

VLADIMIR ILYICH LENIN'S THEORY OF PERSUASION
AS A REVOLUTIONARY STRATEGY

by

John R. E. Bliese
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Redacted Signature

Instructor in charge

Redacted Signature

For the department

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In March, 1917, the Romanovs, one of the greatest royal families of Europe, ceased to rule. Within a few short months, the entire structure of Russian society had been drastically altered. For a few brief months Russia experimented with a form of democracy, and that, too, was swept away. The 1917 Russian Revolution was truly one of the great events in the history of the West, having tremendous consequences for our century. The causes of so great an event must be many and varied; however, this much seems certain: the persuasive attempts of the Bolsheviks contributed to their eventual success. Their use of persuasion was based on the ideas of their great leader, Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, better known by his revolutionary pseudonym, Lenin. It is the purpose of this study to examine and present the ideas of persuasion as a revolutionary strategy as they appear in Lenin's written works.

Perhaps a brief discussion of the events leading up to 1917 would place this study in its proper per-

spective. Russia was a country suffering constant ferment in the nineteenth century; whether the ferment was overt or covert depended on the policies of each czar. At the beginning of the nineteenth century Russia was by all Western standards a backward country. Peter the Great had started the land on the road to westernization and industrialization a century before, but she still lagged far behind the rest of Europe. Russia was almost entirely an agrarian country, a land of great estates worked by peasants who were bound to the land--the institution known as serfdom. Yet, not even Russia escaped the effects of the French Revolution, and many liberal ideas found their way into her intellectual class.

When Czar Alexander I died the first major incident indicating discontent broke out: the Decembrist Revolution of 1825. It was a poorly organized, poorly conceived, and abortive revolt, but some martyrs were made, symbols which subsequent revolutionaries could and did utilize. Under Alexander's successor, his brother Nicholas I, liberal concepts were mercilessly suppressed; his reign was a reactionary one. However, defeat in the Crimean War proved the need for change in internal policies.

Nicholas was succeeded by Alexander II, who was the first czar to enact any of the liberals' ideas. It

was during his reign that serfdom was abolished, for which he became known as the Czar Liberator. However, the conditions of emancipation were such that many peasants were little better off than before; the conditions for obtaining land were difficult and harsh in relation to the peasants' ability to pay.

The emancipation of the serfs created a condition crucial for Russian development: it allowed an industrial laboring class to develop. While the serfs were tied to their land, there was little labor supply in the cities, therefore little chance of industrialization. With the freeing of the serfs, industries could be established, and soon were; huge industries, built with governmental subsidization, they did not evolve from numerous small plants, but were originally built as tremendous structures. Thus, by 1917, the Russian economy was marked by relatively few industrial complexes, but those few were huge by any standard. Their size became crucial later when a strike broke out, for example, at the Thornton textile works, or some other factory. Even though only one factory may have been involved, the strike still affected a sizable portion of the Russian economy. However, the industrial development was only beginning during the reign of Alexander II.

As the face of Russia was drastically changing,

the political structure remained relatively static. The changes were directed almost entirely from above; the Russian czar remained an autocrat. In fact, even during the reign of Nicholas II there was no Prime Minister as such; each minister was responsible individually and independently to the czar, a situation which created much intra-cabinet rivalry. Russia underwent none of the liberal or democratic development in government which Western Europe had experienced. There was no parliament, there were no national elections, indeed, there usually was tight censorship which attempted to keep out all liberal ideas. Although Alexander II instituted a number of reforms--for example, he reorganized the army, reduced military service, and instituted trial by jury--the government was carefully kept autocratic. All reforms were by the whim of the czar, and could be revoked at will.

Naturally, many of those who had come into contact with Western ideas were dissatisfied. Since there was no opposition in government, no legal newspapers or journals for voicing opposition, no freedom of assembly, any who firmly held opposing convictions were forced to operate underground against the government. There was no chance of influencing the government from the outside, so the only hope was to overthrow it, and that was precisely what many concluded. An alienated group of

intellectuals developed in Russia, and it was through that group that revolutionary ideas were introduced into and spread throughout the country.

A number of attempts on the life of Alexander II were made and finally, in 1881, the revolutionaries succeeded. He was replaced by his son, Alexander III, who, reacting to the murder of his father, tightened the control over the entire country. The revolutionary intelligentsia were ruthlessly hunted and imprisoned, exiled or executed. Alexander III's reign was a period of reaction. Russia experienced further economic development, but liberal ideas were excluded from the government, economy, and, indeed, the entire country.

Alexander III died in 1894 and was succeeded by his son, Nicholas II, the last of the Romanovs. Nicholas seems to have been generally unfit to rule a great empire: he could not make decisions and carry them through. His advisers constantly suffered because he often told each one simply what he thought that one wanted to hear. As is well known, his son was a hemophilic, which eventually caused Nicholas to come under the complete control of the notorious monk Rasputin.

Nicholas' unhappy reign was marked by several crucial events. The first was the Russo-Japanese War, which went very badly for Russia. While the war was an indecisive one, it nevertheless proved that Japan could

stop the huge Russian empire, that an Asian nation was at least the equal of a European one. The war was an unpopular one in Russia, largely because it was unsuccessful. Furthermore, the nation was asked to make economic sacrifices to keep up war production. Labor unrest, as a result, increased until in January, 1905, Father Gapon led a peaceful group of laborers to the Winter Palace to present a petition to Nicholas asking that he redress certain grievances. For some reason, as the massed workers stood in front of the Palace, the guards opened fire; the day was known thereafter as Bloody Sunday. For the first time a significant number of Russians concluded that the czar was not after all their father-benefactor. This massacre marked a turning point in Russian history.

After Bloody Sunday, revolution broke out in earnest marked by an event unique in European history: a general strike. By October the internal unrest had grown so great that Czar Nicholas II was forced to make some concessions and, in the famous October Manifesto, he promised civil liberties and an elected Duma or parliament. The Duma began Russia's short experiment with democracy. In 1906 election regulations were enacted by the czar and elections were held for the first Duma. The czar had retained significant powers for himself, giving little real authority to parliament; neverthe-

less, he thought the first Duma too liberal and dissolved it. A second Duma was elected, more liberal than the first, and it was quickly dissolved. In 1907 the laws were changed to give the aristocracy the deciding voice in elections, and a third Duma was elected which met for three years. In 1912 the fourth Duma was elected and met until March, 1917.

Out of the 1905 Revolution one other institution emerged which was to play a crucial role in Russian history: the Soviet. In St. Petersburg the laborers or proletariat formed a council (Soviet) to direct and coordinate their actions. The Soviet constituted a rival authority to the government. It elected as its president Lev Davidovitch Bronstein, better known by his revolutionary pseudonym, Leon Trotsky.

From 1907 to 1914 there were few events of remarkable significance. The revolutionary groups attempted to work among the people, propagandizing for their ideologies, and the government attempted to break up the groups. By 1912, however, war was threatening Europe, and in 1914 it broke out in full force. The First World War was to be the downfall of czarist Russia.

The war had devastating effects on Russia. The Russian army suffered incredible losses. The Russian economy was almost entirely converted to war production, with disastrous results. The cities and the army de-

pended on the peasants to produce their food. However, as the economy was transformed for war production, consumer goods became increasingly scarce. Consequently, there was less and less for the peasants to purchase with the money they received for their products. Finally, the government liquor monopoly seems to have provided the major available product. During the course of the war, however, Rasputin persuaded the czar to forbid the sale of liquor, claiming it had demoralizing effects on the populace. There was, finally, almost no incentive for the peasants to sell their products since there was almost nothing for them to purchase. Therefore, the peasants were probably as well off as ever before, having far more than enough meat and grain for their own consumption, while the cities and army went hungry. The economy was also run down, as capital equipment wore out and was not replaced, since nearly all immediate production was devoted to war materials. By 1917 the economy was in almost complete collapse.

The autocracy could not survive the combined effects of military disasters, demoralization at the course of the war, a broken economy, and loss of respect for the government due largely to the image of Rasputin. In March the people of St. Petersburg revolted, a Provisional Government was established on the basis of the Duma, and the Emperor and Autocrat of All the Russias,

Nicholas II, abdicated; the Romanov line had ended. Simultaneously with the Provisional Government, Soviets were established once again. There followed a period of dual authority in Russia. The Soviet in St. Petersburg seems to have had the actual power, but the Provisional Government had the claim to legitimacy. The Provisional Government reigned, the Soviet ruled. Neither desired to overthrow the other, and anarchy resulted.

Into the chaos in Russia stepped the leader of the Bolsheviks, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin. Lenin had exhibited revolutionary tendencies as early as his student days in Kazan, but did not actually enter the practice of revolution as a profession until 1894 when he went to St. Petersburg to practice law. He joined the Social Democrats there, and in 1896 was arrested, along with most of his group, when the first edition of their new newspaper was being distributed. He spent an entire year in prison before being sentenced to three years' exile in Siberia. Lenin spent these three years rather pleasantly, as the town to which he was sent had a reasonable climate and Krupskaya, whom he married, was exiled to the same town.

After his term ended, Lenin returned to St. Petersburg, but soon left Russia for the greater freedom of Western Europe. He spent the years until 1917 in the

West, writing, organizing, planning, fighting party battles with other Russian intellectuals, and generally attempting to build a group that could take power in Russia if a favorable situation presented itself.

When the March Revolution broke out, Lenin, then in Switzerland, naturally desired to return to Russia. Arrangements were made with the German government for Lenin and a number of other socialists to travel in a sealed railroad car to Russia via Sweden and Finland. Thus it was that in April, 1917, he arrived at the Finland Station in St. Petersburg, returning to a hero's welcome. Immediately he went to work condemning the Provisional Government, urging the Bolsheviks to prepare to take power for themselves. Lenin's personality was an overwhelming one; within a few weeks he had changed the course of the Bolshevik Party to his way of thinking. (During his absence the Party had to exercise a great deal of independence from the foreign center in day-to-day decisions. In April, all the leaders of the faction in Russia were against Lenin's stand on the war, and his attitude toward the Provisional Government. Within a short time, he had converted them all.)

In July there was a disturbance, perhaps designed to take power from the Provisional Government, which many attributed to the Bolsheviks. Lenin was forced to go into hiding in Finland; Bolshevik prestige for the

moment sank. Within a few weeks, however, their support returned, and, when General Kornilov made an abortive attempt to establish a military dictatorship, the Bolsheviks emerged as a truly strong party. By the end of October they were ready to take power. On the night of November 6 (N.S.)¹ they assumed power from their headquarters in the Smolny Institute; Lenin returned from Vyborg to head the Soviet government. The Bolsheviks were successful in obtaining power in St. Petersburg and in many of the major cities quite rapidly, but control over the countryside was not to be won without a bloody civil war. Nevertheless, by the middle of November, the revolution was successfully completed in the centers of power and the machinery of government was in Bolshevik hands.

Throughout the entire period summarized above the revolutionary intelligentsia made innumerable attempts to persuade the populace to become revolutionary also. From the "To the People" movements of the 1870's to the Bolsheviks' final victory in the civil war, one of the major weapons used by all of the intelligentsia was persuasion of one variety or another. Lenin himself made numerous attempts to persuade many and varied audiences, from Party caucuses to massed workers or peas-

¹For an explanation of dating systems see infra, pp. 14-15.

ants. Furthermore, for many the use of persuasion was a conscious action, well thought out in advance, and so it was for Lenin. Throughout his revolutionary career, that is, from 1894 to his death in 1924, Lenin wrote often of persuasion and persuasive strategies. It is such writings that this study will center upon, presenting and examining Lenin's theory of persuasion as a revolutionary strategy.

Approach Taken

At no time did Lenin systematically present his theory of persuasion as a revolutionary strategy. His writings on the subject appear throughout his written works, usually in connection with another specific subject. Lenin at no time wrote an entire "theory of rhetoric" but when, for example, a comrade was imprisoned and asked for advice Lenin replied indicating the manner in which he should use his trial to the best--i.e., most persuasive--advantage. Lenin's theory of persuasion appears in the larger context of politics, rather than as a self-contained rhetorical theory. Lenin usually wrote in refutation and therefore persuasion as a subject was almost always secondary.

Thus, this study will take the entirety of Lenin's written works and select material relevant to persuasion. The approach taken in this study is generally a

descriptive and analytical one. We will extract from Lenin's works his discussions of persuasion as a revolutionary strategy, present them here in a somewhat more systematic manner, and analyze them.

