

Concluding remarks (24th Session, pp. 432-437)

Truthfully ~~Personally speaking, one has to wonder about the~~ *the anxiety which caused*
~~commotion (excitement, brooha?) I created, into which my~~
critics ~~had~~ just because I tried to illuminate in a serious
way the relationship of the proletariat to the bourgeoisie
in our revolution. *seems odd to me* After all, there is no doubt that pre-
cisely this relationship, precisely the definition, above all,
of the position of the proletariat in relation to its
social antipode to the bourgeoisie, *constitutes* ~~represents~~ the core
of the dispute, is the most important axis of proletarian
politics around which *crystallized* ~~crystallized~~ the relationship to all
other classes and groups to the petty bourgeoisie, to the
peasantry, etc. *is* And if ~~we approach the result that the~~ *once we approach to conclude*
bourgeois in our revolution does not play (and cannot ~~play~~)
the role of leader of the proletarian movement, then in its
very essence *it is due to the fact* their politics is counter-revolutionary,
whereas we, in *accordance* ~~correspondence~~ with this, declare that the
proletariat must look ~~to~~ *not* itself, not as a helper of bour-
geois liberalism, but as a vanguard to the revolutionary move-
ment, *which defines* ~~setting~~ its politics, not dependent on other classes, *but*
~~and following exclusively the~~ *deriving it* ~~from its own~~ class tasks and interests.

to further develop the ~~The relationship of the right wing of the party to~~ *allow me to take advantage of this opportunity briefly*
the peasant question ~~is determined, as is the question for the~~
relation to the bourgeoisie with a certain readiness of the
previously referred to schema towards which *P* Plekhanov said:
"for us Marxists the working peasant, as he appears in *the* con-
temporary commodity-capitalist milieu, represents only one
of the many petty independent commodity producers *therefore, not without reason, the crisis*

petty bourgeoisie."

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The bourgeoisie is a class
of society other than that
of the proletariat. The petty
bourgeoisie is a class
of society other than that
of the proletariat.

From this follows that the peasant, like
the petty-bourgeoisie, is a reactionary element of society,
and he who considers him revolutionary is an idealist who
subordinates the independent politics of the proletariat
to the influence of the petty bourgeoisie.

Can
the
peasant
be
revolutionary?

Such an argument is, after all, only a classic
metaphysical thinking according to the formula:

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First of all, to try to make a mechanical trans-
position of the schema about the peasantry as a petty-bourgeois
reactionary layer, onto the peasantry in a revolutionary
period, is doubtless a perversion of the historical dialectic.

What concerns the peasantry, then, is despite its
confusion and the contradictoriness of its needs, despite
its confusing aims of varied colors, in the present revolution,
an objectively revolutionary factor since, standing on the
order of the day of the revolution, in its sharpest form the
question of a land overturn and it thereby brings out the
very question which is insoluble within the limits of a
bourgeois society, and therefore goes outside of the limits
of this society. It may be that just as soon as the waves
of revolution will recede, just as soon as the land question
finds in the end one or another solution in the spirit of
bourgeois private property, substantial layers of the Russian
peasantry will be transformed again into a clearly reaction-
ary petty bourgeois party in the form of a peasant union
(Bavarian Bauerbund). But so long as the revolution is
continuing, so long as the agrarian question is not regulated
he is not only a political rock against absolutism, but
the social sphinx for the whole Russian bourgeoisie and

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therefore the independent ferment for revolution; giving it,
 together with the city proletarian movement that wide ^{expansive} ~~expansive~~ *expansive*
 which relates to the national movement. From this flows
 the socialist utopian coloring of the peasant movement in
 Russia which does not at all ^{relate to demagogy} ~~relate to demagogy~~ *relate to demagogy* for the party
 of the Social Revolutionaries. ^{It is enough to remember} ~~It is enough to remember~~ *It is enough to remember*
 the Peasant War in Germany ^{under Thomas Munzer} ~~under Thomas Munzer~~ *under Thomas Munzer*.

