

DETROIT REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT RECORDS

BOX 12 OF 16

FOLDER 19

CONTINUATION COMMITTEE
REFERENCE MATERIALS

ON THE QUESTION OF A TWO-STAGE REVOLUTION IN PUERTO RICO

"At a certain stage of their development, the material forces of production in society come into conflict with the existing relations of production.... From forms of development of the forces of production these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an epoch of social revolution."(1)

Revolutions are the inevitable and irresistible vehicle of the advancement of human society; they serve the purpose of () the means of production and the relations of production. The socialist revolution frees the means of production from the chains of the profit system and allows for the full realization of the vast technological capabilities of modern society. The bourgeois revolution similarly serves the purpose of freeing the ~~ms~~ rising bourgeoisie and its developing economic system from the shackles of feudalism, with its isolation and anti-scientific mysticism. Thus Lenin defines revolution as, "The violent break-up of the obsolete political superstructure, the contradiction between which and the new relations of production caused its collapse at a certain moment." (2)

One of the great points of demarcation between Marxism and revisionism, especially since the October Revolution of 1917, has been the attitude of revolutionaries to the nature of revolutionary movements in the colonies and dependent countries, that vast majority of mankind which bears the brunt of imperialist exploitation and oppression. Today, as we move closer to the formation of a truly multi-national Communist Party in the United States of North America, debate on this problem has intensified, especially as regards the question of the nature of the revolution in Puerto Rico.

Among the great historic merits of the October Revolution was that it clearly demonstrated that the national bourgeoisie was no longer capable of leading the national revolutionary movement in the colonies and dependent countries to victory. "The revolution," wrote Joseph Stalin in 1925, "cannot be advanced and the complete independence of capitalistically developed colonies and dependent countries achieved unless the compromising national bourgeoisie is isolated, unless the petty-bourgeois revolutionary masses are freed from the influence of the bourgeoisie, unless the hegemony of the proletariat is established and unless the advanced elements of the working class are organized in an independent Communist Party."(3) If there is one thing which revolutionaries the world over have learned in the ~~past~~ past 60 years, it is that the hegemony of the proletariat in every

stage of the national revolution is a prerequisite to the victory of the national revolution and ultimately of the socialist revolution. Anything less than the immediate establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat after the victory of the national liberation movement is bound to lead, as it did in Algeria and elsewhere, to the ultimate defeat of the revolution.

But different societies, at different levels of economic and political development pose different problems for the proletariat in power. The target of the revolution is the outdated relations of production which are holding back the development of the productive forces of society. Thus, in a semi-feudal, semi-colonial or colonial country, where the advancement of society is impeded by foreign imperialist domination and domestic feudal oppression, the target of the revolution cannot be other than imperialism and feudalism. As Mao Tse-tung says in reference to conditions in China in 1939:

"Since the nature of the present-day Chinese society is colonial, semi-colonial and semi-feudal, what are the chief targets or enemies at this stage of the Chinese revolution?"

"They are imperialism and feudalism, the bourgeoisie of the imperialist countries and the landlord class of our country." (4)

And further:

"Imperialism and the feudal landlord class being the chief enemies of the Chinese revolution at this stage, what are the present tasks of the revolution?"

"Unquestionably, its main tasks are to strike at these two enemies, to carry out a national revolution to overthrow foreign imperialist oppression and a democratic revolution to overthrow feudal landlord oppression, the primary and foremost task being the national revolution to overthrow imperialism (Mao is writing at the time of the War of Resistance Against Japan--ed.)" (5)

Marxism-Leninism thus makes absolutely clear the objective mission of the national liberation struggle in those colonies with strong feudal hangovers: to clear the path for the development of capitalism and at the same time lay the foundation for the building of socialism, all under the dictatorship of the proletariat. Lenin, in the period of the democratic revolution in Russia, explains why this must be so:

"In countries like Russia, the working class suffers not so much from capitalism as from the insufficient development of capitalism. The working class is therefore decidedly interested in the broadest, freest and ~~the~~ most rapid development of capitalism. The removal of all the remnants of the old order which are hampering the broad, free and rapid development of capitalism is of decided ~~an~~ advantage to the working class." (italics ours) (6)

Although the situation in Tsarist Russia was by no means identical to the situation in the semi-feudal colonies and semi-colonies today, the need for the elimination of

feudal hangovers in both circumstances dictates similar political projection as regards the revolutionaries' attitude toward the development of capitalism. Mao Tse-tung elaborated on this point many times:

"Since Chinese society is colonial, semi-colonial and semi-feudal, since the principal enemies of the Chinese revolution are imperialism and feudalism, since the tasks of the revolution are to overthrow these two enemies by means of a national and democratic revolution in which the bourgeoisie sometimes takes part, and since the edge of the revolution is directed against imperialism and feudalism and not against capitalism and private property in general even if the big bourgeoisie betrays the revolution and becomes its enemy--since all ~~this~~ ~~this~~ this is true, the character of the Chinese revolution at the present stage is not proletarian-socialist but bourgeois-democratic.

"However, ~~this~~ in present-day China the bourgeois-democratic revolution is no longer of the old general type, which is now obsolete, but one of a new special type. We call this type the new-democratic revolution and it is developing in all other colonial and semi-colonial countries as well as in China. The new-democratic revolution is part of the world proletarian-socialist revolution, for it resolutely opposed imperialism....the new type of democratic revolution clears the way for capitalism on the one hand and creates the prerequisite for socialism on the other."(?)

Summing up then, we see that the revolution in a colonial or semi-colonial country with feudal hangovers must take the form of the new democratic revolution under the hegemony of the proletariat; and that the necessity for new democracy stems essentially from the backward economic structure of these countries.

The question naturally arises as to why, in general, in the colonial and dependent countries, we tend to find extensive feudal hangovers; and as to why in certain colonial nations we find an almost entire lack of feudal vestiges and a highly developed capitalist economy.

As the question is two-fold, so is the answer. Imperialism, in its quest of maximum profits, develops not only commodity exchange but capitalist production; not only does it sack the colonies of their raw materials and dump excess commodities in the colonial world; but imperialism develops industry, in order to make use of the extremely cheap labor pool which the impoverished masses of the colonies provide. Thus imperialism develops maximally, revolutionizes, the productive forces of the colonial countries. But at the same time, the colonial rule of the imperialist bourgeoisie generally depends upon its alliance with the most reactionary strata of the colonial country; and as Mao says, quoting the Communist International, "Imperialism first allies itself with the ruling strata of the previous social structure, with the feudal lords and the trading and money-lending bourgeoisie, against the majority of the people. Everywhere imperialism attempts

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Aspect

to preserve and to perpetuate all those pre-capitalist forms of exploitation (especially in the villages) which serve as the basis for the existence of its reactionary allies."(8)

It is clear that these two tendencies of imperialism cannot exist side by side forever. The ever-increasing industrialisation of the colony sooner or later must force the destruction of most, if not all, remaining pre-capitalist hangovers. The determining factor in deciding the degree of the capitalist development of a colony is the fundamental law of capitalism, the search for maximum profits. If the imperialists gain more from the extensive maintenance of feudal types of oppression in the countryside (as in much of Latin America, for example), then these colonies will be of a semi-feudal nature.

But it is becoming increasingly common for the imperialists to push for rapid and thorough industrialisation of certain of their colonies. A prime example of this is Puerto Rico (other examples might include such colonies as the Negro Nation, Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, South Africa and Ireland).

For many reasons (its size, its closeness to the USNA, its status as a direct colony, particularities of the international sugar market, etc.) Puerto Rico has become one of the most highly industrialized areas in the world. This trend started after World War II and became extremely pronounced in the 1950s. In 1955, agriculture represented 18% of Puerto Rico's net income; by 1970 this had plummeted to 4% (agriculture accounts for 3.1% of the USNA's net income). At the same ~~time~~ time, manufacturing, from 18% increased to provide 24% of the island's income in 1970--as compared to 27.6% in the USNA. And in the combined industries of manufacturing, construction, mining, transportation, communications and utilities, generally signs of an advanced capitalist economy, percentage of net income rose from 30% in 1955 to 43% in 1970--a bit higher than the comparable statistic for the USNA.

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Thus Puerto Rico is at least as heavily proletarian as the USNA, agriculture has just about as much importance to the economy as in the USNA--which means one thing and one thing alone: Puerto Rico is fully and entirely capitalist. What vestiges of feudalism as remain are weak and growing weaker.