This writer realizes that a major danger of such a method lies in the fact that much of the material presented must be taken out of context. That is, Lenin did not present a theory of persuasion, but discussed persuasion on many different occasions and in relation to many different specific situations. Hence, a systematic presentation may distort Lenin's actual thought by the very fact that it is systematic. However, there appear to be no real problems in consistency when this is done. Lenin's thought, at least after 1902, seems consistent, and therefore seems to be systematic, even though in his writings it was not presented systematically. Therefore, the writer believes that this danger has been avoided.

Sources

Many studies have dealt with propaganda, and many propaganda studies have dealt with Russian propaganda. However, all such works which this writer consulted devoted, at most, one chapter to Lenin's use of propaganda and at best merely mentioned his theory of propaganda and agitation, around which this study will revolve. These studies then moved on to consider propa-

ganda under Stalin or Hitler. Almost no attention was given to Lenin and less to his thought. Therefore, the writer had to turn almost exclusively to Lenin's own works.

The edition of Lenin's Collected Works which was used was printed by two Moscow publishing houses, Progress Publishers and the Foreign Languages Publishing House. It totals thirty-eight volumes, which appeared from 1960 through 1967. Volumes one through nineteen and volume thirty-eight were published by the Foreign Languages Publishing House, appearing from 1960 through 1963; volumes twenty through thirty-seven were published by Progress Publishers from 1964 through 1967.²

Two notations must be made about this edition. The translator used British spellings rather than American, and quotations appearing in this study will naturally follow suit. Thus, "labor" appears as "labour," "organization" appears as "organisation," and "program" appears as "programme," to cite three of the more common instances.

Also, there is a problem of dating throughout the period in question, up to February, 1918. Prior to that date, Russia used the old style Julian Calendar which was thirteen days behind the Gregorian Calendar in the

²Cited hereinafter as: "Lenin, Works Vol. ___, p. ___. /Citation of the original work will follow./"

twentieth century, twelve days behind in the nineteenth century. On February 1, 1918, Russia adopted the standard Gregorian Calendar used throughout Western Europe and America. Thus, for most of the period covered in this study, two dates are commonly given for all events, a New Style date, abbreviated N.S., and an Old Style one, abbreviated O.S. Following common practice, this study will also date publications and events in both systems. In the footnotes the New Style date will always appear first, the Old Style date following in parentheses. In the text, the system used will always be indicated, and only one date will be given. The difference in dating, of course, explains why the Bolshevik Revolution is sometimes called the "October Revolution" and sometimes the "November Revolution," for it began on October 24, O.S., and on November 6, N.S.

Other than Lenin's works, the author consulted a number of the more important histories of the period in question. Such works, however, were generally not germane for this study, although they did provide excellent background material on the events about which Lenin wrote. The histories consulted may be found in the bibliography.

Precis of Chapters

Chapter II will be concerned with Lenin's concept of the necessity of persuasion. Orthodox Marxism would

lead to the belief in "spontaneous generation," the idea that economic development alone would cause the proletariat to become a truly revolutionary class. Lenin rejected the theory of spontaneous generation, contending that the proletariat spontaneously would only seek to satisfy their petty day-to-day economic needs. The proletariat, on its own, would never conclude that a complete political change was needed to solve their real problems. Lenin argued that the intelligentsia would have to bring class consciousness to the proletariat, and the method they would have to use, of course, would be persuasion. Thus, he justified the necessity of persuasion as a revolutionary strategy.

Chapter III will deal with the two central concepts of persuasion: "agitation" and "propaganda." Both concepts had a significant history before Lenin contacted them and made them an integral part of his revolutionary theory. The concept of propaganda will be traced generally back through the nineteenth century. The concept of agitation will be traced back to its origin in Poland late in the nineteenth century. Lenin contacted these two concepts and altered them, finally defining them in 1902. "Agitation" he defined as persuasion designed for the masses, presenting one idea and illustrating it. "Propaganda" he defined as persuasion for the intellectual elite, systematically presenting

many ideas as a theoretical whole.

Agitation and propaganda will then be considered from the point of view of the tasks they were to perform. At the most general level, all persuasive attempts were to be educational in nature. Lenin always argued that the masses simply needed to be told the truth about classes and class interests and they would immediately adopt their correct class beliefs and act accordingly. Thus, agitation and propaganda were to educate the masses to become class conscious.

Persuasion also had a number of specific tasks which will be considered: to increase support for the Party, disseminate socialistic ideas, propagate democratic ideas, and spread an understanding of the autocratic government.

On a number of occasions Lenin gave specific instructions to agitators which will also be discussed in Chapter III. Lenin advised the use of the spoken word for agitation, the written word for propaganda. He recommended adaptation to the audience in all cases and in all ways necessary for maximum effectiveness. He believed repetition and the use of examples to be two of the most effective techniques.

Chapter IV will deal with slogans. Lenin advocated the use of slogans as focal points for the content of all agitation and propaganda. The slogan, to be a cor-

rect one, had to be obtained from a detailed analysis of the social forces active at the time. If the slogan were incorrect, it was labeled a "mere phrase," often the conscious product of "phrasemongers," who were bourgeois in spirit and were therefore condemned.

Chapter V will deal with two issues somewhat tangential to the subject of persuasion. Organizational theories for the Social Democratic Party occupied much of Lenin's time and were crucial in his thought. His organizational concepts are relevant at several points to the topic of persuasion since he conceived of the Party as an organization designed to conduct agitation and propaganda in an autocratic state. Thus he advocated a tightly organized, highly centralized Party limited in membership to professional revolutionaries.

At several times Lenin discussed various media for persuasion, three of which will be considered in Chapter V. Lenin advocated the use of the Duma for best advantage, including the opportunity to introduce bills: the Social Democratic Bills should be agitational in nature. Second, he advised comrades facing trial on how best to use the courtroom as an agitational forum. He advised them to expose the trial as a fraud, if possible, but under all circumstances to include a speech on Party principles. Finally, the Party newspaper received much attention. The newspaper was conceived as primarily an

intra-Party organ; any outside circulation would be incidental. The paper would provide organizational contacts for the Party, would aid in preserving ideological unity and purity, and would help develop new agitators, propagandists, and organizers.

CHAPTER II

THE NECESSITY OF PERSUASION

As a Marxist, Lenin desired the eventual establishment of a communist society. However, in his writing he was more concerned with the immediate tasks on the road to that society than with the end result. His orientation was almost always toward the problems of the moment; he was more concerned with immediate tactics than with abstract concepts of the future. As a result, he introduced several new concepts into Marxism and rearranged the emphasis to be placed on the original concepts. One important revision was that, for Lenin, the class struggle had to come from outside the proletariat. As a revolutionary strategy persuasion was to play a role in arousing the proletariat to the class struggle. The role of persuasion seems to be a point at which Lenin introduced at least a difference in emphasis into Marxist theory, if not a complete innovation, for, as Bertrand Russell has stated, Marx expected little from persuasion.¹

¹Bertrand Russell, A History of Western Philosophy (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1945), p. 790.

In this chapter Lenin's basic concepts of the goal of persuasion will be presented. Such a presentation seems necessary to establish the role of persuasion as a revolutionary strategy since it does not appear to be intrinsic to pure Marxism. However, the role of persuasion will be discussed not as a revision of Marxism--that is beyond the scope of this study--but simply as Lenin himself presented it.

First, we must examine the goal Lenin desired to achieve as a revolutionary. His concern was how the class struggle could be won by the proletariat. Beyond this abstract goal of victory, Lenin seemed not to be concerned until he was actually presented with the concrete problems of government; until November, 1917 (N.S.), he dealt almost entirely with revolution, not with governing. Thus, successful revolution itself may be taken as Lenin's major goal.

For the proletariat to win a victory in the class struggle, the first prerequisite was that the proletariat be self-conscious, or, in Lenin's terms, develop class consciousness. Naturally, for consciousness of class interests to be developed, a definition of the term "class consciousness" was needed. Lenin seems to have arrived at such a definition quite early. In 1895 or 1896, while in prison in St. Petersburg, he wrote an explanation of a program for the Social Democratic Party

in which the term "class consciousness" is explicitly defined:

The workers' class-consciousness means the workers' understanding that the only way to improve their conditions and to achieve their emancipation is to conduct a struggle against the capitalist and factory-owner class created by the big factories. Further, the workers' class-consciousness means their understanding that the interests of all the workers of any particular country are identical, that they all constitute one class, separate from all the other classes in society. Finally, the class-consciousness of the workers means the workers' understanding that to achieve their aims they have to work to influence affairs of state, just as the landlords and the capitalists did, and are continuing to do now.²

In this early definition, class consciousness included three important characteristics: 1) realization of the necessity of struggle against the bourgeoisie, 2) an outlook national in scope, and 3) realization of the political aspect of the class struggle. Only the second characteristic was significantly altered in Lenin's later thought, in which an international outlook was to replace a national one.

In 1902, in What Is To Be Done? Lenin expanded the concept of class consciousness:

Working-class consciousness cannot be genuine political consciousness unless the workers are trained to respond to all cases of tyranny, oppression, violence, and abuse, no matter what class is affected--unless they are trained,

²Lenin, Works Vol. 2, pp. 112-13. "Explanation of the Programme for the Social-Democratic Party," written in 1895 or 1896, first published in 1924.

moreover, to respond from a Social-Democratic point of view and no other. The consciousness of the working masses cannot be genuine class-consciousness, unless the workers learn, from concrete, and above all from topical, political facts and events to observe every other social class in all the manifestations of its intellectual, ethical, and political life; unless they learn to apply in practice the materialist analysis and the materialist estimate of all aspects of the life and activity of all classes, strata, and groups of the population.³

In the expanded form, class consciousness included awareness of all aspects of life, not just economic aspects. Moreover, the emphasis is clearly placed on the political aspects; in fact, Lenin almost equated class consciousness with political consciousness. In actual practice, as will be seen when we come to the discussion of agitation and propaganda, Lenin changed his views drastically between 1896 and 1902. In 1896 he was primarily concerned with the immediate economic aspects of the workers' lives. By 1902 he had broadened his outlook to include the necessity, indeed, the predominance, of the political aspects of the class struggle, and he included this broader outlook in his definition of class consciousness.

Class consciousness, of course, was not to be taken as an end in itself. It was merely the prerequisite for waging class war, for carrying out in practice the theory

³Lenin, Works Vol. 5, p. 412. What Is To Be Done?, March, 1902. Italics here and throughout the chapter are in the original.

of class struggle. Lenin seems to have arrived at a definition of "class struggle" fairly early. In exile, in 1899, he wrote:

We are all agreed that our task is that of the organisation of the proletarian class struggle. But what is this class struggle? When the workers of a single factory or of a single branch of industry engage in struggle against their employer or employers, is this class struggle? No, this is only a weak embryo of it. The struggle of the workers becomes a class struggle only when all the foremost representatives of the entire working class of the whole country are conscious of themselves as a single working class and launch a struggle that is directed, not against individual employers, but against the entire class of capitalists and against the government that supports that class.⁴

For the moment, we must take this as a beginning, as a working definition he used at the beginning of his revolutionary career. There is one curious idea included in it, which may become clearer as we progress through Lenin's concepts of persuasion. Note that the struggle of workers against employers becomes a class struggle only when the "foremost representatives" of the workers obtain something resembling the 1896 definition of class consciousness, i.e., they must realize the necessity of struggle against the bourgeoisie, have an outlook national in scope, and realize the political aspect of the class struggle. What about the rest of the

⁴Lenin, Works Vol. 4, p. 215. Our Immediate Tasks, written in the last half of 1899, first published in 1925.

workers? Did they need class consciousness to make a class war out of a mere trade union struggle? If we go back to the definitions given in 1902 of the term "class consciousness" we will see an apparent change. In 1902, class consciousness referred to "the" workers, not "some" workers or "foremost representatives" of the workers. It would appear that Lenin's 1899 definition of "class struggle" may be a carry over from his days in St. Petersburg in 1894-1896, of which more later. After returning from exile, Lenin's works generally indicate whenever he used the term "foremost representatives of the working class" or a similar phrase, that he meant the proletariat as an entire class, as distinguished from, for example, the peasants. But the context in the case in question does not clarify the issue at all; indeed, it tends to confound it, as it appears that Lenin may have been referring to the Party. At least it is clear that Lenin regarded class consciousness as a means to an end, i.e., as a method of converting strikes and individual or even industry-wide labor activity into a genuine class struggle. It also appears that Lenin developed at least a vague notion of what that class struggle would be quite early. His later concepts will be presented as we deal with the various aspects of persuasion.