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Concluding
THE ENDING SPEECH

Matthew 5:31. "But let your communication be
Yes, yes; Nay, nay! for whatsoever is
more than these cometh of evil!"

First of all I have to explain certain misunderstandings which arose from the accidental circumstance that because of lack of time I was forced to stop nearly at the half point the examination of the basic views on the issue of the relationship of the proletariat to the bourgeois parties. Particularly favorable for my critics was the circumstance that I did not have the chance to illuminate in more detail the relationship of the proletariat to petty bourgeois trends, and particularly to the peasantry. How many far-reaching conclusions were drawn from that fact! I was speaking only of the relationship of the proletariat to the bourgeoisie, and that - according to com. Martov - is simply identification of the role of the proletariat with the role of all other classes except the bourgeoisie in the present revolution - in other words, it ~~means~~ means the same "left block", which erases the class separation of the proletariat and subordinates it to the influence of the petty bourgeoisie - that same "left block", which comrades bolsheviks defend.

According to the speaker from Bund, from the fact that I dealt exclusively with the politic of the proletariat towards the bourgeoisie, clearly follows something just opposite, namely that I completely negate the role of the peasantry and the left block, and so that my position is just the opposite to the comrades bolsheviks. Finally, another speaker from Bund went even further in his ~~unmerciful~~ unmerciful critique stating that to speak only of the proletariat as a revolutionary class borders with outright anarchism. So as you see, the conclusions are quite varied and come together only on one point, that all in the same degree are supposed to be deadly for me.

Truthfully speaking, the anxiety which seized my critics because I illuminated ~~mainly~~ the reciprocal relationship of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie in the present revolution seems odd to me. It is beyond any doubt, that it is that precise relationship, precisely the definition of above all the relationship of the proletariat to its social antipode, the bourgeoisie, that constitutes the central point of the issue, that it is the main axis of the proletarian politic, around which are already crystallising its relationships to other classes and groups, to petty bourgeoisie, peasantry and others. And if we come to the conclusion that the bourgeoisie does not play and in the present revolution cannot play the role of the leader of the liberation movement, ~~that because of the very essence of its politic it is counterrevolutionary, when in accordance with this we state, that the proletariat has to deem itself not a helpful part of the bourgeois liberalism but a vanguard of revolutionary movement, which defines its politic, not depending on other classes but derives it only from its own tasks and class interests, when we say that the proletariat is not only the ^{guide} guide of the bourgeoisie but is called to lead independent politic -- when we say all this, then it should be clear, that the conscious proletariat should utilize all revolutionary peoples movements, subordinating them to its leadership and its class politic. Particularly when it comes to the revolutionary peasantry, no one could doubt, that we are not forgetting its existence and are far from passing over in silence the issue of the relationship of the proletariat to it. The directives for the social-democratic faction in Duma, deposited by to the congress a few days ago by the Polish comrades, among them by me, contained on this issue a totally clear and precise statement.~~

I will take advantage of this opportunity to, even in few words, touch closer on that issue. About the relationship of the right

wing of our party to the peasant question decides -- as on the bourgeois question -- a certain ready, made ahead of time schema under which one classifies the real relationships. "For us, marxists -- says com. Plekhanov -- the working peasant such as he is under the contemporary commodity-capitalist conditions, is no more than one of the forms of small, independent commodity producers, and small, independent commodity producers, not without basis, we count among the petty-bourgeoisie." From this one concludes, that the peasant, as petty-bourgeois, is a reactionary social element and he, who considers him a revolutionary element -- he idealizes him, he subordinates the independent proletarian politic to the influence of petty-bourgeoisie.