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But will, for Puerto Rican society is socialism. The only possible next step, or stage if you will, is a new democratic stage, whose "objective mission is to clear the path for the development of capitalism"(9), would be absurd in Puerto Rico.

What is the theoretical "justification" given for this absurd assertion? Generally, it centers around the undialectical quoting out of context of short passages of "On New Democracy" or other works. An example is:

So long as they are revolutions in colonial or semi-colonial countries, their state and governmental structure will of necessity be basically the same, i.e., a new-democratic state under the joint dictatorship of several anti-imperialist classes. (10)

Is this thesis of Mao Tse-tung's correct? Yes; it was correct in 1939 and it is correct today. Why is it that in the colonial and semi-colonial countries, new democracy is generally a necessary stage in the revolution? As we have said, for the elimination of feudal vestiges; and nearly all colonies and semi-colonies are also semi-feudal. Mao makes this very clear throughout all of his writing and, in fact, just seven pages earlier, says:

"...such a revolution in a colonial and semi-colonial country is still fundamentally bourgeois-democratic in its social character during its first stage of first step, and ~~with the objective mission of clearing the path for the development of capitalism.~~ its objective mission is to clear the path for the development of capitalism." (11)

Is there any possibility or necessity for a bourgeois-democratic revolution in a fully developed capitalist nation, which Puerto Rico certainly is? Of course not; but our friends of the two stages, since they have no grasp of dialectics, simply latch onto a catch phrase, taken out of historical, political and theoretical context, and apply it everywhere and anytime. Mao also says many times that the main enemy of the Chinese people is Japanese imperialism--in 1939. Would anyone think of applying this to, say, Mexico in 1974? Of course not, although the basis of this concept--the need for unity of all revolutionary classes against a foreign aggressor--is absolutely correct. Just so is the concept of a new-democratic stage in the revolution in semi-colonial and colonial countries absolutely correct. It is only in those colonies which do not conform to the general rule of imperialist preservation of feudal oppression in the countryside that Marxists-Leninists, analysing dialectically the general and the particular, call for socialism and not for new democracy.

Let us be clear on one point. It is the bounden internationalist duty of all Anglo-American communists to raise the cry: "Free Puerto Rico!" Our task is to build a party which can unite the multi-national proletariat of the USNA state; and a major prerequisite of this unity is the repudiation by the Anglo-American proletariat of the

~~rich~~ plunder and ~~enrichment~~ enslavement of the colonial nations on the part of "our" bourgeoisie. Yet the Communist League is part of the international communist movement, and we have the responsibility ~~to~~ to add our understanding, ~~to~~ to aid in the clarification of the many problems which face Communists the world over. It is in this spirit that we feel obligated to ~~point~~ point out the theoretical fallacy of the call for a two-stage revolution in Puerto Rico.

This absurdity, of a new democratic revolution in Puerto Rico, has disoriented certain honest comrades in the USNA, mostly out of confusion or ignorance. But we fully understand the true origin of this "theory" of a two-stage revolution in Puerto Rico. The modern revisionists all over the world have long attempted to sabotage the national liberation struggles in the colonies and dependent countries by preaching their counter-revolutionary, social-imperialist "theory" that political independence, under the hegemony of the national bourgeoisie, is a necessary prerequisite for the development of the revolutionary movement. The revisionists' social-imperialist designs on the colonies and semi-colonies demand that the proletariat of the colonial nations be sacrificed for the preservation of the national bourgeoisie; and their many "theoretical" justifications of this corrupt line consists of falsifying the Marxist-Leninist position on the national liberation movement and on New Democracy.

This makes it all the more ~~more~~ important for all Marxist-Leninists and honest revolutionaries to develop our understanding of this question, through a thorough and exhaustive study of the classics of Marxism-Leninism and of the concrete situation confronting us.

FREE PUERTO RICO!

**DOWN WITH THE MODERN REVISIONISTS' ~~THEIR~~ FALSIFICATIONS OF
MARXISM*LENINISM!!**

BUILD AN ULTI*NATIONAL COMMUNIST PARTY!!!

Additions to Puerto Rico article draft.

page 2, line 2, after ~~the~~ "socialist revolution", insert:

Indeed, in the present-day period of history, state power must either be in the hands of the proletariat or in the hands of the bourgeoisie. The proletarian dictatorship takes many forms; as Lenin says:

"All nations will reach socialism; this is inevitable. But not all nations will reach socialism in the ~~same~~ same way; each will introduce a special feature in the form of democracy it adopts, in the form of the proletarian dictatorship, and in the rate at which it carries out the reconstruction of the ~~various~~ various phases of social life." (Lenin, "A Caricature of Marxism and Imperialist Economism", Collected Works, Volume XIX, pages 256-257)

One of these forms is the "people's democratic dictatorship" or the "new democratic republic" in the semi-feudal colonies and semi-colonies. New democracy, in its essence, is a form of the dictatorship of the proletariat; ~~indeed~~ indeed, it could not be otherwise, for...

(then back to "anything less than....")

page 5, paragraph 5; after "not for new democracy", insert:

One more point. Understanding that a period of new democracy in Puerto Rico would be tantamount to handing the revolution over to the petty-bourgeois does not mean that we repudiate alliances with other forces. Although New Democracy entails a governmental alliance between all the revolutionary, i.e. anti-imperialist and anti-feudal classes in society, all coalitions in colonial ~~countries~~ countries are not New Democracy; Communists seek to ally with all forces which can aid in the achievement of our goal. We Communists in the USNA will ~~not~~ make alliances with non-proletarian elements, particularly from the urban petty-bourgeoisie; no revolution will be possible without alliances. But does this mean that we will have a new-democratic stage in the USNA? No; it ~~merely means~~ merely means that we will make alliances.

Similarly, in Puerto Rico it will undoubtedly be possible and necessary for the proletariat to unite with many other sectors of the population which are opposed to the USNA imperialists' plunder of Puerto Rico. But this is not new democracy; this is an alliance.

then to: "Let us be clear on one point.."

OUR PROGRAMME

International Social-Democracy is at present in a state of ideological wavering. Hitherto the doctrines of Marx and Engels were considered to be the firm foundation of revolutionary theory, but voices are now being raised everywhere to proclaim these doctrines inadequate and obsolete. Whoever declares himself to be a Social-Democrat and intends to publish a Social-Democratic organ must define precisely his attitude to a question that is preoccupying the attention of the German Social-Democrats and not of them alone.

We take our stand entirely on the Marxist theoretical position: Marxism was the first to transform socialism from a utopia into a science, to lay a firm foundation for this science, and to indicate the path that must be followed in further developing and elaborating it in all its parts. It disclosed the nature of modern capitalist economy by explaining how the hire of the labourer, the purchase of labour-power, conceals the enslavement of millions of propertyless people by a handful of capitalists; the owners of the land, factories, mines, and so forth. It showed that all modern capitalist development displays the tendency of large-scale production to eliminate petty production and creates conditions that make a socialist system of society possible and necessary. It taught us how to discern, beneath the pall of rooted customs, political intrigues, abstruse laws, and intricate doctrines—the *class struggle*, the struggle between the propertied classes in all their variety and the propertyless mass, the *proletariat*, which is at the head of all the propertyless. It made clear the real task of

a revolutionary socialist party: not to draw up plans for refashioning society, not to preach to the capitalists and their hangers-on about improving the lot of the workers, not to hatch conspiracies, *but to organise the class struggle of the proletariat and to lead this struggle, the ultimate aim of which is the conquest of political power by the proletariat and the organisation of a socialist society.*

And we now ask: Has anything new been introduced into this theory by its loud-voiced "renovators" who are raising so much noise in our day and have grouped themselves around the German socialist Bernstein? *Absolutely nothing.* Not by a single step have they advanced the science which Marx and Engels enjoined us to develop; they have not taught the proletariat any new methods of struggle; they have only retreated, borrowing fragments of backward theories and preaching to the proletariat, not the theory of struggle, but the theory of concession—concession to the most vicious enemies of the proletariat, the governments and bourgeois parties who never tire of seeking new means of baiting the socialists. Plekhanov, one of the founders and leaders of Russian Social-Democracy, was entirely right in ruthlessly criticising Bernstein's latest "critique"⁸⁷; the views of Bernstein have now been rejected by the representatives of the German workers as well (at the Hannover Congress).⁸⁸

We anticipate a flood of accusations for these words; the shouts will rise that we want to convert the socialist party into an order of "true believers" that persecutes "heretics" for deviations from "dogma," for every independent opinion, and so forth. We know about all these fashionable and trenchant phrases. Only there is not a grain of truth or sense in them. There can be no strong socialist party without a revolutionary theory which unites all socialists, from which they draw all their convictions, and which they apply in their methods of struggle and means of action. To defend such a theory, which to the best of your knowledge you consider to be true, against unfounded attacks and attempts to corrupt it is not to imply that you are an enemy of *all* criticism. 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. We think that an *independent* elaboration of Marx's theory is especially essential for Russian socialists; for this 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. We shall therefore gladly afford space in our paper for articles on theoretical questions and we invite all comrades openly to discuss controversial points.