Before going further into an analysis of Lenin's

concept of the class struggle and the strategy of waging it, it must be pointed out that Lenin, consistent with orthodox Marxist analysis, was directly concerned only with the proletariat, i.e., the industrial workers. They were, he believed, the only truly revolutionary class. In this belief, Lenin seems to have been quite consistent even from his early, pre-exile years to later periods in his career. In 1894, in his first major polemical work, What the "Friends of the People" Are and How They Fight the Social-Democrats he wrote:

[The] position of the factory worker in the general system of capitalist relations makes him the sole fighter for the emancipation of the working class, for only the higher stage of development of capitalism, large-scale machine industry, creates the material conditions and the social forces necessary for this struggle.⁵

In 1897, while in exile, he wrote The Tasks of the Russian Social-Democrats:

. . . in the fight against the autocracy, the working class must single itself out, for it is the only thoroughly consistent and unre-served enemy of the autocracy, only between the working class and the autocracy is no compromise possible, only in the working class can democracy find a champion who makes no reservations, is not irresolute and does not look back. The hostility of all other classes, groups and strata of the population towards

⁵Lenin, Works Vol. 1, pp. 299-300. What the "Friends of the People" Are and How They Fight the Social-Democrats, 1894.

the autocracy is not unqualified; their democracy always looks back.⁶

The context of the above quotation clearly limits the meaning of the term "working class" to the proletariat. And, in 1909, he approved a resolution of the Bolsheviks which stated:

Only the proletariat can bring the democratic revolution to its consummation, the condition being that the proletariat, as the only thoroughly revolutionary class in modern society, leads the mass of the peasantry, and imparts political consciousness to its spontaneous struggle against landed proprietorship and the feudal state⁷

Note that in all three quotations Lenin pointed to the proletariat as the only class with which he was directly and immediately concerned. Thus, in his theory of persuasion as a revolutionary strategy, he was concerned with the proletariat as the primary intended receivers of the persuasive messages.

Having examined Lenin's definitions of the concepts of class consciousness and the class struggle, yet another term comes to the fore: "spontaneous generation." It was Lenin's rejection of the theory of spontaneous generation that led him to his theory of per-

⁶Lenin, Works Vol. 2, p. 335. The Tasks of the Russian Social-Democrats, written at the end of 1897, first published in Geneva in 1898.

⁷Lenin, Works Vol. 15, p. 362. "The Aim of the Proletarian Struggle in Our Revolution," Sotsial-Demokrat, No. 3, March 22 (9), 1909.

suasion as a revolutionary strategy. The theory of spontaneous generation was a pure Marxist concept, contending that the working class, if left on its own, would spontaneously take part in the class struggle against the bourgeoisie. It held that no outside forces were needed, that mere economic development alone would automatically lead to the development of the proletariat as a revolutionary class. Lenin seems to have opposed the theory of spontaneous generation at least as early as his period of exile. In 1899, in an article entitled "Apropos of the Profession de Foi," he took issue with spontaneity:

Can one find in history a single case of a popular movement, of a class movement, that did not begin with spontaneous, unorganised outbursts, that would have assumed an organised form and created political parties without the conscious intervention of enlightened representatives of the given class? If the working-class urge, spontaneous and indomitable, to engage in political struggle has so far taken mainly the form of unorganised outbursts, only Moskovskiye Vedomosti and Grazhdanin [two monarchist journals] can draw from this the conclusion that the Russian workers have not yet, in the mass, attained the maturity for political agitation. A socialist, on the contrary, will draw from it the conclusion that the time has long been ripe for political agitation.⁸

Lenin believed that "spontaneously" the working class would develop only trade union consciousness, not class

⁸Lenin, Works Vol. 4, p. 290. "Apropos of the Profession de Foi," written at the end of 1899, first published in 1924.

consciousness for the class struggle. All that the working class would achieve on their own would be a very primitive form of outbursts against individual employers or, at best, individual industries, designed to win concession to their simple, petty demands; no true antagonism against the bourgeoisie as a class would develop.

Lenin's views on spontaneity were more fully developed by 1902. He explained his position in What Is To Be Done?:

There is much talk of spontaneity. But the spontaneous development of the working-class movement leads to its subordination to bourgeois ideology, to its development along the lines of the Credo programme; for the spontaneous working-class movement is trade-unionism, is Nur-Gewerkschaftlerei, and trade-unionism means the ideological enslavement of the workers by the bourgeoisie. Hence, our task, the task of Social-Democracy, is to combat spontaneity, to divert the working-class movement from this spontaneous, trade-unionist striving to come under the wing of the bourgeoisie, and to bring it under the wing of revolutionary Social-Democracy. . . .

But why, the reader will ask, does the spontaneous movement, the movement along the line of least resistance, lead to the domination of bourgeois ideology? For the simple reason that bourgeois ideology is far older in origin than socialist ideology, that it is more fully developed, and that it has at its disposal immeasurably more means of dissemination. And the younger the socialist movement in any given country, the more vigorously it must struggle against all attempts to entrench non-socialist ideology, and the more resolutely the workers must be warned against the bad counsellors who shout against "overrating the conscious element," etc. . . .

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 It is often said that the working class spontaneously gravitates towards socialism.

This is perfectly true in the sense that socialist theory reveals the causes of the misery of the working class more profoundly and more correctly than any other theory, and for that reason the workers are able to assimilate it so easily, provided, however, this theory does not itself yield to spontaneity, provided it subordinates spontaneity to itself. Usually this is taken for granted, but it is precisely this which Rabocheye Dyelo [a political journal which advocated the "Economist" heresy] forgets or distorts. The working class spontaneously gravitates towards socialism; nevertheless, most widespread (and continuously and diversely revived) bourgeois ideology spontaneously imposes itself upon the working class to a still greater degree.

Rabochaya Mysl [another Economist journal] believes, however, that "politics always obediently follows economics" (Rabocheye Dyelo varies this thesis when it asserts in its programme that "in Russia more than in any other country, the economic struggle is inseparable from the political struggle"). If by politics is meant Social-Democratic politics, then the theses of Rabochaya Mysl and Rabocheye Dyelo are utterly incorrect. The economic struggle of the workers is very often connected (although not inseparably) with bourgeois politics, clerical politics, etc., as we have seen. Rabocheye Dyelo's theses are correct, if by politics is meant trade-union politics, viz., the common striving of all workers to secure from the government measures for alleviating the distress to which their condition gives rise, but which do not abolish that condition, i.e., which do not remove the subjection of labour to capital.⁹

Thus, by 1902, Lenin had come to the position that spontaneity was something to be combatted by all good Social Democrats. Notice, of course, that this position

⁹Lenin, Works Vol. 5, pp. 384-87. What Is To Be Done?, March, 1902.

was adopted for the purpose of refutation.¹⁰ The Credo program was a document which favored the idea of spontaneity, of letting the workers develop their own class consciousness. It was an example of the heresy of "Economism," which Lenin often labeled, "Tail-ism." However, it is important to note his position that the workers could not on their own develop anything but bourgeois trade union consciousness. This meant that the socialists, those who were to lead the workers in the class struggle, had two tasks: 1) they had to lead the workers rather than merely follow them or join them, and 2) they had to lead from the outside, i.e., they must be revolutionaries, intellectuals, outside the working class, since class consciousness could only be brought to the proletariat from outside. Here is where persuasion began to play a role as a revolutionary strategy.

To understand Lenin's position, we should look briefly at the application of his concept of spontaneous generation. He used the examples of the famous strikes of the late nineteenth century to illustrate and prove his point. The strikes which broke out in the 1860's

¹⁰Some doubt is cast on the above analysis by Baron, who claimed that Lenin "conceded that he had overstated the case for consciousness as a corrective to the deplorable predilection of the Economists for spontaneity." Samuel Baron, Plekhanov (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1963), p. 236.

and 1870's, he claimed, were "spontaneous" and were accompanied by the "spontaneous" destruction of plant equipment and machinery. These he labeled "revolts." He then compared them with the strikes which occurred in the 1890's, which were much more highly organized and had more clearly defined objectives. The strikes of the 1890's, he believed, might even be called "conscious" because of the progress which they showed the working class had made since the earlier period of "revolts." However, even though the last group of strikes might be labeled "conscious" they still proved that the spontaneously developed element represented nothing more than "consciousness" in an "embryonic form." The early "revolts" Lenin characterized as being simply the "resistance of the oppressed" whereas the later series were systematic, representing the class struggle in embryo, "but only in embryo." By themselves, these systematic strikes were only trade union struggles, not Social Democratic struggles. Here, as elsewhere, Lenin seems to have equated "Social Democratic struggles" with the true "class struggle." Even as late as the 1890's, he contended, the workers still had not, indeed could not have, developed true class consciousness.¹¹

¹¹Lenin, Works Vol. 5, pp. 374-75. What Is To Be Done?, March, 1902.

Lenin believed that true class consciousness would necessarily come from outside the working class. He developed and explained this idea in What Is To Be Done?:

We have said that there could not have been Social-Democratic consciousness among the workers. It would have to be brought to them from without. The history of all countries shows that the working class, exclusively by its own effort, is able to develop only trade-union consciousness, i.e., the conviction that it is necessary to combine in unions, fight the employers, and strive to compel the government to pass necessary labour legislation, etc.¹²

All those who talk about "overrating the importance of ideology", about exaggerating the role of the conscious element, etc., imagine that the labour movement pure and simple can elaborate, and will elaborate, an independent ideology for itself, if only the workers "wrest their fate from the hands of the leaders". But this is a profound mistake. . . .

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 . . . there can be no talk of an independent ideology formulated by the working masses themselves in the process of their movement, the only choice is--either bourgeois or socialist ideology. There is no middle ground (for mankind has not created a "third" ideology, and, moreover, in a society torn by class antagonisms there can never be a non-class or an above-class ideology). Hence, to belittle the socialist ideology in any way, to turn aside from it in the slightest degree means to strengthen bourgeois ideology.¹³

Lenin found considerable support for his argument by looking at the history of the socialist movement. He found, of course, that the founders of "modern scien-

¹²Ibid., p. 375.

¹³Ibid., pp. 383-84.

tific socialism," Marx and Engels, belonged to the "bourgeois intelligentsia." In Russia, the Social Democratic doctrine and theory was developed completely independently of the "spontaneous growth of the working-class movement; it arose as a natural and inevitable outcome of the development of thought among the revolutionary socialist intelligentsia."¹⁴

When discussing Economism, a heresy which advocated limitation of agitation and propaganda to purely economic issues, Lenin advanced a slightly different analysis to demonstrate that proletarian class consciousness must come from without. He claimed that class political consciousness must be brought to the workers from the outside, "that is, only from outside the economic struggle, from outside the sphere of relations between workers and employers." Political consciousness must be brought from the sphere of politics, that is, from the "sphere of relationships of all classes and strata to the state and the government, the sphere of the interrelations between all classes." Lenin concluded this discussion by contending that, to bring political consciousness to the working class, the Social Democrats would have to go among all classes of the population, presumably to find out what the relation-

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 375-76.

ships of all the classes actually were.¹⁵

Having decided that the workers could only obtain class political consciousness, which was the same as Social Democratic consciousness, if it were brought to them from outside their own sphere, Lenin naturally was faced with the question: How should political consciousness be brought to the workers? He believed that a vanguard party of revolutionaries, existing independently of the working class, was the proper tool to use to bring political knowledge to the workers. A preliminary form of this idea may be discerned as early as 1899 in his "Apropos of the Profession de Foi":

In no political or social movement, in no country has there ever been, or could there ever have been, any other relation between the masses of the given class or people and its numerically few educated representatives than the following: everywhere and at all times the leaders of a certain class have always been its advanced, most cultivated representatives. Nor can there be any other situation in the Russian working-class movement.¹⁶

In Russia, as elsewhere, these advanced representatives were naturally to be the Social Democratic Party. It was the Party that would instill political consciousness and the persuasive methods to be used were "agita-

¹⁵Ibid., p. 422.

¹⁶Lenin, Works Vol. 4, p. 292. "Apropos of the Profession de Foi," written at the end of 1899, first published in 1924.

tion" and "propaganda."

In this chapter we have seen why Lenin believed persuasion necessary for the revolution. He did not believe that the development of the economy itself would induce a revolutionary attitude in the proletariat. Economic development alone would leave the proletariat concerned solely with immediate economic issues, it could only lead to the development of trade union consciousness. Persuasion was needed, he thought, to develop the class political consciousness of the workers, to get them to advance the class struggle at the political level.

