated as in this case: *15*, pp. 371–74.
16. *9*, p. 141.

17. Service, vo1. 1, p. 38.
18. Orlando Figes, *A People's Tragedy: A History of the Russian Revolution* (New York: Viking, 1996), pp. 145–46.
19. Lars Lih, *Lenin Rediscovered:* What Is to Be Done *in Context* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), pp. 377–83.
20. Service, vol. 1, p. 77.
21. *2*, p. 341.
22. Service, vol. 1, p. 76.
23. Issac Deutscher, *The Prophet Armed: Trotsky, 1879–1921*, vol. 1 (New York: Vintage Books, 1965), pp. 83–97.
24. Trotsky, *Stalin: An Appraisal of the Man and His Influence* (New York: The Universal Library, 1941), p. 112.
25. *7*, pp. 472–83.
26. Lih, pp. 526–27.
27. Bertram D. Wolfe, *Three Who Made a Revolution: A Biographical History* (New York: Stein and Day Publishers, 1984).
28. Ibid., p. 259.
29. *7*, pp. 394–95.
30. J. L. H. Keep, "Russian Social-Democracy and the First State Duma," *Slavonic & East European Review* 34, no. 82 (December 1955): 195.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid., p. 198.
33. Ibid., p. 199.

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Italicized or quoted titles indicate that the work is by Lenin. Works by other authors have the author's name(s) following the title, in parentheses. Periodicals are italicized followed by their place of publication in brackets.

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