What are the main questions that arise in the application to Russia of the programme common to all Social-Democrats? We have stated that the essence of this programme is to organise the class struggle of the proletariat, and to lead this struggle, the ultimate aim of which is the conquest of political power by the proletariat and the establishment of a socialist society. The class struggle of the proletariat comprises the economic struggle (struggle against individual capitalists or against individual groups of capitalists for the improvement of the workers' condition) and the political struggle (struggle against the government for the broadening of the people's rights, i.e., for democracy, and for the broadening of the political power of the proletariat). Some Russian Social-Democrats (among them apparently those who direct *Rábochaya Mysl*) regard the economic struggle as incomparably the more important and almost go so far as to relegate the political struggle to the more or less distant future. This standpoint is utterly false. All Social-Democrats are agreed that it is necessary to organise the economic struggle of the working class, that it is necessary to carry on agitation among the workers on this basis, i.e., to help the workers in their day-to-day struggle against the employers, to draw their attention to every form and every case of oppression and in this way to make clear to them the necessity for combination. But to forget the political struggle for the economic would mean to depart from the basic principle of international Social-Democracy, it would mean to forget what the entire history of the labour movement teaches us. The confirmed adherents of the bourgeoisie and of the government which serves it have even made repeated attempts to organise purely economic unions of workers and to divert them in this way from "politics," from

socialism. It is quite possible that the Russian Government, too, may undertake something of the kind, as it has always endeavoured to throw some paltry sops or, rather, sham sops, to the people, only to turn their thoughts away from the fact that they are oppressed and without rights. No economic struggle can bring the workers any lasting improvement, or can even be conducted on a large scale, unless the workers have the right freely to organise meetings and unions, to have their own newspapers, and to send their representatives to the national assemblies, as do the workers in Germany and all other European countries (with the exception of Turkey and Russia). But in order to win these rights it is necessary to wage a *political struggle*. In Russia, not only the workers, but all citizens are deprived of political rights. Russia is an absolute and unlimited monarchy. The tsar alone promulgates laws, appoints officials and controls them. For this reason, *it seems* as though in Russia the tsar and the tsarist government are independent of all classes and accord equal treatment to all. But *in reality* all officials are chosen exclusively from the propertied class and all are subject to the influence of the big capitalists, who make the ministers dance to their tune and who achieve whatever they want. The Russian working class is burdened by a double yoke; it is robbed and plundered by the capitalists and the landlords, and to prevent it from fighting them, the police bind it hand and foot, gag it, and every attempt to defend the rights of the people is persecuted. Every strike against a capitalist results in the military and police being let loose on the workers. Every economic struggle necessarily becomes a political struggle, and Social-Democracy must indissolubly combine the one with the other into a *single class struggle of the proletariat*. The first and chief aim of such a struggle must be the conquest of political rights, *the conquest of political liberty*. If the workers of St. Petersburg alone, with a little help from the socialists, have rapidly succeeded in wringing a concession from the government—the adoption of the law on the reduction of the working day⁸⁹—then the Russian working class as a whole, led by a single Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, will be able, in persistent struggle, to win incomparably more important concessions.

The Russian working class is able to wage its economic and political struggle alone, even if no other class comes to its aid. But in the political struggle the workers do not stand alone. The people's complete lack of rights and the savage lawlessness of the bashi-bazouk officials rouse the indignation of all honest educated people who cannot reconcile themselves to the persecution of free thought and free speech; they rouse the indignation of the persecuted Poles, Finns, Jews, and Russian religious sects; they rouse the indignation of the small merchants, manufacturers, and peasants, who can nowhere find protection from the persecution of officials and police. All these groups of the population are incapable, separately, of carrying on a persistent political struggle. But when the working class raises the banner of this struggle, it will receive support from all sides. Russian Social-Democracy will place itself at the head of all fighters for the rights of the people, of all fighters for democracy, and it will prove invincible!

These are our fundamental views, and we shall develop them systematically and from every aspect in our paper. We are convinced that in this way we shall tread the path which has been indicated by the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party in its published *Manifesto*.

we be able to work out definite political tactics. Social-Democracy has renounced the fallacious theory of the "one reactionary mass." It regards utilisation of the support of the progressive classes against the reactionary classes to be one of the most important political tasks. As long as the organisations and publications are local in character, this task can hardly be carried out at all: matters do not go farther than relations with individual "liberals" and the extraction of various "services" from them. Only a common Party organ, consistently implementing the principles of political struggle and holding high the banner of democracy will be able to win over to its side all militant democratic elements and use all Russia's progressive forces in the struggle for political freedom. Only then shall we be able to convert the workers' smouldering hatred of the police and the authorities into conscious hatred of the autocratic government and into determination to conduct a desperate struggle for the rights of the working class and of the entire Russian people! In modern Russia, a strictly organised revolutionary party built up on this foundation will prove the greatest political force!

In subsequent issues we shall publish the draft programme of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party and begin a more detailed discussion of the various organisational questions.

A DRAFT PROGRAMME
OF OUR PARTY ⁹³

Written at the end of 1899
First published in 1924 in the
first edition of V. I. Lenin's
Collected Works, Vol. 1

Published according
to the manuscript

The thing to begin with, most likely, is the question of whether there is really a pressing need for a programme of the Russian Social-Democrats. From comrades active in Russia we have heard the opinion expressed that at this particular moment there is no special need to draw up a programme; that the urgent question is one of developing and strengthening local organisations, of placing agitation and the delivery of literature on a more sound footing; that it would be better to postpone the elaboration of a programme until such time as when the movement stands on firmer ground; that a programme might, at the moment, turn out to be unfounded.

We do not share this opinion. It goes without saying that "every step of real movement is more important than a dozen programmes,"⁹⁴ as Karl Marx said. But neither Marx nor any other theoretician or practical worker in the Social-Democratic movement has ever denied the tremendous importance of a programme for the consolidation and consistent activity of a political party. The Russian Social-Democrats have just got over the period of the most bitter polemics with socialists of other trends and with non-socialists who were unwilling to understand Russian Social-Democracy; they have also got over the initial stages of the movement during which the work was carried on piecemeal by small local organisations. The need for unity, for the establishment of common literature, for the appearance of Russian workers' newspapers arises out of the real situation, and the foundation in the spring of 1898 of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, which announced its intention of elaborating a Party programme in the near future, showed clearly that the demand for a programme grew out of the needs of the

movement itself. At the present time the urgent question of our movement is no longer that of developing the former scattered "amateur" activities, but of uniting—of organisation. This is a step for which a programme is a necessity. The programme must formulate our basic views; precisely establish our immediate political tasks; point out the immediate demands that must show the area of agitational activity; give unity to the agitational work, expand and deepen it, thus raising it from fragmentary partial agitation for petty, isolated demands to the status of agitation for the sum total of Social-Democratic demands. Today, when Social-Democratic activity has aroused a fairly wide circle of socialist intellectuals and class-conscious workers, it is urgently necessary to strengthen connections between them by a programme and in this way give all of them a sound basis for further, more extensive, activity. Lastly, a programme is urgently necessary because Russian public opinion is very often most profoundly mistaken in respect of the real tasks and methods of action of the Russian Social-Democrats: these mistaken views in some cases grow naturally in the morass of political putrefaction that is our real life, in others they are artificially nurtured by the opponents of Social-Democracy. In any case, this is a fact that has to be taken into account. The working-class movement, merging with socialism and with the political struggle, must establish a party that will have to dispel all these misunderstandings, if it is to stand at the head of all the democratic elements in Russian society. The objection may be raised, further, that the present moment is inopportune for the elaboration of a programme because there are differences of opinion that give rise to polemics among the Social-Democrats themselves. I believe the contrary to be true—this is another argument *in favour* of the necessity for a programme. On the one hand, since the polemic has begun, 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. The polemic indicates that the Russian Social-Democrats are showing a revived interest in extensive questions pertaining to the aims of our movement and to its immediate tasks and tactics; precisely such a revival is essential to a discussion of the draft pro-