CHAPTER III

AGITATION AND PROPAGANDA

This study is concerned primarily with Lenin's theories of persuasion as a revolutionary strategy after 1902, the year in which the all-important What Is To Be Done? was written. It was this book that laid the foundations for Bolshevism. It was this book that formed the basis for a distinction between European Social Democracy and the Russian Bolshevik faction, or party. It was this book that laid the foundations for the split in the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party, in 1903, between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks. However, although What Is To Be Done? is the basis for much of this study, it would be profitable to discover the origins of the two central concepts of Lenin's theory, "agitation" and "propaganda," as they relate to Lenin and to Russia.

Agitation and Propaganda: Definitions

To analyze the origins of the concepts of agitation and propaganda, we may rely heavily on Richard Pipes' short but extensively documented study, Social Democracy and the St. Petersburg Labor Movement: 1885-

1897. Pipes selected St. Petersburg as the center for his attention for two reasons. First, he claimed, St. Petersburg was both the educational capital of the country and the locale of its most advanced industries. As such, it attracted the ablest of Russian labor leaders. Second, the future leaders of both factions of Russian Social Democracy received their training in labor organizations there: Martov, Dan, Potresov, Lenin and several others.¹ Having selected St. Petersburg, Pipes presented a brief history of the various labor groups there. It is a story of organization followed by arrests, of workers distrustful of intellectuals, of intellectuals attempting to influence workers for political gain.

First we must analyze an institution which arose in late nineteenth century Russia, the worker circle. The worker circle was the principal institutional expression of the emergence of the labor intelligentsia. These circles usually came into existence on the initiative of a worker who was attending evening or Sunday school. The worker-student would usually suggest to other students that they meet periodically to discuss serious books.² These worker circles were first used

¹Richard Pipes, Social Democracy and the St. Petersburg Labor Movement, 1885-1897 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1963), p. x.

²Ibid., p. 5.

for political purposes by the Populist parties. Pipes contended that almost all of the activities taken up by the Social Democrats--formation of labor circles, propaganda, strike agitation, the printing of leaflets and pamphlets for workers--had first been devised and practised by the Populists. The Social Democrats merely "cultivated soil which had been turned and seeded by their Populist predecessors."³ Alexander Kerensky, later to become Minister of Justice and then Prime Minister in the Provisional Government, has related approximately the same course of events. Kerensky stated that the revolutionary work among the peasants during the 1870's failed because the peasants obtained the right to free labor on their own land. Thus, the peasants were faced with the task of building up their own independent economy, which would take all of their strength and attention. After 1881 the revolutionaries realized that the peasants would be occupied with their own economic affairs, rather than with political struggles, for a long time, so they looked around for another group with which to work. The reign of Alexander III saw the formation of the proletariat as an independent class and an independent political force. Consequently, the revolutionary youth turned their attention to the indus-

³Ibid., pp. 7-8.

trial workers. Naturally, these revolutionaries were at first the old Populists who had originally worked with the peasants.⁴

The intellectuals, the revolutionary youth, attempted to use the worker circles to spread their political doctrines. It should be noted that the worker circles at first were composed strictly of workers. They were formed on the initiative of the workers; the intellectuals played no role in their formation or their composition. However, the intellectuals were a contact with the outside world which these circles sought. For this reason, the circles usually allowed intellectuals to "visit" them, without regard to their political beliefs; yet, the circles sought to maintain strict independence from these visitors. In fact, such visitors were not unqualifiedly welcome. Pipes ascribed a basic distrust of the intellectuals to a divergence of interests. The workers wanted to learn in order to escape the "monotonous and hopeless condition of the factory" and to obtain a respectable place in society. The intellectuals, on the other hand, sought contact with the workers as a means of bringing socialist ideas to the working class. Added to this divergence of interests was the realization, certainly rapid, that contact with

⁴Alexander Kerensky, The Crucifixion of Liberty (New York: The John Day Company, 1934), pp. 48-49.

intellectuals led to police surveillance and often to arrests. Finally, Pipes stated, psychological factors played a role in the workers' distrust of the intellectuals. The intellectuals were usually students at either the University or the Technological Institute in St. Petersburg. They were young, but of approximately the same age as the members of the worker circles. However, the students had rarely worked, were naive and bookish, whereas the workers usually had begun earning a living when very young, often while still in their early teens. They were, as a result, more mature than the students. Add to this the fact that, as June arrived each year, the students left for home while the workers had to stay and continue earning a living.⁵ All in all, the two groups--the workers and the intellectual, revolutionary youth--were quite different.

As previously mentioned, the Populists began the work with the proletariat and the Social Democrats later took up their own contacts. However, at this early date, it was very difficult to distinguish the Populists from the Social Democrats, at least within the boundaries of Russia. This condition prevailed in varying degrees throughout the entire period in question--up until the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. The emigres abroad car-

⁵Pipes, op. cit., pp. 10-11.

ried on polemics among themselves, but inside Russia, the various parties often worked fairly well together. However, there appears to have been a distinguishing difference between the two groups in the area of tactics. The Social Democrats viewed the educational opportunities of contacts with worker circles as a long-range proposition, a chance to develop the class consciousness of the workers. The long-range, educational approach would become known as "propaganda." The Populists, on the other hand, were more interested in stirring up the workers to immediate action--to strike, primarily, but sometimes even to undertake terrorist activities. The tactics used would become known as "agitation."⁶

Because of the difference in tactics, the workers came to prefer contact with the Social Democrats: it was safer than contact with the Populists. This was the conclusion reached by the czarist police in a report prepared in 1896 on the basis of extensive interrogation of both workers and intellectuals arrested in connection with one of the revolutionary groups, the Union of Struggle.⁷ Their conclusion is quite understandable, if we remember that the workers were primarily interested

⁶Ibid., p. 14.

⁷Ibid., p. 15.

in the intellectuals because of the education which could be received from them, not because of the action they, the workers, could perform as agents of the revolutionaries.

During the late 1880's the intellectuals, the students in St. Petersburg, worked with worker circles on an individual, independent basis. At the end of that decade, however, they began to organize themselves for greater effectiveness. In 1889 the Social Democrats became the first group to organize. In that year students, primarily from the Technological Institute, united to conduct propaganda among industrial workers and to train cadres of propagandists from the ranks of the working class.⁸ For a period of several years the workers' organizations and the intellectuals' groups worked independently of each other. There were contacts, to be sure, but the initiative still came from the workers who still viewed the students as at best suspect. However, contacts improved during this period.

The Social Democrats, holding as their goal the independence of the workers, were remarkably successful. By the summer of 1891 the Central Worker Circle, the major one in St. Petersburg, was able to function

⁸Ibid., p. 25.

entirely on its own, training its own instructors to provide to the various lesser circles. It even widened its activity to cover areas outside the capital city.⁹ But the very next year, 1892, following an abortive attempt to hold a May Day celebration, the police arrested almost all of the leaders of the Central Worker Circle.¹⁰

Reorganization began the following year, 1893, under much the same arrangements as before. However, this time the Social Democrats were led by I. Radchenko, who laid the foundation for much of the later Social Democratic attitude toward the workers. It was Radchenko's group that Lenin was soon to join. Radchenko rejected the principle of labor hegemony which had previously determined all relationships between workers and intellectuals. He did not believe that the workers could take care of themselves. He thought they were incapable of protecting themselves from police, from squandering their energy on trivial matters, and were totally incapable of organizing on their own for the struggle against the autocratic regime. Radchenko believed that all propaganda activities should be placed in the hands of a small conspiratorial organization of revolutionaries.¹¹ These views were almost identical

⁹Ibid., pp. 35-36.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 38.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 43-44.

to those Lenin was to adopt nearly a decade later, with the single exception that Radchenko was solely concerned with propaganda, whereas Lenin in the twentieth century was also concerned with agitation. Radchenko's beliefs were basically a reversion to the old Populist concepts of relations with workers.

In 1894 Lenin came to St. Petersburg to practice law and to join the revolutionaries. From the very beginning, he was far more interested in literary and theoretical activities than in practical, routine propagandistic or agitational activities. In fact, during his first year in St. Petersburg, Lenin had virtually no direct contact with any workers.¹² Although Radchenko had started the Social Democratic group on some half-hearted propagandistic activity, he had made little more in the way of progress. Lenin did not attempt to revitalize the group at all. Instead, he began work on polemical essays directed against the Populists, the first major one being, as Pipes translated the title, What Are the "Friends of the People" and How Do They Wage War on the Social Democrats?¹³

Although Lenin seems to have had little, if anything, to do with it, the Social Democrats at this time instituted a change in tactics. It was at this point,

¹²Ibid., pp. 53-54.

¹³Ibid., pp. 55-56.

the mid-1890's, that the tactic known as agitation first came into use in Russia.

This new method originated in Russian Poland, in a socialist labor organization called the Union of Polish Workers Founded in 1889 by workers and intellectuals dissatisfied with the terrorist tactics of the Proletariat group, the Union concentrated on economic conflicts between employers and workers on the assumption that the best way to create a mass organization and to interest the worker in politics is to promote industrial strife. The exponents of this device maintained that the worker who was indifferent or hostile to socialist and democratic ideas instinctively understood his own needs and would respond favorably to propaganda based on his personal economic interests. A strike for higher wages or shorter working hours would soon drive him also to anti-government activity because the government would back the employers and punish the strikers, thus revealing the intimate connection between the capitalist system and the country's political regime. The worker would come to understand that he could not improve his lot without fighting autocracy. Thus the goal of political action in the name of democracy and socialism would be reached by way of the economic struggle in the name of the worker's immediate needs. This tactic called for agitation among the mass of industrial laborers, that is, incitement against their employers and the authorities who were expected to support them.¹⁴

It should be noted that, although the end goal of agitation was political, the day-to-day agitation ignored political issues. Agitation, as conceived by the Union of Polish Workers, dealt strictly with economic goals, and immediate economic goals at that. The political ends, the Union believed, would come with time. This,

¹⁴Ibid., p. 58.

as we shall see, Lenin changed completely. But Lenin's revision was to come nearly a decade later; at this point he was little concerned with the subject of agitation.

From the Union of Polish Workers, the tactic of agitation reached Russia by way of Vilno on the Lithuanian borderlands. Pipes stated that the Jewish Social Democrats in Vilno modeled themselves on the Poles and organized strike funds among the local workers. They also instigated a number of strikes, primarily to reduce working hours.¹⁵ Seton-Watson also recorded Vilna, as he transliterated the name, as a center of Marxist activities. He, too, concluded that there the distinction was made between agitation and propaganda as tactics.¹⁶ However, apparently even at Vilna (or Vilno) the workers were not very friendly toward the Social Democratic intellectuals. They seem to have been especially hostile to the new method of agitation, and for the same reasons that the Russian workers opposed the Populists' tactics of terror. To gain the workers' acceptance of the agitational technique, in 1896 Alexander Kremer wrote a pamphlet called Ob-agitatsii or On Agitation. Edited by Martov, it was to spread through-

¹⁵Ibid., p. 60.

¹⁶Hugh Seton-Watson, The Decline of Imperial Russia, 1855-1914 (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, n.d.), p. 147.

out Russia, soon acquiring the status of a handbook of Social Democratic action.¹⁷ This pamphlet seems to be the form in which Lenin was introduced to the new method. It characterized agitation precisely as the Union of Polish Workers had used it. Pipes translated a significant passage from On Agitation as follows:

. . . no matter how extensive the labor movement, its successes cannot be assured until labor commits itself firmly to the political struggle. The attainment of political power represents the main task of the struggling proletariat. But this task can confront the worker only when the economic struggle demonstrates to him that it is clearly impossible to improve his lot under existing political conditions. Only when the strivings of the proletariat come to confront directly the given political system, and when the current of the labor movement comes up against political authority, will the movement have arrived at the phase at which the class struggle is transformed into a conscious political struggle. . . . the task of Social Democrats lies in carrying out continuous agitation among factory workers on the basis of their everyday petty needs and demands.¹⁸

In practice, agitation was carried out during this early period in a series of set steps. First, with the aid of friendly workers, usually members of a worker circle, the Social Democrats would gather detailed information on the conditions and grievances of the workers at a certain factory. This information was then

¹⁷Pipes, op. cit., p. 62.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 62-63. See also Baron, op. cit., p. 149.

edited and written up as leaflets or proclamations addressed to the workers. The publications dealt with concrete issues which even the most simple minded worker could understand, such as wages, working hours, treatment by management, and the like. The publications concluded with discussions of relevant laws and practices followed in other similar factories. Finally the demands which the workers should make of management were presented.¹⁹

Agitation as a method reached St. Petersburg, and thus reached Lenin, by several routes. Martov brought in one copy of On Agitation in October, 1894. Silvin, another revolutionary, obtained a copy in Moscow and brought it to St. Petersburg. The Radchenko group, of which Lenin was a member, studied the document carefully and discussed it at great length.²⁰ The discussions of the new method revealed a split among the St. Petersburg intellectuals, a split which would continue in more or less the same manner for the entire period in question, until the Bolsheviks finally won power in 1917. Radchenko and Krasin, another famous revolutionary, were completely opposed to the new method. They feared that it would deflect the attention of the Social Democrats away from their long-range goals, lead to concentration

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 63-64.