*7/11/1918
Plekhanov*

The ~~set forth~~ argument is, after all, only a classic example of the infamous metaphysical way of thinking according to the formula: "Yea, yea; no, no. And what's over and above this is, from evil is". The bourgeoisie is the revolutionary class -- and what's over and above this is, from evil is. Peasantry is a reactionary class -- and what's over and above this is, from evil is. There is no doubt that the peasant's characteristics contained in the mentioned quote are true, if one considers the so-called normal, quiet periods of the existence of this society. But even within those limits it errs on the side of serious limitations and one-sidedness. In Germany ever more numerous layers not only of the agrarian proletariat, but also the small peasantry, come closer to the socialdemocracy, proving, that to talk about the peasantry as a totally monolithic class of reactionary petty-bourgeoisie -- is to certain degree, dry and impracticable schema. And in this non-differentiated yet class of Russian peasantry, which was put in motion by the present revolution, are significant layers not only of our temporary political ally, but also our future natural comrades. Thus resigning from submitting them already now to our leadership and our influence would be sectarianism, unforgivable in a leading force of the revolution.

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First of all, however, the mechanical transmittal of a schema of the peasantry, as a petty-bourgeois, reactionary layer, onto the role of this peasantry in the revolutionary period is undoubtedly a transgression with regard to historical dialectics. The role of the peasantry and the relationship of the proletariat to it is defined the same way as the role of the bourgeoisie, not according to subjective desires and aims of those classes, but according to their objective situation. The Russian bourgeoisie is, despite the oral statements and printed liberal programs, objectively a reactionary class, because its interests in the present social and historical situation demand a quick liquidation of the revolutionary movement by concluding a rotten compromise with absolutism. In ~~the case of~~ peasantry, despite the whole confusion and contradictions in its demands, despite the foggy exhibiting a play of colors character of its aims -- it is in the present revolution an objectively revolutionary agent, because by ~~putting on the agenda of the revolution~~ the issue of agrarian turnover in its sharpest form, it puts forth an issue, which cannot be solved in the framework of bourgeois society and which by its nature, is outside the framework of that society. It is very possible, that as soon as the waves of the revolution subside, when the agrarian question will find this or other solution in the spirit of the bourgeois private property, large layers of the Russian peasantry will transform themselves into an openly reactionary petty-bourgeois party, the kind of Bavarian Bauernbund. But as long as the revolution continues, as long as the agrarian question is not solved, it is not only a political underwater reef for the absolutism, but a social sphinx for the whole Russian bourgeoisie, and because of it it con-

independent Bund
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stitutes an autonomous form of the revolution, giving it in cooperation with the urban proletarian movement that wide momentum, which characterises the vehement people's movements. From that flows the socialist-utopian coloration of the peasant movement in Russia, which is not at all a fruit of the artificial grafting and demagogy on the part of s.-r., but it accompanied all the great peasant uprisings of the bourgeois society. It is enough to remember the peasant wars in Germany and the name of Tomasz Münzer.

But just because the peasant movements are in the whole* nature utopian and hopeless, they are absolutely not capable of playing an independent role and in every historical situation they subordinate themselves to the leadership of other, more active and crystallised classes. In France the revolutionary urban bourgeoisie energetically supported the peasant uprisings -- the so-called *Jacquerie*. If in middle-age Germany the leadership of the peasant wars went not into the hands of progressive bourgeoisie, but into the hands of the reactionary malcontent small nobility, it happened because the German bourgeoisie -- as a result of historical backwardness of Germany -- was realising the first phase of its class emancipation only in a deformed ideological form of religious reformation, and because of its weakness, instead of gladly greeting the peasant wars, it was afraid of them and threw itself into the reaction's embrace, similarly as now the Russian liberalism, afraid of the proletarian and peasant movement, is throwing itself into reaction's embrace. It is clear, that the political leadership of the chaotic peasant movement and its subordination to the influence of the conscious proletariat is presently in Russia the natural historic task of that conscious proletariat.

If the proletariat refused that role fearing for purity of its socialist program, it would find itself on the level of a doctrinaire sect, and not on the level of the natural historic leader of the whole of the wronged in the bourgeois system, the leader, which it is according to the spirit of the theory of scientific socialism. Let us remember that passage from Marx, in which he says that the proletariat is called on to be the warrior for all wronged.