gramme. On the other hand, if the polemic is not to be fruitless, if it is not to degenerate into personal rivalry, if it is not to lead to a confusion of views, to a confounding of enemies and friends, it is absolutely essential that the question of the programme be introduced into the polemic. The polemic will be of benefit only if it makes clear in what the differences actually consist, *how profound they are*, whether they are differences of substance or differences on partial questions, whether or not these differences interfere with common work in the ranks of one and the same party. Only the introduction of the programme question into the polemic, only a definite statement by the two polemising parties on their *programmatic* views, can provide an answer to all these questions, questions that insistently demand an answer. The elaboration of a common programme for the Party should not, of course, put an end to all polemics; it will firmly establish those basic views on the character, the aims, and the tasks of our movement which must serve as the banner of a fighting party, a party that remains consolidated and united despite partial differences of opinion among its members on partial questions.

And now, to the matter.

When a programme of the Russian Social-Democrats is spoken of, all eyes naturally turn towards the members of the Emancipation of Labour group who founded Russian Social-Democracy and have done so much for its theoretical and practical development. Our older comrades were not slow in responding to the demands of the Russian Social-Democratic movement. Almost at the very same time—in the spring of 1898—when preparations were being made for the congress of Russian Social-Democrats which laid the foundations for the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, P. B. Axelrod published his pamphlet, *Present Tasks and Tactics of the Russian Social-Democrats* (Geneva, 1898; the foreword being dated March 1898), and reprinted as an appendix to it "A Draft Programme of the Russian Social-Democrats," published by the Emancipation of Labour group as early as 1885.

We shall begin with a discussion of this draft. Despite the fact that it was published almost 15 years ago, it is our opinion that, by and large, it adequately serves its

purpose and is on the level of present-day Social-Democratic theory. The draft designates precisely that class which alone, in Russia as in other countries, is capable of being an independent fighter for socialism—the working class, the “industrial proletariat”; it states the aim which this class must set itself—“the conversion of all means and objects of production into social property,” “the abolition of commodity production” and “its replacement by a new system of social production”—“the communist revolution”; it indicates the “inevitable preliminary condition” for “the reconstruction of social relations”—“the seizure of political power by the working class”; it affirms the international solidarity of the proletariat and the necessity for an “element of variety in the programmes of the Social-Democrats of different states in accordance with the social conditions in each of them taken separately”; it points to the specific feature of Russia “where the masses of working people suffer under the double yoke of developing capitalism and moribund patriarchal economy”; it shows the connection between the Russian revolutionary movement and the process of the creation (by the forces of developing capitalism) of “a new class, the industrial proletariat—the most responsive, mobile, and developed”; it indicates the necessity for the formation of “a revolutionary working-class party” and specifies “its first political task”—“the overthrow of absolutism”; it shows the “means of political struggle” and formulates its basic demands.

All these elements are, in our opinion, absolutely essential to a programme of the Social-Democratic working-class party; they all enunciate theses that have, until now, been again and again confirmed both in the development of socialist theory and in the development of the working-class movement of all countries, specifically, in the development of Russian social thought and the Russian working-class movement. In view of this, the Russian Social-Democrats can and should, in our opinion, make the draft of the Emancipation of Labour group—a draft requiring editorial changes, corrections, and additions only in respect of details—the basis of the programme of the Russian Social-Democratic working-class party.

Let us try to note which of these changes of detail we deem advisable and in regard to which it would be desirable

to have an exchange of opinions among all Russian Social-Democrats and class-conscious workers.

In the first place, there must, of course, be some slight changes in the structural character of the programme; in 1885 it was the programme of a group of revolutionaries abroad who had proved able to define the only path of development for the movement that offered success, but who, at that time, still did not see before them anything like an extensive and independent working-class movement in Russia. In 1900 it has become a question of a programme for a working-class party founded by a large number of Russian Social-Democratic organisations. In addition to the editorial changes that are in consequence essential (and that need not be dealt with in detail, since they are self-evident), this difference makes it necessary to bring into the foreground and emphasise more strongly the process of economic development that is engendering the material and spiritual conditions for the Social-Democratic working-class movement, and the class struggle of the proletariat which the Social-Democratic Party sets itself the aim of organising. The cardinal point of the programme should be the characterisation of the basic features of the present-day economic system of Russia and its development (cf. in the programme of the Emancipation of Labour group: "Capitalism has achieved tremendous success in Russia since the abolition of serfdom. The old system of natural economy is giving way to commodity production..."). This should be followed by an outline of the fundamental tendency of capitalism—the splitting of the people into a bourgeoisie and a proletariat, the growth of "the mass of misery, oppression, slavery, degradation, exploitation."⁹⁵ These famous words of Marx are repeated in the second paragraph of the Erfurt Programme of the German Social-Democratic Party,⁹⁶ and the critics that are grouped about Bernstein have recently made particularly violent attacks precisely against this point, repeating the old objections raised by bourgeois liberals and social-politicians against the "theory of impoverishment." In our opinion the polemic that has raged round this question has demonstrated the *utter groundlessness* of such "criticism." Bernstein himself admitted that the above words of Marx were true as a characterisation of the *tendency* of

capitalism—a tendency that becomes a reality in the absence of the class struggle of the proletariat against it, in the absence of labour protection laws achieved by the working class. It is precisely in Russia today that we see the above tendency manifesting its effect with tremendous force on the peasantry and the workers. Further, Kautsky has shown that these words on the growth of “the mass of misery, etc.,” are true in the sense, not only of characterising a tendency, but of indicating the growth of “social poverty,” i.e., the growth of the disparity between the condition of the proletariat and the living standard of the bourgeoisie—the standard of social consumption that continues to rise parallel with the gigantic growth in the productivity of labour. Lastly, these words are true also in the sense that in “the border regions” of capitalism (i.e., those countries and those branches of the national economy in which capitalism is only just emerging and clashing with pre-capitalist conditions) the growth of poverty—not only “social,” but also the most horrible physical poverty, to the extent of starvation and death from starvation—assumes a mass scale. Everybody knows that this is ten times more applicable to Russia than to any other European country. And so, the words about the growth of “the mass of misery, oppression, slavery, degradation, exploitation” must, in our opinion, imperatively be included in our programme—first, because they faithfully describe the basic and essential features of capitalism, they characterise precisely the process that unrolls before our eyes and that is one of the chief reasons for the emergence of the working-class movement and socialism in Russia; secondly, because these words provide a fund of material for agitation, because they summarise a whole series of phenomena that most oppress the masses of the workers, but, at the same time, most arouse their indignation (unemployment, low wages, undernourishment, famine, the Draconian discipline of capital, prostitution, the growth in the number of domestics, etc., etc.); and, thirdly, because by this precise characterisation of the ruinous effect of capitalism and of the necessary, inevitable indignation of the workers we draw a line between ourselves and the indecisive elements who, “sympathise” with the proletariat and demand “reforms” for its

benefit, while trying to occupy the "golden mean" between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, between the autocratic government and the revolutionaries. It is particularly necessary today to dissociate ourselves from such people, if we are to strive for a united and consolidated working-class party that conducts a determined and unswerving struggle for political liberty and socialism.

Here a few words are in order on our attitude to the Erfurt Programme. From what has been said above it is clear to everyone that we consider it necessary to make changes in the draft of the Emancipation of Labour group that will bring the programme of the Russian Social-Democrats closer to that of the German. We are not in the least afraid to say that we want to imitate the Erfurt Programme: there is nothing bad in imitating what is good, and precisely today, when we so often hear opportunist and equivocal criticism of that programme, we consider it our duty to speak openly in its favour. Imitating, however, must under no circumstances be simply copying. Imitation and borrowing are quite legitimate insofar as in Russia we see the same *basic* processes of the development of capitalism, the same *basic* tasks for the socialists and the working class; but they must not, under any circumstances, lead to our forgetting the *specific features* of Russia which must find *full expression* in the specific features of our programme. Running ahead somewhat, let us say here that among these specific features are, first, our political tasks and means of struggle; and, secondly, our struggle against all remnants of the patriarchal, pre-capitalist regime and the specific posing of the *peasant* question arising out of that struggle.