²⁰Ibid., p. 64.

on trivial matters, and expose the revolutionaries to the police.²¹

More important, it seems that Lenin himself opposed agitation at first. The Social Democrats held one and possibly two meetings in the fall of 1894 to discuss the new method.

Lenin's opposition to agitation is explicitly stated by E. Korolchuk She asserts that at the meeting of Social Democratic intellectuals . . . held on February 18-19, 1895, Lenin denounced this method of work and expressed preference for the older propagandistic tactic. Further evidence to this effect is provided by Lenin's first proclamation addressed to industrial workers written early in January 1895²²

In January and February of 1895 strikes broke out in the Neva Mechanical and Naval Works and the New Admiralty. Lenin wrote two proclamations for the workers, following generally the same series of steps discussed earlier. The first proclamation, however, was described by Nikolaevsky as propagandistic rather than agitational in nature. The second was characterized by its "legal" appeal. It urged the workers not to revolt but to take advantage of the rights they possessed under existing legislation.²³ This seems consistent with the Lenin of the 1890's, but it is certainly different from the views

²¹Ibid., pp. 64-65.

²²Ibid., p. 65.

²³Ibid., p. 66.

he expressed from 1902 on.

Lenin was still far more interested in literary work than in the day-to-day routine of practical revolutionary work. He joined the organization of intellectuals at the University and at the Free Economic Society which, under the leadership of Peter Struve, was challenging the Populist ideology.²⁴ In this organization, known as the stariki, Lenin was assigned to the job of editor-in-chief of the group's proposed publications: again, a literary job.²⁵ As editor-in-chief, however, he did write a few leaflets. One was the appeal, "To the Workers of the Thornton Factory," which dealt exclusively with economic issues, making no allusion to politics whatsoever. Also, he wrote the pamphlet in a very conciliatory tone, emphasizing the rights of the workers. In other words, it was a strictly legalistic appeal, merely asking the workers to stand up for the rights they already by law possessed.²⁶ The leaflet seems to be of a type which Lenin later would condemn completely.

In January of 1896, while attempting to distribute the first edition of their new newspaper, almost the entire membership of the stariki and many of the labor

²⁴Ibid., pp. 69-70.

²⁵Ibid., p. 86.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 91-92.

leaders as well were arrested. Lenin, too, was arrested and was eventually sentenced to three years exile in Siberia. This arrest confirmed the belief of the few remaining labor leaders that contact with the intellectuals brought nothing but trouble; it reaffirmed their old skepticism about agitation as a tactic.²⁷ However, only a few short months later, in May of 1896, the St. Petersburg mass labor movement began. In that month the largest strike in Russian history up to that time took place among the textile workers. It was also the first strike in Russia to transcend the boundaries of an individual factory by spreading over the entire industry. It was followed by another strike of textile workers in January, 1897. Both of these strikes were worker-initiated, worker-led, and worker-directed.²⁸

After the May textile strike had begun, Lenin, while still in prison awaiting sentence, agreed to draft a program for the striking workers. Edmund Wilson described Lenin writing the draft in the prison, using milk as invisible ink, and inkstands molded from bread so that they could be swallowed whenever the guard came around.²⁹ The draft program was smuggled out of the

²⁷Ibid., p. 98.

²⁸Ibid., p. 99.

²⁹Edmund Wilson, To the Finland Station (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1940), p. 380.

jail and lost, but was recovered after the revolution.

Pipes translated a portion of the draft:

The Russian Social Democratic party declares as its task to help this struggle of the Russian working class by developing labor's class-consciousness, assisting its organization, and showing it the real goals of the struggle . . . The task of the party is not to invent in its head some fashionable methods of helping the workers, but to join the labor movement, to illuminate it, to help the workers in the struggle which they have already begun to wage themselves.³⁰

The whole tone of this program was quite different from the tone Lenin was to use later. Note that the party was to help, not to lead, labor. The draft continued to discuss the economic struggle which in the first place supposedly demonstrated to the worker the nature of economic exploitation, in the second place imbued him with a fighting spirit, and in the third place developed his political consciousness. Pipes contrasted this with the central theme of What Is To Be Done?, in which the thesis was that "class political consciousness can be brought to the worker only from the outside, that is, outside the economic struggle, outside the realm of relations of workers toward their employers."³¹ Apparently, Lenin changed his entire philosophy of tactics during his period of exile.

³⁰Pipes, op. cit., p. 109. Italics here and throughout the chapter are in the original.

³¹Ibid., p. 110.

Lenin, as mentioned previously, was sentenced to three years' exile in Siberia in 1897. He returned, after serving his term, in 1900 and resumed his revolutionary work. Soon after returning he wrote one of his most famous works, What Is To Be Done?, which was to be the basis for all the rest of his theoretical work as well as the basis for the Bolshevik faction of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party. Since his period of exile was primarily a period of study for Lenin rather than a period of writing or a period of action, we must jump a space of five years to find the concepts of agitation and propaganda in their final form. During the period of exile Lenin did, of course, write one of his major works, The Development of Capitalism in Russia, but that work is mainly a statistical analysis of the economy of Russia and as such does not concern us here. But he also wrote a few articles in which the development of his thought may be traced.

In 1897, in Siberia, Lenin wrote The Tasks of the Russian Social-Democrats, first published the following year in Geneva, in which he drew the distinction between these two terms, "agitation" and "propaganda":

The socialist activities of Russian Social-Democrats consist in spreading by propaganda the teachings of scientific socialism, in spreading among the workers a proper understanding of the present social and economic system, its basis and its development, an

understanding of the various classes in Russian society, of their interrelations, of the struggle between these classes, of the role of the working class in this struggle, of its attitude towards the declining and the developing classes, towards the past and the future of capitalism, an understanding of the historical task of international Social-Democracy and of the Russian working class. Inseparably connected with propaganda is agitation among the workers, which naturally comes to the forefront in the present political conditions of Russia and at the present level of development of the masses of workers. Agitation among the workers means that the Social-Democrats take part in all the spontaneous manifestations of the working-class struggle, in all the conflicts between the workers and the capitalists over the working day, wages, working conditions, etc., etc. Our task is to merge our activities with the practical, everyday questions of working-class life, to help the workers understand these questions, to draw the workers' attention to the most important abuses, to help them formulate their demands to the employers more precisely and practically, to develop among the workers consciousness of their solidarity, consciousness of the common interests and common cause of all the Russian workers as a united working class that is part of the international army of the proletariat. To organise study circles among workers, to establish proper and secret connections between them and the central group of Social-Democrats, to publish and distribute working-class literature, to organise the receipt of correspondence from all centres of the working-class movement, to publish agitational leaflets and manifestos and to distribute them, and to train a body of experienced agitators--such, in broad outline, are the manifestations of the socialist activities of Russian Social-Democracy.³²

³²Lenin, Works Vol. 2, pp. 329-30. The Tasks of the Russian Social-Democrats, written at the end of 1897, published in Geneva in 1898.

At this early date Lenin had not formulated the simple, precise distinction between these two terms that he arrived at later. The distinction between agitation and propaganda seems to hinge on the content of the message being delivered: agitation apparently was to deal with immediate economic issues, propaganda with broader economic and political ideas. This distinction Lenin was later not only to dismiss but to vigorously oppose: agitation limited to economic issues became the heresy of "Economism" or "Tail-ism," the latter label derived from a statement by Plekhanov who condemned such activity as "gazing with awe . . . upon the 'posterior' of the Russian proletariat."³³

By 1902 Lenin had firmly arrived at the distinction between agitation and propaganda which he was to use throughout the rest of his revolutionary career and which was to carry over, to a certain extent, into the present in Soviet Russia. In What Is To Be Done? Lenin presented his definitions. He first quoted one of Plekhanov's works, Tasks of the Socialists in the Fight Against the Famine in Russia: "A propagandist presents many ideas to one or a few persons; an agitator presents only one or a few ideas, but he presents them to

³³Lenin, Works Vol. 5, pp. 447-48. What Is To Be Done?, March, 1902.

a mass of people."³⁴ Thus, the final distinction turned not on the content of the message but on the audience for which it was intended. There were two types of audiences: the intellectual few to whom many ideas were presented and the masses to whom one or a few ideas were given. Lenin then developed this concept further:

. . . the propagandist, dealing with, say, the question of unemployment, must explain the capitalistic nature of crises, the cause of their inevitability in modern society, the necessity for the transformation of this society into a socialist society, etc. In a word, he must present "many ideas", so many, indeed, that they will be understood as an integral whole only by a (comparatively) few persons. The agitator, however, speaking on the same subject, will take as an illustration a fact that is most glaring and most widely known to his audience, say, the death of an unemployed worker's family from starvation, the growing impoverishment, etc., and, utilising this fact, known to all, will direct his efforts to presenting a single idea to the "masses", e.g., the senselessness of the contradiction between the increase of wealth and the increase of poverty; he will strive to rouse discontent and indignation among the masses against this crying injustice, leaving a more complete explanation of this contradiction to the propagandist. Consequently, the propagandist operates chiefly by means of the printed word; the agitator by means of the spoken word. The propagandist requires qualities different from those of the agitator.³⁵

In this definition we see a clear distinction between propaganda and agitation.

³⁴Ibid., p. 409. See also Baron, op. cit., p. 151.

³⁵Ibid., pp. 409-10.

One important result of the definitional distinction was that referring to the medium proper to or mainly used by each: the agitator was to use primarily the spoken word, the propagandist the written word. This simply meant that there was a primary medium for each. Naturally, the agitator might use printed material such as factory leaflets calling for a strike or explaining the workers' position during a strike. Lenin himself wrote many such leaflets. The propagandist might, of course, use the spoken word, as Lenin himself did on such occasions as Party conferences, Party congresses, meetings of editorial boards, worker circles, and the like. But for each type of persuasive activity Lenin prescribed a primary medium, one to be emphasized as most appropriate to that type.

Another important factor is the number of people involved in each audience. Chakotin quoted Lenin, although he did not indicate the source: "The revolutionary propagandist must think in terms of hundreds, the agitator in terms of tens of thousands, and the organizer and leader of the revolution in terms of millions!"³⁶ Lenin himself, of course, was to be that "leader of the revolution."

We have already seen that Lenin's definitions of

³⁶Serge Chakotin, The Rape of the Masses (London: George Routledge and Sons, Ltd., 1939), p. 165.

the terms "agitation" and "propaganda" were not really original definitions; they had a significant history of use and development by the St. Petersburg Social Democrats, by the Polish Union, and by the Social Democrats abroad, as indicated by the Plekhanov quotation in What Is To Be Done?

Because Lenin adopted these definitions, they are still used to a certain extent today in the Soviet Union. Clews wrote:

But where British and American definitions still use fairly general terms, the standard Soviet Dictionary-encyclopedia is far more specific. "Propaganda," it defines, "is the interpretation of ideas, teachings, political opinions and knowledge, component parts of the work of the communist and workers' parties in the ideological training of the party masses and the toilers." In short, to communists propaganda is an essential feature of their system.³⁷

Chakotin includes a further group concept, which has been a fundamental basis of communist propaganda for more than sixty years. He divides people into two groups --the ten per cent which make up the active minority and the ninety per cent which total the passive majority. Though he does not say so, this is the same grouping as that classified by the communists as cadres and masses. For the former propaganda is sophisticated, for the latter it is simple, categorical and direct, designed to influence the emotions, not the mind.³⁸

It seems, then, that perhaps the Communists today do not

³⁷John C. Clews, Communist Propaganda Techniques (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1964), p. 4.

³⁸Ibid., p. 10.

draw the same clear distinction between the two terms "agitation" and "propaganda" but, if Clews is correct, they do still clearly differentiate between the two functions these terms covered, between the two types of audiences to which the terms applied.