Let us return, however, to the issue of the relationship to the bourgeoisie. I will not, of course, seriously answer the accusations and criticisms from the representatives of Bund. The whole political wisdom of Bund is reduced, as is shown, to the simple thesis: not to rely on any firm and defined principles, to exploit the convenient sides of each situation. With that miserable political wisdom the comrades from Bund want to be guided equally in the relationship to factions within our party, as to the different classes in the Russian revolution. In the intra-party relationships that position is reduced not to the role of independent political centrum, but to a politic calculating ahead of time on the existance of two different factions. Projected onto the wide ocean of the Russian revolution, that politic leads to most laudable results. That politic, whose advocates are the representatives from Bund, reduces itself to the well known slogan of the German opportunists: to the politic "von Fall zu Fall" ** from event to event, or if you like, from fall to fall (applause).

* Probably instead of this word it should be "their".--Note of the editors of Minutes.

** Criticising the opportunistic tactic of Bund, Rosa Luxemburg used here, especially re. Abramovich /Rein/, a sharp characteristic, comparing Bund's tactic to the behaviour of ~~sucksters~~. Those words almost led to breaking the congress. Bund'ists requested, that RL takes back those words. RL, supported by other delegates from SDKPiL, refused the Bund's request. After long negotiations, the issue was resolved by removing from minutes that part of RL's speech offending Bund'ists.

The Bund's face, which was so clearly shown to us, is important and interesting not so much for characterizing it, but considering their alliance with the mensheviks and their support of them in this congress. Bund underlines the trend of the politics of comrades mensheviks.

Com. Plekhanov accused me of representing in certain sense marxism, which evaporated and is floating above clouds. Com. Plekhanov, polite even when it is not his intention, really made me in this case a compliment. A marxist, if he wants to understand the course of events, should observe the relationships not crawling on the low ground of everyday and momentary situation, but from a certain theoretical height, and that height, from which one should observe the course of the Russian revolution, is the international development of the class bourgeois society and accomplished by it the degree of ripeness. Com. Plekhanov and his friends accused me bitterly, that I draw such tempting and splendid perspectives of the present revolution, as though the Russian proletariat could expect only the great victories. It is totally wrong. My critics ascribe to me in this case a view totally foreign to me, that the proletariat could and should develop in all its length and with all decisiveness its fighting tactic only under the condition, that it will have guaranteed only victories. Just the opposite, I think, that bad is a leader and sad is an army, which would accept a fight only when it has the victory in its pocket from the outset. Just the opposite, I not only do not have any intentions of promising the Russian proletariat a series of undoubted victories, but I rather think, that if the working class, faithful to its historical duty, will ever widen its fighting tactic and make it more decisive according to the deepening contradictions and wider perspectives of the revolution -- it could find itself in an unusually complicated and difficult situation. What's more, I even think, that if the working class will rise to its task, i.e. it will by its actions lead the course of revolutionary events to the last limits permitted by objective development of social relations, then almost inevitably awaits it at those limits a temporary setback. I think, however, that the Russian proletariat should have the courage and the resolute will to face all, which is prepared for it by the historical development, that it should in necessity, even for the price of sacrifices, play in this revolution - in relationship to the world proletarian army - that role of a vanguard, revealing new contradictions, new tasks and new ways of the class struggle, as was played by the French proletariat in the 19th century. I think that the Russian proletariat should lead itself in its tactic not at all by counting on defeat or victory, but to work out exclusively from its class historical tasks, remembering, the proletariat's defeats arising from the revolutionary momentum of its class struggle, are only local and temporary appearances of its world movement forward as a whole, since those defeats are inevitable historical steps leading to the ultimate victory of socialism.

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 26 "Voschrittler" (progressives). Here a party of "progressives" created in Prussia in 1861. The politics of that party on the issues of uniting, constitution and general election law was the subject of its fight with Lassalle. Towards the end of 19th century started the disintegration of that party. -- 594.

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