Having made this necessary reservation, let us continue. The statement on the growth of "the mass of misery" must be followed by a characterisation of the *class struggle* of the proletariat—a declaration of the aim of this struggle (the conversion of all means of production into social property and the replacement of capitalist production by socialist production), a declaration of the international character of the working-class movement, a declaration of the *political* character of the class struggle and its *immediate* objective (the winning of political liberty). It is particularly necessary to recognise the struggle against the autocracy for political

liberties as the first political task of the working-class party; this task should, in our opinion, be explained by an exposition of the class nature of the present-day Russian autocracy and of the need to overthrow it, not only in the interests of the working class, but also in the interests of social development as a whole. Such a description is essential both in regard to theory, because, from the standpoint of the basic ideas of Marxism, the interests of social development are higher than the interests of the proletariat—the interests of the working-class movement as a whole are higher than the interests of a separate section of the workers or of separate phases of the movement; and in regard to practice, the elucidation is essential because of the need to characterise the focal point to which all the variety of Social-Democratic activity—propaganda, agitation, and organisation—must be directed and round which it must be concentrated. *In addition*, we think a special paragraph of the programme should be devoted to the provision that the Social-Democratic working-class party set itself the *aim* of supporting every revolutionary movement against the autocracy and the struggle against all attempts on the part of the autocratic government to corrupt and befog the political consciousness of the people by means of bureaucratic guardianship and sham doles, by means of that demagogic policy which our German comrades have called the “*Peitsche und Zuckerbrot*” policy (whip and biscuit policy). The biscuit—the doles to those who, for the sake of partial and individual improvements in their material conditions, renounce their political demands and remain the humble slaves of police violence (hostels for students, etc., and for workers—one has only to recall the proclamations of Minister of Finance Witte at the time of the St. Petersburg strikes in 1896 and 1897,⁹⁷ or the speeches in defence of the workers delivered by representatives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs at the commission on the promulgation of the law of June 2, 1897). The whip—the increased persecution of those who, despite the doles, remain fighters for political liberty (the drafting of students into the army⁹⁸; the circular of August 12, 1897, on the transportation of workers to Siberia; increased persecution of Social-Democracy, etc.). The biscuit is to decoy the weak, to bribe and corrupt them; the whip is to overawe and “rend-

er harmless" honest and class-conscious fighters for the working-class cause and for the cause of the people. As long as the autocracy exists (and we must now in drawing up our programme take into account the existence of the autocracy, since its collapse would inevitably call forth such huge changes in political conditions that they would compel the working-class party to make essential changes in the formulation of its immediate political tasks)—as long as the autocracy exists, we must expect a continued renewal and increase of the government's demagogic measures. Consequently, we must conduct against them a systematic struggle, exposing the falseness of the police benefactors of the people, showing the connection between government reforms and the struggle of the workers, teaching the proletariat to make use of every reform to strengthen its fighting position and extend and deepen the working-class movement. The point on the support for *all* fighters against the autocracy is necessary in the programme, because Russian Social-Democracy, indissolubly fused with the advanced elements of the Russian working class, must 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.

Such is our view on the demands that must be met by the section of our programme dealing with *principles* and on the basic postulates that must be expressed in it with the maximum precision and clarity. In our opinion the following should be deleted from the draft programme of the Emancipation of Labour group (from the part dealing with principles): 1) statements on the form of peasant land tenure (we shall discuss the peasant question later); 2) statements on the causes of "instability," etc., of the intelligentsia; 3) the point on the "abolition of the present system of political representation and its replacement by direct people's legislation"; 4) the point on the "means of political struggle." True, we do not see anything obsolete or erroneous in the last point, but, on the contrary, believe that the means of struggle should be precisely those indicated by the Emancipation of Labour group (agitation, revolutionary organisation, transition at "a suitable moment" to determined attack, not rejecting, *in principle*, even ter-

ror); but we believe that the programme of a *working-class party* is no place for indications of the means of activity that were necessary in the programme of a group of revolutionaries abroad in 1885. The programme should leave the question of means open, allowing the choice of means to the militant organisations and to Party congresses that determine the *tactics* of the Party. Questions of tactics, however, can hardly be introduced into the programme (with the exception of the most important questions, questions of *principle*, such as our attitude to other fighters against the autocracy). Questions of tactics will be discussed by the Party newspaper as they arise and will be eventually decided at Party congresses. The same applies, in our opinion, to the question of terror. The Social-Democrats must imperatively undertake the discussion of this question—of course, from the standpoint of tactics and not of principle—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. 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 its energy* on organisation and the regular delivery of literature. This is not the place to speak in greater detail on the question.

As far as the issue of direct people's legislation is concerned, it seems to us that at the present moment it should not be included in the programme. The victory of socialism must not be connected, in principle, with the *substitution* of direct people's legislation for parliamentarism. This was proved, in our view, by the discussion on the Erfurt Programme and by Kautsky's book on people's legislation. Kautsky admits (on the basis of an historical and political analysis) that a certain benefit accrues from people's legislation under the following conditions: 1) the absence of an antithesis between town and village or the preponderance of the towns, 2) the existence of highly developed political

parties; 3) "the absence of excessively centralised state power, independently opposed to people's legislation." In Russia we see *exactly the opposite* conditions, and the danger of "people's legislation" degenerating into an imperialist "plebiscite" would be particularly great in our country. If Kautsky could say, in 1893, speaking of Germany and Austria, that "for us, East-Europeans, direct people's legislation belongs to the sphere of the 'state of the future,'" what is there to be said of Russia? We, therefore, believe that at present, when the autocracy is dominant in Russia, we should limit ourselves to the demand for a "democratic constitution" and prefer the first two points of the practical part of the programme of the Emancipation of Labour group to the first two points of the practical part of the "Erfurt Programme."

Now let us look at the practical part of the programme. This part consists, in our opinion, of three sections, in substance if not in arrangement: 1) the demands for general democratic reforms; 2) the demands for measures of protection for the workers; and 3) the demands for measures in the interests of the peasants. There is hardly any need to make substantial changes in the "draft programme" of the Emancipation of Labour group as regards the first section, which demands: 1) universal franchise; 2) salaries for deputies; 3) general, secular, free, and compulsory education, etc.; 4) inviolability of the person and domicile of citizens; 5) uncurtailed freedom of conscience, speech, assembly, etc. (here it should perhaps be added specifically: the right to strike); 6) freedom of movement and occupation (here it would probably be correct to add: "freedom of migration" and "the complete abolition of passports"); 7) full equality of all citizens, etc.; 8) replacement of the permanent army by the general arming of the people; 9) "the revision of our entire civil and criminal legislation, the abolition of social-estate divisions and of punishments incompatible with the dignity of man." Here it would be well to add: "complete equality of rights for men and women." To this section should be added the demand for fiscal reforms formulated in the programme of the Emancipation of Labour group as one of the demands to "be put forward by the working-class party, basing itself on these fundamental political rights"—"the

abolition of the present system of taxation and the institution of a progressive income tax." Lastly, there should also be here a demand for "the election of civil servants by the people; for every citizen to be granted the right to prosecute in court any government official without first having to make a complaint to superiors."