Agitation and Propaganda: General Task

Having established the definitions for the terms "agitation" and "propaganda," we may now turn to the functions these two persuasive techniques were to perform. And, at the most general level, the terms "education" and "class consciousness" come to the foreground.

Lenin always maintained a single attitude toward the masses: he always believed that they were simply uneducated, uninformed, or, in his usual terminology, they lacked class consciousness. The Social Democrats could win the masses by simply showing them the truth. In contrast to this, he always believed that his enemies, the bourgeoisie and the heretical socialists, were deceitful, cunning, malign, and always acted toward the Social Democrats and the proletariat and peasantry with malice aforethought. As a generalization, it may be said that Lenin believed that the bourgeoisie and the monarchists were attempting to deceive the masses, but that these attempts at deception could be thwarted

if the Social Democrats would merely educate the masses. As he put it in a speech on August 28, 1918, at the first All-Russia Congress on Education, "Education is one of the component parts of the struggle we are now waging. We can counter hypocrisy and lies with the complete and honest truth."³⁹ We may now examine Lenin's beliefs summarized above in more detail.

Let us first take Lenin's attitude toward those to be educated, or, if you will, Lenin's analysis of his audience. In 1901 he wrote an article entitled "The Journal Svoboda" in which he set forth his conception of the masses to be educated:

The popular writer does not presuppose a reader that does not think, that cannot or does not wish to think; on the contrary, he assumes in the undeveloped reader a serious intention to use his head and aids him in his serious and difficult work, leads him, helps him over his first steps, and teaches him to go forward independently. The vulgar writer assumes that his reader does not think and is incapable of thinking; he does not lead him in his first steps towards serious knowledge, but in a distortedly simplified form, interlarded with jokes and facetiousness, hands out "ready-made" all the conclusions of a known theory, so that the reader does not even have to chew but merely to swallow what he is given.⁴⁰

This position is typical; the uneducated masses were

³⁹Lenin, Works Vol. 28, p. 87. Speech at the first All-Russia Congress on Education, August 28, 1918.

⁴⁰Lenin, Works Vol. 5, pp. 311-12. "The Journal Svoboda," written in the autumn of 1901, first published in 1936.

seen as serious-minded, willing to learn, eager to think for themselves if someone would only give them the basic tools for thinking and would only aid them in taking the "first steps." It must be remembered that in Russia this was in itself an enormous task. The masses were largely illiterate; those who were eager to learn, as we have seen, were, for good reason, suspicious of the revolutionary intellectuals. Nevertheless, Lenin believed that much progress had been made by the revolutionaries. Although he may have been overly-optimistic, in 1905 he stated:

In the beginning we had to teach the workers the ABC, both in the literal and in the figurative senses. Now the standard of political literacy has risen so gigantically that we can and should concentrate all our efforts on the more direct Social-Democratic objectives aimed at giving an organised direction to the revolutionary stream.⁴¹

In 1906 election campaigns were held for the Second Duma. Lenin indicated his analysis of the masses in an article which appeared on December 24 (O.S.):

Such are the conditions in which the election campaign for the Second Duma is being inaugurated. The ordinary man in the street is cowed. He has been intimidated by the military courts. He is under the spell of the government's boast that the Duma will be docile. He yields to this mood and is ready to forgive the Cadets [a moderate party] all their mistakes, to throw overboard all that the First Duma taught him and vote for the Cadets if only the Black Hundreds [monarch-

⁴¹Lenin, Works Vol. 8, p. 216. "New Tasks and New Forces," Vperyod No. 9, March 8 (Feb. 23), 1905.

ists⁷ are kept out.

That the ordinary man in the street should behave in this way is natural. He is never guided by a definite world-outlook, by principles of integral party tactics. He always swims with the stream, blindly obeying the mood of the moment. He cannot reason in any other way than by contrasting the most moderate of all the opposition parties to the Black Hundreds. He is incapable of thinking for himself over the experience of the First Duma.⁴²

The task of the Social Democrats, of course, was to help educate these common men-in-the-street to enable them to think through the experiences of the First Duma, to guide them in their first attempts at political analysis. The one thing that was lacking in these common people was political consciousness, the consciousness that they were members of a class and had common class interests. The educational activities of the Social Democrats would have to help develop this class consciousness.

Later in Lenin's career, especially during the decade preceding the 1917 Revolution, he was much concerned with specific aspects of the education which the Social Democrats should give to the workers. This, of course, was the decade in which the war broke out after a long period of high tension. It was a period of reaction in Russia, and at the end was a violent up-

⁴²Lenin, Works Vol. 11, pp. 389-90. "The Political Situation and the Tasks of the Working Class," Ter-nii Truda No. 1, Jan. 6, 1907 (Dec. 24, 1906).

heaval. Several examples of issues Lenin singled out for analysis during this period may indicate his general attitude toward the masses and the Social Democratic Party's duty toward them. In 1912, as our first example, Lenin wrote an article entitled "Two Utopias" in which he indicated the importance of education:

Utopia is a Greek word, composed of ou, not, and topos, a place. It means a place which does not exist, a fantasy, invention or fairy-tale.

In politics utopia is a wish that can never come true--neither now nor afterwards, a wish that is not based on social forces and is not supported by the growth and development of political, class forces.

The less freedom there is in a country, the scantier the manifestations of open class struggle and the lower the educational level of the masses, the more easily political utopias usually arise and the longer they persist.⁴³

The utopian concepts could be combatted by two means: by increasing the amount of freedom, and/or by increasing the educational level of the masses. It is interesting to contrast this quotation and the one given prior to it with the much more optimistic attitude expressed in 1905 (note 41). 1905, of course, was a year of great revolutionary activity, strikes, demonstrations, Bloody Sunday, and finally the October Manifesto granting an elected legislature. The article quoted was written in the very midst of this activity, in March of that year. Its tone was much more optimistic than that of

⁴³ Lenin, Works Vol. 18, p. 355. "Two Utopias," written in October, 1912, first published in 1924.

the following two quotations; but this is getting away from the heart of the point at issue.

In 1913 Lenin contended:

We cannot guarantee the realisation of our demands by reducing them, by curtailing our programme, or by adopting the tactics of attracting unenlightened people with the deceptive promise of easy constitutional reforms under Russian tsarism. We can guarantee it only by educating the masses in the spirit of consistent democracy and awareness of the falsity of constitutional illusions. The guarantee lies in the revolutionary organisation of the foremost class, the proletariat, and in the great revolutionary enthusiasm of the masses.⁴⁴

Again, we see education of the masses as the key. A year and a half later, in June, 1914, Lenin presented a more detailed explanation of this contention:

Like a mother who carefully tends a sick child and gives it better nourishment, the class-conscious workers must take more care of the districts and factories where the workers are sick with liquidationism. This malady, which emanates from the bourgeoisie, is inevitable in a young working-class movement, but with proper care and persistent treatment, it will pass without any serious after-effects. To provide the sick workers with more plentiful nourishment in the shape of Marxist literature, to explain more carefully and in more popular form the history and tactics of the Party and the meaning of the Party decisions on the bourgeois nature of liquidationism, to explain at greater length the urgent necessity of proletarian unity, i.e., the submission of the minority of the workers to the majority, the submission of the one-fifth to the four-fifths of the class-conscious workers of

⁴⁴ Lenin, Works Vol. 18, p. 453. "Notification and Resolutions of the Meeting of the Central Committee of the R.S.D.L.P. and Party Functionaries," Feb., 1913.

Russia--such are some of the most important tasks confronting us.⁴⁵

Liquidationism was a heresy which maintained that the illegal, underground aspect of Social Democracy in Russia should be "liquidated" and all Party workers should then concentrate solely on legal activities. That this heresy probably had great appeal to the workers in the major Russian cities can be inferred from two factors: 1) the great lengths to which Lenin went to refute this heresy, and 2) the long-standing interest of the worker circles in avoiding illegal activities and concentrating on those that would not involve them with the czarist police. At any rate, it is important to note that Lenin's answer to the appeal of liquidationism was to provide education in the form of Marxist literature, containing explanations of the heresy and the class interest it represented. That is, his answer was to intensify agitation and propaganda.

In the period from 1914 to 1917 Lenin faced a different problem in regard to World War One. Lenin opposed this war, not because he was a pacifist--which he most certainly was not--but because it was an "imperialist" war in which only imperialists could win. If Russia stayed in the war, he believed, the Russian workers

⁴⁵Lenin, Works Vol. 20, p. 371. "The Working Class and Its Press," Trudovaya Pravda No. 15, June 27 (14), 1914.

would emerge from the war more oppressed than before, regardless of which side won. However, at least at first, the war was a very popular one in Russia; not only did the workers support it, but many of the so-called socialists favored the Russian war effort, adopting the heresy of "revolutionary defencism" or nationalism. This heresy, Lenin thought, was the result of bourgeois deception and lack of class consciousness on the part of the proletariat. In September, 1917, during the period of the Provisional Government, Lenin wrote "The Tasks of the Proletariat in our Revolution." The monarchy had been overthrown, but Lenin believed that the bourgeoisie who controlled the new government were just as bad as, if not worse than, the monarchy in their attitude toward the workers:

The slogan "Down with the War!" is, of course, correct. But it fails to take into account the specific nature of the tasks of the present moment and the necessity of approaching the broad mass of the people in a different way. It reminds me of the slogan "Down with the Tsar!" with which the inexperienced agitator of the "good old days" went simply and directly to the countryside--and got a beating for his pains. The mass believers in revolutionary defencism are honest, not in the personal, but in the class sense, i.e., they belong to classes (workers and the peasant poor) which in actual fact have nothing to gain from annexations and the subjugation of other peoples. This is nothing like the bourgeois and the "intellectual" fraternity, who know very well that you cannot renounce annexations without renouncing the rule of capital, and who unscrupulously deceive the people with fine phrases, with unlimited prom-

ises and endless assurances.

The rank-and-file believer in defencism regards the matter in the simple way of the man in the street: "I don't want annexations, but the Germans are 'going for' me, therefore I'm defending a just cause and not any kind of imperialist interests at all." To a man like this it must be explained again and again that it is not a question of his personal wishes, but of mass, class, political relations and conditions, of the connection between the war and the interests of capital and the international network of banks, and so forth. Only such a struggle against defencism will be serious and will promise success--perhaps not a very rapid success, but one that will be real and enduring.⁴⁶

At least from 1902 on, in appealing to the workers, in educating them to be class conscious, in showing them exactly where their class interests lay, Lenin always placed the emphasis on the political aspects. Even though Marxism was an essentially economic doctrine, Leninism was essentially political. This was a fact noted by Sukhanov, who wrote after the Revolution:

Socialism is, of course, primarily an economic problem. I have indicated that the Bolsheviks were weak on this. Neither Lenin, elaborating the programme of his party, nor Trotsky, doing the same for the former Interdistrictites, appreciated the significance of an economic programme as such, or gave it priority; indeed, they simply forgot about it.⁴⁷

While we cannot agree with Sukhanov that Lenin simply forgot about economic programs and the economic aspects

⁴⁶Lenin, Works Vol. 24, pp. 65-66. "The Tasks of the Proletariat in Our Revolution," September, 1917.

⁴⁷N. N. Sukhanov, The Russian Revolution, 1917, trans. and ed. by Joel Carmichael (2 vols.; New York: Harper and Brothers, 1962), II, p. 554.

of the class struggle, it is certainly true that he did not give the economic aspects priority.

As early as 1897, in his article The Tasks of the Russian Social-Democrats, Lenin indicated the importance of politics:

In conducting agitation among the workers on their immediate economic demands, the Social-Democrats inseparably link this with agitation on the immediate political needs, the distress and the demands of the working class, agitation against police tyranny, manifested in every strike, in every conflict between workers and capitalists, agitation against the restriction of the rights of the workers as Russian citizens in general and as the class suffering the worst oppression and having the least rights in particular, agitation against every prominent representative and flunkey of absolutism who comes into direct contact with the workers and who clearly reveals to the working class its condition of political slavery.⁴⁸

In 1897, then, Lenin had stated the importance of political agitation in connection with economic problems.

This was to change somewhat later, so that, by 1902, in What Is To Be Done?, Lenin contended that political agitation must have priority over economic agitation:

The fact that economic interests play a decisive role does not in the least imply that the economic (i.e., trade-union) struggle is of prime importance; for the most essential, the "decisive" interests of classes can be satisfied only by radical political changes in general. In particular the fundamental economic interests of the proletariat can be satisfied only by a political revolution that will re-

⁴⁸Lenin, Works Vol. 2, p. 332. The Tasks of the Russian Social-Democrats, written at the end of 1897, first published in Geneva in 1898.

place the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie by the dictatorship of the proletariat.⁴⁹

. . . not only must Social-Democrats not confine themselves exclusively to the economic struggle, but . . . they must not allow the organisation of economic exposures to become the predominant part of their activities. We must take up actively the political education of the working class and the development of its political consciousness.⁵⁰

Thus, the political aspects of the class struggle had become dominant in Lenin's thinking, and hence were to predominate in the Social Democrats' education of the workers. Lenin went on to refute the "pompous phrase about 'lending the economic struggle itself a political character'" which had been advanced by some. This, he contended, would degrade "Social-Democratic politics to the level of trade-union politics."⁵¹ It seems, then, that Lenin did not even want the Social Democrats to worry much about the economic struggle; they were to concentrate on educating the masses to be politically conscious.

A second task of education, previously mentioned in passing, was that of fighting deception of the masses by the bourgeoisie. Lenin always thought that his opponents were vicious men attempting to deceive

⁴⁹Lenin, Works Vol. 5, pp. 390-91. What Is To Be Done?, March, 1902.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 400.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 405.

the masses into believing something other than his own pure truth. He was quite clear in his contention that class consciousness, specifically political consciousness on the part of the workers, would counter the attempts at deception made by the bourgeoisie. For example, in 1914 he wrote:

But class-conscious workers will not be deceived by the rantings of sham "political campaigns" launched by the disruptors of the workers' organisation. What class-conscious workers appreciate most of all and first of all in every press organ is adherence to high principle. What are the workers really being taught under cover of the "opposition" clap-trap, clamour and claims to defend the interests of the workers?--that is the main, the basic and, properly speaking, the only important question that every thinking worker asks himself. The thinking worker knows that the most dangerous of advisers are those liberal friends of the workers who claim to be defending their interests, but are actually trying to destroy the class independence of the proletariat and its organisation.⁵²

The major enemy of the proletariat, Lenin thought, was not the monarchy, which was readily identifiable, but the bourgeoisie which might deceive the workers. This greatest of all enemies was the one which was to be fought by class consciousness; the monarchy, of course, could be fought even by the liberal bourgeoisie. Our point is, then, that political consciousness was important to fight deception.

⁵²Lenin, Works Vol. 20, p. 90. "The Liberals' Corruption of the Workers," Put Pravdy No. 9, Feb. 13 (Jan. 31), 1914.

Lenin analyzed specific attempts at "deception" by the bourgeoisie which were to be combatted by Social Democratic persuasion, i.e., by agitation and propaganda. For illustration, we may take several examples from Lenin's writings, in chronological order. On April 19, 1905 (O.S.), during the first major revolution in Russia, Lenin wrote: "The government is up to its old game of trying to fool the peasantry with sham concessions. This policy of corruption must be countered with the slogans of our Party."⁵³ Later that same year, after the czar had promised a loosening of his rule, Lenin indicated one way in which the government could deceive the masses:

Granting for a moment the improbable and the impossible, namely, that the tsarist government, having decided to convene a "Constituent" (read: consultative) Assembly, will give formal guarantees of freedom of propaganda, all the vast advantages and superior facilities for campaigning which accrue from the organised power of the state will nevertheless remain in its hands. These advantages and facilities for propaganda during the elections to the first people's assembly will be enjoyed by the very ones who have oppressed the people by all the means in their power, and from whom the people have begun to wrest liberty by force.⁵⁴

⁵³Lenin, Works Vol. 8, p. 400. Report on the Resolution on the support of the peasant movement, to The Third Congress of the R.S.D.L.P., May 2 (April 19), 1905.

⁵⁴Lenin, Works Vol. 8, p. 516. "The Democratic Tasks of the Revolutionary Proletariat," Proletary No. 4, June 17 (4), 1905.

In October, 1905, in the famous October Manifesto, the czar promised to grant an elected Duma, or parliament, and soon political parties were formed to contest the elections. One of these parties was the Constitutional Democratic Party, better known as the Cadets. This party was of great concern to Lenin, since he believed it to be one of those bourgeois parties which were the special enemies of the proletariat, and since it enjoyed more success than any other "liberal" party. In 1906, following a mass meeting, he wrote:

The popular meeting in the Panina Palace seemed particularly outrageous to the Cadet gentlemen. The Social-Democrats' speeches at the meeting stirred up that putrid swamp. "Have a heart," cry the Cadet gentlemen, "you are helping the government with your criticism of our party." It is a familiar argument. Whenever the Social-Democrats step forward to explain to the proletariat and the people as a whole the real meaning of the events that are taking place, to dispel the fog which the bourgeois politicians are spreading over the workers, to warn the workers against the bourgeois traders of people's freedom, and to show the workers their true place in the revolution, the liberal gentlemen cry that this weakens the revolution.⁵⁵

A month later, he warned that "to combat the treacherous tactics of the Cadets what is required is not to echo the Cadets, but to preserve complete independence, that is to say, to warn the proletariat and the peasants not to trust the Cadets, not to repeat the Cadet slogans."

⁵⁵Lenin, Works Vol. 10, p. 419. "Resolution and Revolution," Volna No. 16, May 26 (13), 1906.

Those who advocated advancing slogans similar to the Cadet slogans were "selling our revolutionary birth-right for a mess of Cadet reformist pottage."⁵⁶ As we shall see later, Lenin was much concerned lest the Social Democrats advance slogans which were also being advanced by less revolutionary parties. He wanted to maintain not only the independence referred to here, but also clear symbols which would enable the masses to identify the Social Democrats as a separate party, not merely a member of a group of similar liberal parties.

In 1912, elections to the Duma were held, and a campaign was conducted rather like any campaign in any democratic country, with parties, platforms, electioneering, promises, and, in Lenin's words, "the most brazen self-advertisement." Naturally, this was just on the part of the bourgeois and monarchist parties. Lenin compared the political advertisements to commercial ones: "Look at the commercial advertisements in any newspaper-- you will see that the capitalists think up the most 'striking', bombastic and fashionable names for their merchandise, which they praise in the most unrestrained manner, stopping at no lie or invention whatever." The political parties of bourgeois tendencies, he continued, were doing precisely the same in the campaign. This

⁵⁶ Lenin, Works Vol. 11, p. 67. "Yes-Men of the Cadets," Ekho No. 5, July 10 (June 27), 1906.

presented a problem, he believed, in that "political advertisement misleads an incomparably greater number of people" than does commercial merchandising since the former "is much harder to expose and its deception much more lasting." Lenin carried the analogy further, noting the similarity between the labeling of brand-names and the choosing of names for a political party: "The names of some parties, both in Europe and in Russia, are chosen with a direct eye to advertisement, and their 'programmes' are quite often written for the sole purpose of hoodwinking the public."⁵⁷ Of course, the Social Democrats were to act otherwise; for example, they were to stick to their party principles in the development of a program or platform and to maintain the strictest adherence to principle in campaigning.

After the elections were over, and the government had settled down to acting quite as it had before, Lenin wrote that the masses were politically ignorant, that they lacked the ability to look for exact proofs "concerning controversial and important historical questions," and that they placed "naive credence" in "shouting and expostulation, and . . . the assurances and vows made by people with interests at stake."⁵⁸ The

⁵⁷ Lenin, Works Vol. 18, p. 44. "Political Parties in Russia," Nevskaya Zvezda No. 5, May 23 (10), 1912.

⁵⁸ Lenin, Works Vol. 19, p. 228. "Notes of a Publicist," Sotsial-Demokrat No. 31, June 28 (15), 1913.

Social Democrats, again, could overcome this by educating the masses, through agitation and propaganda, to become class conscious.

After World War One began, Lenin found another area, mentioned earlier, of deception of the masses. On the one hand, there was the heresy of revolutionary defencism, or nationalism. On the other hand, there were also prophets of pacifism within Russia who, Lenin contended, were equally bad. In 1915 he wrote:

Pacifism, the preaching of peace in the abstract, is one of the means of duping the working class. . . .

At the present time, the propaganda of peace unaccompanied by a call for revolutionary mass action can only sow illusions and demoralise the proletariat, for it makes the proletariat believe that the bourgeoisie is humane, and turns it into a plaything in the hands of the secret diplomacy of the belligerent countries. In particular, the idea of a so-called democratic peace being possible without a series of revolutions is profoundly erroneous.⁵⁹

During the first part of the war, the Russian nation unified behind the czar once again--as it turned out, for the last time. However, due to inept policies and military disasters, the Russian people gradually became more dissatisfied, leading eventually to the overthrow of the autocracy in March, 1917, and finally to the overthrow of the Provisional Government in Novem-

⁵⁹Lenin, Works Vol. 21, pp. 162-63. "The Conference of the R.S.D.L.P. Groups Abroad," Sotsial-Demokrat No. 40, March 29 (16), 1915.

ber (N.S.) of the same year. During this time, however, from 1905 to 1917, the Russian people had the chance to experiment with democracy, at least in some small degree. Lenin was dissatisfied with the results, which he saw as mere deception of the masses. In 1916 he wrote concerning democracy:

Nothing in our times can be done without elections; nothing can be done without the masses. And in this era of printing and parliamentarism it is impossible to gain the following of the masses without a widely ramified, systematically managed, well-equipped system of flattery, lies, fraud, juggling with fashionable and popular catchwords, and promising all manner of reforms and blessings to the workers right and left--as long as they renounce the revolutionary struggle for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie. I would call this system Lloyd-Georgism, after the English Minister Lloyd George, one of the foremost and most dexterous representatives of this system in the classic land of the "bourgeois labour party".⁶⁰

To overcome the deception of those bourgeois labor parties the masses must be educated, which, as we have seen several times previously, was a function of agitation and propaganda.

One of the major issues in this period of political experimentation was that of a responsible ministry. The Duma was elected as a legislature, but the ministers were appointed solely by the czar and were responsible only to the throne. The Duma could not cause a ministry

⁶⁰ Lenin, Works Vol. 23, p. 117. "Imperialism and the Split in Socialism," Sbornik Sotsial-Demokrata No. 2, December, 1916.

to fall, as they could if a responsible government were adopted. Levin, in his history of the Second Duma, summarized the two Social Democratic Party factions' positions on this most important question: the Mensheviks favored a Duma ministry, but the Bolsheviks opposed it. The Bolsheviks--here Levin clearly meant Lenin himself: the articles he cited in this section were all by Lenin--were very suspicious of a Duma ministry. Lenin feared that it would involve a deal between the government and the bourgeoisie at the expense of the people; furthermore, it would merely foster constitutional illusions and thus detract from the revolutionary consciousness of the proletariat. In short, it would deceive the workers into believing that they were actually making headway under the czar, without overthrowing the entire system.⁶¹

In 1917 Lenin raised identical objections to the Pre-parliament which he thought had as its aim "to trick the masses, to deceive the workers and peasants, to distract them from the new upsurge of the revolution, to dazzle the eyes of the oppressed classes by a new dress for the old, long tried-out, bedraggled, threadbare 'coalition' with the bourgeoisie" ⁶²

⁶¹ Alfred Levin, The Second Duma (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1940), p. 51.

⁶² Lenin, Works Vol. 26, pp. 55-56. "From a Publicist's Diary," Oct. 5 (Sept. 22), 1917, published, 1924.

In 1918, when speaking to a group of propagandists on their way to the provinces, Lenin said of the bourgeoisie: "One day they bribe ignorant soldiers to raid wine and spirit warehouses; the next day they get railway officials to hold up freights or shipowners to hold up grain barges, etc., on their way to the capital." It was to be the task of these propagandists to bring order to the provinces which would show the workers and peasants that "they need have no fear of any tricks on the part of the bourgeoisie."⁶³

Lenin almost always came back to the basic contention that the agitators and propagandists, the Social Democratic professional persuaders, were to educate, to show, to explain over and over again, to demonstrate. Only this would produce the class consciousness needed--if the workers could but see where their real class interests lay, they would adopt those class interests as their own personal goals. If a person were but shown the truth, he would follow it--at least if that person were a member of the proletarian class.

Generally, we have now seen, Lenin conceived of persuasion as a means of education, at least in relation to the proletariat. However, he was much more concerned

⁶³Lenin, Works Vol. 26, p. 514. Report of a speech to propagandists on their way to the provinces, Pravda No. 18, Feb. 6 (Jan. 24), 1918; the speech was delivered on Feb. 5 (Jan. 23), 1918.

in his writings with specific tasks of persuasion, and it is to these specific tasks that we may now turn our attention.