In the second section of the practical demands we find in the programme of the Emancipation of Labour group a general demand for "the legislative regulation of relations between workers (urban and rural) and employers, and the organisation of a relevant inspectorate with workers' representation." We think that the *working-class party* should define the demands made on this point more thoroughly and in greater detail; the party should demand: 1) an eight-hour working day; 2) prohibition of night-work and prohibition of the employment of children under 14 years of age; 3) uninterrupted rest periods, for every worker, of no less than 36 hours a week; 4) extension of factory legislation and the Factory Inspectorate to all branches of industry and agriculture, to government factories, to artisan establishments, and to handicraftsmen working at home; election, by the workers, of assistant inspectors having the same rights as the inspectors; 5) establishment of factory and rural courts for all branches of industry and agriculture, with judges elected from the employers and the workers in equal numbers; 6) unconditional prohibition everywhere of payment in kind; 7) legislation fixing the responsibility of factory owners for all accidents and maiming of workers, both industrial and agricultural; 8) legislation fixing payment of wages at least once a week in all cases of the hire of workers of all kinds; 9) repeal of all laws violating the equality of employers and employees (for example, the laws making factory and farm workers criminally responsible for leaving their work, the laws giving employers greater freedom to cancel hiring agreements than their employees, etc.). (It goes without saying that we are only outlining desirable demands without giving them the final formulation required for the draft.) This section of the programme must (in conjunction with the preceding section) provide the basic, guiding principles for agitation, without in any way, of course, hindering agitators in this or that locality, branch

of production, factory, etc., from putting forward demands in a somewhat modified form, demands that are more concrete or more specific. In drawing up this section of the programme, we should strive, therefore, to avoid two extremes—on the one hand, we must not omit any one of the main, basic demands that hold great significance for the *entire* working class; on the other, we must not go into minute particulars with which it would hardly be rational to load the programme.

The demand for “state assistance for producers’ associations” in the programme of the Emancipation of Labour group should, in our opinion, be completely eliminated. The experience of other countries, as well as theoretical considerations, and the specific features of Russian life (the tendency of the bourgeois liberals and the police government to flirt with “artels” and with “the patronage ... of people’s industry,” etc.)—all this should counsel against our putting forward this demand. (Fifteen years ago, of course, matters were quite different in many respects; *then* it was quite natural for Social-Democrats to include such a demand in their programme.)

There remains the third and last section of the practical part of the programme—the demands related to the peasant question. In the programme of the Emancipation of Labour group we find only one demand pertaining to this question—the demand for a “radical revision of our agrarian relations, i.e., a revision of the conditions of land redemption and the allotment of the land to the village communes; the granting of the right to refuse an allotment and to leave the village commune to those peasants who find it convenient to do so, etc.”

It seems to me that the basic idea here expressed is perfectly correct and that the Social-Democratic working-class party should, in point of fact, include a relevant demand in its programme (I say “a relevant demand” because I think certain amendments are desirable).

I understand this problem in the following way. The peasant question in Russia differs substantially from the peasant question in the West, the *sole* difference being that in the West the question is almost exclusively one of a peasant in a capitalist, bourgeois society, whereas in Russia

it is one of a peasant who suffers no less (if not more) from *pre-capitalist* institutions and relations, from the *survivals of serfdom*. The role of the peasantry as a class that provides fighters against the autocracy and against the survivals of serfdom is by now played out in the West, but not yet in Russia. In the West the industrial proletariat has long since become completely alienated from the countryside; this alienation has been made final by relevant legal institutions. In Russia "the industrial proletariat, both by its composition and by the conditions of its existence, is to a very great extent still connected with the countryside" (P. B. Axelrod, *op. cit.*, p. 11). True enough, the differentiation of the peasantry into a petty bourgeoisie and into wage-workers is proceeding with great power and astounding rapidity in Russia, but it is a process that has not yet come to an end, and—what is most important—this process is still evolving within the framework of the old institutions of serfdom that fetter all the peasants with the heavy chains of collective liability and the tax-assessed community. The Russian Social-Democrat, therefore, even if he (like the writer of these lines) belongs to the determined opponents of the protection or support of small proprietorship or small agricultural economy in capitalist society, i. e., even if, on the agrarian question, he (like the writer of these lines) is on the side of those Marxists whom the bourgeois and opportunists of all stripes love to deride as "dogmatists" and "orthodox"—the Russian Social-Democrat can and must, without betraying his convictions in the slightest, but, rather, because of those convictions, insist that the working class party should inscribe on its banner *support for the peasantry (not by any means as a class of small proprietors or small farmers), insofar as the peasantry is capable of a revolutionary struggle against the survivals of serfdom in general and against the autocracy in particular*. Do not all of us Social-Democrats declare that we are ready to support even the big bourgeoisie *insofar as it is capable of a revolutionary struggle* against the above manifestations—how then can we refuse to support the petty-bourgeois class, many millions strong, that is gradually, step by step, merging with the proletariat? If support for the liberal demands of the big bourgeoisie does not mean support of the big bourgeoisie, then support for the democratic

demands of the petty bourgeoisie certainly does not mean support of the petty bourgeoisie; on the contrary, it is precisely this development which political liberty will make possible in Russia that will, with particular force, lead to the destruction of small economy under the blows of capital. I do not think there will be any arguments among the Social-Democrats on this point. The question, therefore, is: 1) how to elaborate demands in such a way that they *do not degenerate* into support of small property-owners in a capitalist society? and 2) is our peasantry capable, at least in part, of a *revolutionary* struggle against the remnants of serfdom and against absolutism?

Let us begin with the second question. It is doubtful whether anyone will deny the existence of revolutionary elements among the Russian peasantry. In the post-Reform period, too, we know, there have been peasant revolts against the landlords, their stewards, and the government officials who support them. Well known are the agrarian killings, revolts, etc. Well known is the growing indignation of the peasantry (in whom even pitiful fragments of education have already begun to arouse a sense of human dignity) against the savage lawlessness of the gang of aristocratic wastrels that has been let loose against the peasantry under the title of Rural Superintendents." Well known is the fact that famines of growing frequency involve millions of people who cannot remain passive spectators of such "food difficulties." Well known is the fact of the growth of religious sects and rationalism among the peasantry; political protests in religious guise are common to all nations at a certain stage of their development, and not to Russia alone. The existence of revolutionary elements among the peasantry, therefore, is not open to the slightest doubt. We do not in the least exaggerate the strength of these elements; we do not forget the political backwardness and ignorance of the peasants, nor in the least wipe out the difference between "the Russian revolt, senseless and ruthless," and the revolutionary struggle; we do not in the least forget the endless means which the government has at its disposal for the political deception and demoralisation of the peasantry. But from all this there follows only one thing, that it would be senseless to make the peasantry the *vehicle* of the revolutionary movement, that

a party would be insane to *condition* the revolutionary character of its movement upon the revolutionary mood of the peasantry. There can be no thought of proposing anything of the sort to the Russian Social-Democrats. We say only that a working-class party cannot, without violating the basic tenets of Marxism and without committing a tremendous political mistake, *overlook* the revolutionary elements that exist among the peasantry and not afford those elements support. Whether or not the revolutionary elements among the Russian peasantry will be able to behave at least in the way the West-European peasants behaved at the time of the overthrow of the autocracy is a question to which history has not yet provided an answer. If they prove themselves incapable, the Social-Democrats will have lost nothing as far as their good name or their movement is concerned, since it will not be their fault if the peasantry does not respond (may not have the strength to respond) to their revolutionary appeal. The working-class movement is going its own way and will continue to do so, despite all the betrayals of the big bourgeoisie or the petty bourgeoisie. If the peasantry should prove itself capable—then that Social-Democracy which did not afford it support under these circumstances would for ever lose its good name and the right to be regarded as the leading fighter for democracy.

Returning to the first question presented above, we must say that the demand for a "radical revision of agrarian relations" seems unclear to us: it may have been sufficient fifteen years ago, but we can hardly be satisfied with it today when we must provide guidance for agitation and, at the same time, guard ourselves against the defenders of small economy, all too numerous in present-day Russian society, who have such "influential" supporters as Messrs. Pobedonostsev, Witte, and very many officials in the Ministry of Internal Affairs. We take the liberty of offering our comrades for discussion the following approximate formulation of the third section of the practical part of our programme:

"The Russian Social-Democratic working-class party, giving its support to every revolutionary movement against

the present state and social system, declares that it will support the peasantry, insofar as it is capable of revolutionary struggle against the autocracy, as the class that suffers most from the Russian people's lack of rights and from the survivals of serfdom in Russian society.

"Proceeding from this principle, the Russian Social-Democratic working-class party demands:

"1) The abrogation of land redemption¹⁰⁰ and quit-rent payments and of all duties at present obligatory for the peasantry as a tax-paying social-estate.

"2) The return to the people of the sums of which the government and the landed proprietors have robbed the peasants in the form of redemption payments.

"3) The abolition of collective liability and of all laws that hamper the peasant in disposing of his land.

"4) The abolition of all remnants of the peasant's feudal dependence on the landlord, whether they are due to special laws and institutions (e.g., the position of the peasants and workers in the iron-foundry districts of the Urals) or to the fact that the land of the peasants and the landlords has not yet been demarcated (e.g., survivals of the law of easement in the Western territory),¹⁰¹ or to the fact that the cutting-off of the peasant land by the landlords has left the peasants in what is in actual fact the hopeless position of former corvée peasants.

"5) That peasants be granted the right to demand, in court, the reduction of excessively high rents and to prosecute for usury landlords and, in general, all persons who take advantage of the necessitous condition of the peasants to conclude with them shackling agreements."

We shall have to deal in particular detail with the motives for such a proposal—not because this is the most important part of the programme, but because it is the most disputed and has a more remote connection with the generally established truths that are accepted by all Social-Democrats. The introductory proposition on (conditional) "support" for the peasantry seems to us to be necessary, because the proletariat cannot and must not, in general, take upon itself the defence of the interests of a class of small property-owners; it can support it only *to the extent to which* that class is revolutionary. And since it is

the autocracy that is today the embodiment of all that is backward in Russia, all the survivals of serfdom, lack of rights, and "patriarchal" oppression, it is essential to point out that the working-class party supports the peasantry only to the extent that the latter is capable of revolutionary struggle against the *autocracy*. Such a proposition is apparently excluded by the following proposition in the draft of the Emancipation of Labour group: "The main bulwark of the autocracy resides precisely in the political apathy and intellectual backwardness of the peasantry." But this is not a contradiction of theory alone; it is a contradiction of reality, because the peasantry (like the class of small property-owners in general) is distinguished by the duality of its character. We do not wish to repeat well-known political-economic arguments showing the internal contradictions of the condition of the peasantry, but we shall call to mind the following characterisation by Marx of the French peasantry of the early fifties:

"The Bonaparte dynasty represents not the revolutionary, but the conservative peasant; not the peasant that strikes out beyond the condition of his social existence, the small holding, but rather the peasant who wants to consolidate this holding, not the country folk who, linked up with the towns, want to overthrow the old order through their own energies, but on the contrary those who, in stupefied seclusion within this old order, want to see themselves and their small holdings saved and favoured by the ghost of the Empire. It represents not the enlightenment, but the superstition of the peasant; not his judgment, but his prejudice; not his future, but his past; not his modern Cevennes, but his modern Vendée" (*Der 18. Brumaire*. S. 99¹⁰²). The working-class party needs precisely to support the peasantry which is striving to overthrow "the old order," i.e., in Russia, first and foremost the autocracy. The Russian Social-Democrats have always recognised the necessity to extract and absorb the revolutionary side of the Narodnik doctrine and trend. In the programme of the Emancipation of Labour group this is expressed not only in the above-quoted demand for "a radical revision," etc., but also in the following words: "It goes without saying, incidentally, that even today, people

who are in direct contact with the peasantry could, by their activities among them, render important service to the socialist movement in Russia. Far from repelling such people, the Social-Democrats will make every effort to come to an agreement with them on the basic principles and methods of their work." Fifteen years ago, when the traditions of revolutionary Narodism were still alive, such a declaration was sufficient; but today we must ourselves begin to discuss "basic principles of work" among the peasantry if we want the Social-Democratic working-class party to become a vanguard fighter for democracy.

But do not the demands we propose lead to the support, not of the peasants themselves, but of their property, to the consolidation of small economy, and do they correspond to the entire course of capitalist development? Let us examine these questions that are of the highest importance to the Marxist.

There can scarcely be any differences of opinion among Social-Democrats with regard to *the substance* of the first and third demands. The second demand, by its essence, will probably give rise to differences of opinion. The following considerations, to our view, speak in its favour: 1) it is a fact that the redemption payments represented direct plunder of the peasants on the part of the landlords, that the payments were not only for peasant land but for serf-holding rights, and that the government gathered *more* from the peasants than it paid to the landlords; 2) we have no grounds for regarding this fact as something ended and filed away in the archives of history, for the aristocratic exploiters themselves do not so regard the peasant Reform when they lament over the "sacrifices" they made at the time; 3) precisely today, when the starvation of millions of peasants is becoming chronic, when the government that wastes millions on gifts to the landlords and capitalists, and on an adventurist foreign policy, is haggling for pennies off the grants to the starving—precisely today it is appropriate and essential to recall what the rule of the autocratic government that serves the interests of the privileged classes has cost the people; 4) the Social-Democrats cannot remain indifferent spectators of peasant

hunger and the death of peasants from starvation; there have never been two opinions among Russian Social-Democrats as to the need for the most extensive help to the starving, and hardly anyone will claim that serious help is possible without revolutionary measures; 5) the expropriation of the royal demesne¹⁹ and greater mobilisation of lands belonging to the aristocracy, i.e., that which would result from the implementation of the proposed demand, would bring only benefit to the entire social development of Russia. *Against* the proposed demand we shall probably be told, mostly, that it is "impracticable." If such an objection is supported only by phrases against "revolutionism" and "utopianism," we can say in advance that such *opportunist phrases* do not frighten us in the least and that we do not attach any significance to them. If, however, the objection is supported by an analysis of the economic and political conditions of our movement, we fully admit the necessity for a more detailed discussion of the question and the benefit accruing from a polemic in regard to it. We would only mention that this demand does not stand alone but forms part of the demand to support the peasantry *to the extent* that the latter is revolutionary. History will decide precisely how and with what strength these elements in the peasantry will manifest themselves. If we understand by the "practicability" of a demand its general correspondence, not to the interests of social development, but to a specific state of economic and political conditions, it will be a totally fallacious criterion, as Kautsky showed convincingly in his polemic with Rosa Luxemburg when the latter spoke of the "impracticability" (for the Polish working-class party) of the demand for Polish independence. Kautsky, at that time, pointed out as an example (if our memory serves us) the demand made by the Erfurt Programme on the election of civil servants by the people. The "practicability" of this demand is more than doubtful in present-day Germany, but none of the Social-Democrats proposed limiting the demands to the narrow bounds of what is possible at a given moment or under given conditions.

Further, as far as the fourth point is concerned, probably no one will object, in principle, to the necessity for

Social-Democrats to advance the demand for the abolition of all remnants of feudal dependence. What will need clarification will probably be only the formulation of that demand, as well as its extent, i.e., whether it should include, for example, measures for abolishing the *factual* corvée dependence of the peasants that was created by the cutting-off of peasant lands in 1861.¹⁰⁴ In our opinion this question should be decided in the affirmative. The tremendous significance of the actual survival of corvée (labour-service) economy has been fully established in literature, as has also the tremendous retardation of social development (and the development of capitalism) caused by this survival. The development of capitalism, of course, is leading up to, and will in the end result in, the elimination of these survivals "of their own accord, in a natural way." But, first, these survivals are extraordinarily tenacious, so that their rapid elimination is not to be expected; secondly—and mainly—the "natural way" means nothing other than the dying-out of the peasants who, *in point of fact* (due to labour-service, etc.), are tied to the soil and enslaved by the landlords. It stands to reason that under these circumstances the Social-Democrats cannot allow their programme to be silent on this question. It may be asked: How could this demand be implemented? We think it unnecessary to deal with this in the programme. The implementation of this demand (as of almost all others in this section, depending on the strength of the revolutionary elements among the peasantry) will, of course, necessitate a detailed examination of local conditions by local, elective, peasant committees as a counterweight to the Committees of Nobles¹⁰⁵ that accomplished their "legal" plunder in the sixties; the democratic demands of the programme adequately define the democratic institutions required for this purpose. This would be precisely the "radical revision of agrarian relations" of which the programme of the Emancipation of Labour group speaks. As we said above, we agree in principle with this point of the Emancipation of Labour group's draft and would only: 1) specify the conditions under which the proletariat can struggle for the class interests of the peasantry; 2) define the *character* of the revision—the aboli-

tion of the remnants of feudal dependence; 3) express the demands more precisely.

We foresee another objection: a re-examination of the question of cut-off lands, etc., should lead to the return of those lands to the peasantry. This is obvious. But will this not strengthen small property, small holdings? Can the Social-Democrats desire the replacement of the big capitalist economy, which is perhaps being conducted on the lands plundered from the peasantry, by small economy? This would, indeed, be a *reactionary* measure!

We answer: undoubtedly the substitution of small-scale for large-scale economy is reactionary, and we must not favour it. But the demand we are discussing is *conditioned* by the aim of "abolishing the remnants of feudal dependence"; consequently, it cannot lead to the fragmentation of big holdings; it applies only to old holdings that are, in essence, based purely on the corvée system; *in relation to them* a peasant holding, free of all medieval impediments (cf. point 3) is *progressive*, *not reactionary*. It is, of course, not easy to draw a line of demarcation here, but we do not believe that any one demand in our programme can be "easily" realised. Our role is to outline the basic principles and basic tasks; those who will be called upon to decide these problems in practice will know how to consider the details.

The purpose of last point is identical with that of the preceding: the struggle against all remnants of the *pre-capitalist mode of production* (so abundant in the Russian countryside). It will be remembered that the renting of land by peasants in Russia very often serves to conceal survivals of corvée relations. The idea for this last point was borrowed from Kautsky, who pointed out that, in relation to Ireland, even Gladstone's liberal administration had enacted a law in 1881 granting the courts the right to reduce excessively high rents, and included in the number of desirable demands: "The reduction of exorbitant rents by courts especially set up for this purpose" (*Reduzierung übermässiger Pachtzinsen durch dazu eingesetzte Gerichtshöfe*). This would be particularly useful in Russia (given the condition, of course, of the courts being democratically organised) in the sense that it would eliminate corvée relations. We think that to this we could also add the

demand for the extension of the laws on usury to cover enslaving agreements; in the Russian village, bondage is so widespread, so heavily oppressive to the peasant in his *capacity as a worker*, so exceedingly obstructive to social progress, that the struggle against it is particularly necessary. And it would not be more difficult for a court to establish the enslaving, usurious character of an agreement, than to establish the excessive nature of rent.

In general, the demands we propose reduce themselves, in our opinion, to two main objectives: 1) to abolish all *pre-capitalist*, feudal institutions and relations in the countryside (the complement to these demands being contained in the first section of the practical part of the programme); 2) to give the class struggle in the countryside a more open and conscious character. We believe that precisely these principles should serve as a guide for the Social-Democratic "agrarian programme" in Russia. It is necessary to dissociate ourselves resolutely from the attempts, so numerous in Russia, to *smooth down* the class struggle in the countryside. The dominant liberal-Narodnik tendency is distinguished precisely by this feature, but, in resolutely rejecting it (as was done in the "Appendix to the Report of the Russian Social-Democrats at the International Congress in London"), we should not forget that we must take particular note of the revolutionary content of Narodism. "To the extent that Narodism was revolutionary, i.e., came out against the social-estate, bureaucratic rule and against the barbarous forms of exploitation and oppression of the people which the state supported, to that extent Narodism had to be included, with relevant amendments, as a component part of the programme of Russian Social-Democracy" (Axelrod, *Present Tasks and Tactics*, p. 7). Two basic forms of the class struggle are today intertwined in the Russian countryside: 1) the struggle of the peasantry against the privileged landed proprietors and against the remnants of serfdom; 2) the struggle of the emergent rural proletariat against the rural bourgeoisie. For Social-Democrats the second struggle, of course, is of greater importance; but they must also indispensably support the first struggle *to the extent that it does not contradict* the interests of social development.

It is no accident that the peasant question has always occupied and continues to occupy such a prominent place in Russian society and in the Russian revolutionary movement: this fact is a reflection of the great, significance still retained by the first of the two forms of struggle.

In conclusion, there is one possible misunderstanding against which we should be on guard. We spoke of Social-Democracy's "revolutionary appeal" to the peasants. Does this not mean diffusion, is it not harmful to the essential concentration of forces for work among the industrial proletariat? Not in the least; the necessity for such a concentration is recognised by *all* Russian Social-Democrats; it figures in the draft of the Emancipation of Labour group (1885) and again in the pamphlet, *The Tasks of the Russian Social-Democrats* (1898). Consequently, there are absolutely no grounds at all to fear that the Social-Democrats will split their forces. A programme is not an instruction; a programme must embrace the *whole* movement, and in practice, of course, first one and then another aspect of the movement has to be brought into the foreground. No one will dispute the necessity to speak in the programme of rural, as well as industrial, workers, although in the present situation there is not a single Russian Social-Democrat who would think of calling upon the comrades to go to the village. The working-class movement, however, even apart from our efforts, will inevitably lead to the spread of democratic ideas in the countryside. "Agitation based on economic interests will inevitably lead Social-Democratic circles directly up against facts that show clearly the closest solidarity of interests between our industrial proletariat and the peasant masses" (Axelrod, *ibid.*, p. 13). For this reason an "*Agrarprogramm*" (*in the sense indicated*; strictly speaking, of course, it is not an "agrarian programme" at all) is an absolute necessity for Russian Social-Democrats. In our propaganda and agitation we constantly come upon peasant-workers, that is, factory-workers who retain their connections with the village, who have relatives or a family in the village and who travel back and forth. Questions of land redemption payments, collective liability, and rent are of vital interest even to large numbers of metropolitan

workers (to say nothing of the workers in the Urals, for example, amongst whom Social-Democratic propaganda and agitation has begun to find its way). We should be remiss in performing our duty, if we did not take care to give precise guidance to Social-Democrats and class-conscious workers who go to the village. Nor should we forget the rural intelligentsia, elementary school teachers, for instance. The latter are so humiliated, materially and spiritually, they observe so closely and know from their own experience the lack of rights and the oppression of the people, that there can be no doubt at all of the sympathetic reception among them of Social-Democratic ideas (given the further growth of the movement).

These then, in our opinion, should be the component parts of a programme of the Russian Social-Democratic working-class party: 1) a statement on the basic character of the economic development of Russia; 2) a statement on the inevitable result of capitalism: the growth of poverty and the increasing indignation of the workers; 3) a statement on the class struggle of the proletariat as the basis of our movement; 4) a statement on the final aims of the Social-Democratic working-class movement—on its striving to win political power for the accomplishment of these aims—and on the international character of the movement; 5) a statement on the essentially political nature of the class struggle; 6) a statement to the effect that the Russian absolutism, which conditions the lack of rights and the oppression of the people and patronises the exploiters, is the chief hindrance to the working-class movement, and that the winning of political liberty, essential in the interests of the entire social development, is, therefore, the most urgent political task of the Party; 7) a statement to the effect that the Party will support all parties and sections of the population that struggle against the autocracy and will combat the demagogic intrigues of our government; 8) the enumeration of the basic democratic demands; then, 9) demands for the benefit of the working class; and 10) demands for the benefit of the peasantry, with an explanation of the general character of these demands.

We are fully conscious of the difficulty of providing a completely satisfactory formulation of the programme

without a number of conferences with comrades; but we consider it essential to set about this task, believing (for the reasons indicated above) that postponement is impermissible. We hope to receive the aid of all the theoreticians of the Party (headed by the members of the Emancipation of Labour group), as well as of all socialists doing practical work in Russia (not only of Social-Democrats: it would be very desirable to hear the opinion of socialists of other groups and we would not refuse to publish their opinion), and the aid of all class-conscious workers.

A RETROGRADE TREND IN RUSSIAN SOCIAL-DEMOCRACY

The Editorial Board of *Rabochaya Mysl* has published a *Separate Supplement* to "*Rabochaya Mysl*" (September 1899), for the purpose of "dispelling the mass of misunderstanding and indefiniteness that exists with regard to the trend of *Rabochaya Mysl* (such as our 'renunciation of politics')." (From the Editorial Board.) We are very glad that *Rabochaya Mysl* is at last raising programmatic questions which, until now, it sought to ignore, but we emphatically protest against the statement that the "trend of *Rabochaya Mysl* is that of progressive Russian workers" (as the Editorial Board declares in the cited text). In fact, if the Editorial Board of *Rabochaya Mysl* wants to follow the path indicated (so far only *indicated*) in that publication, this means that it has falsely understood the programme elaborated by the founders of Russian Social-Democracy, a programme that has to-date had the adherence of all Russian Social-Democrats working in Russia; it means that it is taking a *step backwards* with respect to the level of theoretical and practical development already attained by Russian Social-Democracy.

The *Rabochaya Mysl* trend is expounded in the leading article of the *Separate Supplement* entitled "Our Reality" (signed: *R. M.*), which article we must now analyse in the greatest detail.

From the very beginning of the article we see that *R. M.* gives a *false* description of "our reality" in general, and of our working-class movement in particular, that he reveals an extremely narrow conception of the working-class