Agitation and Propaganda: Specific Tasks

The question, "What specifically was agitation and propaganda to do?" is a very complex one and, as is true of most questions dealing with Lenin, one that he never answered systematically. For Lenin, the tasks of agitation and propaganda were entirely ad hoc ones: "immediate tasks" or "tasks of the moment" were often-used phrases. Out of the plethora of specific tasks which Lenin discussed, we will attempt to select several representative ones and present them here since an entire presentation of all the specific tasks which Lenin delegated to agitation and propaganda would actually involve quotation of the major part of the material in his thirty-eight volumes of Collected Works.

Basically, Lenin believed that agitation and propaganda had the task of enlisting support for the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party, specifically the Bolshevik faction. That, however, is a very high level generalization; a number of more specific tasks can be found without delving into all the details of the Party programs and the specific problems which arose during Lenin's revolutionary career. From the point of view of

the Party, then, Lenin believed that agitation and propaganda, properly conducted, would ensure the Party of a place in society, especially in the society which would follow a revolution. As early as 1902 he wrote that those "who make nation-wide political agitation the corner-stone of their programme, their tactics, and their organisational work . . . stand the least risk of missing the revolution."⁶⁴

To develop Lenin's ideas more fully, we will take, in chronological order, a number of the more important points. Turning first to his period of exile, in 1897, Lenin wrote The Tasks of the Russian Social-Democrats in which appeared one very important generalization about the tasks of agitation and propaganda. He contended that "simultaneously with the dissemination of scientific socialism" the Social Democrats should propagate "democratic ideas among the working-class masses" and should

strive to spread an understanding of absolutism in all its manifestations, of its class content, of the necessity to overthrow it, of the impossibility of waging a successful struggle for the workers' cause without achieving political liberty and the democratisation of Russia's political and social system.⁶⁵

Here Lenin set out three basic tasks for the propagan-

⁶⁴Lenin, Works Vol. 5, p. 513. What Is To Be Done?, March, 1902.

⁶⁵Lenin, Works Vol. 2, p. 332. The Tasks of the Russian Social-Democrats, written at the end of 1897, published in Geneva in 1898.

dists and agitators of his Party: 1) to disseminate scientific socialism, which, naturally, would be primarily undertaken among the proletariat, rather than the peasantry; 2) to propagate democratic ideas among the working-class masses, these ideas to be directed at all workers in Russia; and 3) to spread an understanding of absolutism in all its manifestations. This final task was to be directed at and undertaken among all the various classes of Russian society which could possibly become anti-monarchist.

Two years later, in 1899, while still in Siberia, Lenin wrote "Apropos of the Profession de Foi," another article of refutation. In this article, he stressed the task of enlisting support for the class struggle from among the working class. He contended that it was a task of agitation to

encourage the political struggle in all conceivable manifestations, to organise this struggle and transform it from its spontaneous forms into the struggle of a single political party. Agitation, therefore, must serve as a means of widely expanding the political protest and the more organised forms of political struggle.⁶⁶

Here still other tasks are presented: not only must agitation enlist the support of more workers, but it should also expand specifically the organized forms of

⁶⁶Lenin, Works Vol. 4, p. 294. "Apropos of the Profession de Foi," written at the end of 1899, first published in 1924.

struggle.

We now come to 1902 and, for our purposes, Lenin's primary work, What Is To Be Done? Here a number of important functions of agitation and propaganda were presented. The first was that of helping to develop theoreticians from among the working masses. Lenin believed that the class struggle required an ideology developed by the professional revolutionaries. However:

This does not mean, of course, that the workers have no part in creating such an ideology. They take part, however, not as workers, but as socialist theoreticians, as Proudhons and Weitlings; in other words, they take part only when they are able, and to the extent that they are able, more or less, to acquire the knowledge of their age and develop that knowledge. But in order that working men may succeed in this more often, every effort must be made to raise the level of the consciousness of the workers in general; it is necessary that the workers do not confine themselves to the artificially restricted limits of "literature for workers" but that they learn to an increasing degree to master general literature. It would be even truer to say "are not confined", instead of "do not confine themselves", because the workers themselves wish to read and do read all that is written for the intelligentsia, and only a few (bad) intellectuals believe that it is enough "for workers" to be told a few things about factory conditions and to have repeated to them over and over again what has long been known.⁶⁷

In this work Lenin would seem to have set a limit to agitation, and a starting point for propaganda among the workers. To develop more worker-theoreticians, the gen-

⁶⁷Lenin, Works Vol. 5, p. 384. What Is To Be Done?, March, 1902.

eral level of the workers must be raised; this, apparently, would allow for an opportunity for more workers of ability to have the chance to become advanced theoreticians. To do this, agitation was not enough; notice that Lenin condemns the mere repetition of "what has long been known." As we have seen when discussing the definitions of the two terms, "agitation" and "propaganda," this would necessitate a change from the former to the latter.

Secondly, Lenin argued in What Is To Be Done? that agitation and propaganda should enable the Party to increase its support among the masses. In the 1902 publication, however, Lenin was more concerned with making a worker into a true Social Democrat than with merely enlisting his support. To become a Social Democrat, in Lenin's opinion, the worker had to have "a clear picture in his mind of the economic nature and the social and political features" of every important class in Russia: landlords and priests, state officials and peasants, students and vagabonds. The worker had to know the operation of the class struggle: the class interests of the various groups mentioned above, the "inner workings" and "selfish strivings" of each and every class, the interests which were reflected by specific institutions and laws. To get such a "clear picture" the Social Democrats would have to present more than mere books for the

worker to read; they would have to present "living examples"--presumably themselves insofar as one class was concerned--and "political exposures," these two conditions being "essential and fundamental" for "training the masses in revolutionary activity."⁶⁸ Thus, another task of agitation and propaganda was to educate the workers so that they would know all these "facts" about their society and could therefore become true Social Democrats.

Furthermore, agitation and propaganda, in using political exposures, would help to isolate the czar and his monarchist supporters. Such a contention seems to have been based on the divide-and-conquer principle. Political exposures, Lenin wrote, would serve as "a powerful instrument for disintegrating the system we oppose, as a means for diverting from the enemy his casual or temporary allies, as a means for spreading hostility and distrust among the permanent partners of the autocracy."⁶⁹ Presumably, this would be primarily a task for agitation, since the device to be used was exposure. Propaganda seems generally to have been reserved for more long-range activities and to have used more pedestrian devices than exposures.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 413.

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 431.

A fourth task was closely related to the second: to help relieve the Social Democratic Party of some of the burdens of routine affairs, which would largely result from the attraction of new and better members to the Party. At that time, 1902, the czarist government had loosened the restrictions on labor union-type organizations to enable the government itself, especially the secret police, to form unions. It was thought that if the government formed unions, it would both be able to control the organizations formed and at the same time satisfy the workers by providing them with "unions." It did not quite work out the way it was planned. Lenin believed that, in the long run, legalization of some union activities would help the Social Democrats, primarily by giving them another example of governmental hypocrisy which would be relatively easy to expose. These exposures would attract ever larger numbers of workers to the Social Democratic Party and the new members could take over many of the legal functions that were then absorbing much of the Party workers' time. Lenin suggested that the new members would be able to carry out such activities as distribution of legal books and "mutual aid," which would have a snowball effect: they would "inevitably provide us with an increasing quantity of material for agitation."⁷⁰ Of course, the

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 455.

first step, as the last in this chain of reasoning, was successful agitation: the governmental unions must be exposed first, to attract new members to the Social Democrats, to do the legal work, to provide more material for more agitation.

In April, 1902, Lenin wrote "A Letter to the Northern League" in which he advised the League on matters of agitation and propaganda. In this letter, Lenin discussed two primary functions of propaganda: 1) as a means of training agitators and 2) as a means of spreading class consciousness in general.⁷¹ The first function is quite understandable, since it would be necessary to present to the prospective agitator many ideas, the wide range of theoretical work of Social Democracy. The agitator would have to know and absorb the socialist theory to be able to conduct effective agitation; he would have to know what the Party line was to be able to present it with local illustrations. The second function has already been discussed when we examined the institution known as the worker circle. This activity, of course, continued throughout the pre-revolutionary period; there were always workers who wanted an education and the Social Democrats, as well as other revolutionaries, were

⁷¹Lenin, Works Vol. 6, p. 167. "A Letter to the Northern League," written in April, 1902, first published in 1923.

always happy to provide it, with their own specific party lines attached.

At various times Lenin turned his attention to the agitational and propagandistic tasks in relation to the peasantry of Russia. An article of his appeared in 1906 soon after the czar had dissolved the Duma:

Of course, in our work of agitation we must, on the one hand, do all we can to explain to the peasants that it is absolutely legitimate and necessary to wage a pitiless struggle against the enemy, even to the extent of destroying his property; on the other hand, we must show that on the degree of organization depends the possibility of a much more rational and advantageous outcome of the struggle: destroying the enemy (the landlords and bureaucrats, especially the police) and transferring all property to the people, or to the peasants, intact (or with the least possible damage).⁷²

It must be remembered that Lenin was not much concerned with the peasants. They were not, he thought, a truly revolutionary class; it would be many years before they would develop into one. They were bourgeois in attitude and would have to go through a period of development in which they would become worker-farmers before they would or could become truly revolutionary. However, he still had to face the fact that the vast majority of the Russian population was composed of peasants, and hence he could not ignore them entirely. In 1906, as at other

⁷²Lenin, Works Vol. 11, p. 123. "The Dissolution of the Duma and the Tasks of the Proletariat," July, 1906.

times, Lenin simply saw the peasants as possibly anti-monarchical because they were anti-landlord; they could be a useful ally in a revolution, but could not be the basis for a socialistic society. Consistent with these beliefs, his advice concerning agitational and propagandistic tasks among the peasantry was usually limited to two goals: 1) to foster the peasantry's hatred of the landlords and 2) restrain them from excessive destruction.

As the first decade of this century ended and the second began, the strike activity in Russia increased tremendously. By 1913 it had grown to such proportions that Lenin believed there was another task for agitation as a result of the increased activities of the workers in the economic sphere:

The working class continues to act as the leader of the revolutionary struggle for nation-wide liberation. The mass revolutionary strike movement continues to grow. The genuine struggle waged by the advanced contingents of the working class is proceeding under revolutionary slogans.

Owing to the very circumstances of the struggle the mass economic movement, which in many cases starts with the most elementary demands, is to an increasing degree merging with the revolutionary working-class movement.

It is the task of the advanced workers to accelerate by their agitational and educational activities the process of uniting the proletariat under the revolutionary slogans of the present epoch. Only in this way will the advanced workers succeed in fulfill-

ing their other task of rousing the peasant and urban democrats.⁷³

By 1917, in the middle of the short life of the Provisional Government, Lenin perceived the main task for Social Democratic agitators to be one of exposure of the new forces governing Russia. The czar was safely in prison, but Lenin believed that the Provisional Government was not much better. In July he wrote:

All agitational work among the people must be reorganised to ensure that it takes account of the specific experience of the present revolution, and particularly the July days, i.e., that it clearly points to the real enemy of the people, the military clique, the Cadets and the Black Hundreds, and that it definitely unmasks the petty-bourgeois parties, the Socialist-Revolutionary /basically a party of the peasantry/ and Menshevik parties, which played and are playing the part of butcher's aides.

All agitational work among the people must be reorganised so as to make clear that it is absolutely hopeless to expect the peasants to obtain land as long as the power of the military clique has not been overthrown, and as long as the Socialist-Revolutionary and Menshevik parties have not been exposed and deprived of the people's trust. That would be a very long and arduous process under the "normal" conditions of capitalist development, but both the war and economic disruption will tremendously accelerate it. These are "accelerators" that may make a month or even a week equal to a year.⁷⁴

Here we see suggested the theory of "telescoping the

⁷³Lenin, Works Vol. 19, p. 419. "The Tasks of Agitation in the Present Situation," a resolution of the Summer, 1913, Joint Conference of the Central Committee of the R.S.D.L.P. and Party Officials.

⁷⁴Lenin, Works Vol. 25, p. 188. On Slogans, July, 1917.

revolution" from a slightly different angle than was generally presented; in this case, the war and economic disruptions would speed up the natural process. But more important for our immediate point is Lenin's discussion of the task of depriving the various other revolutionary parties, specifically the Menshevik and Socialist-Revolutionary parties, of the people's trust. The agitation would have to make it clear to the people that these parties were out to deceive them: exposure of these parties was necessary.

After the November (N.S.) Revolution had taken place, there erupted the civil war in Russia between the Red army and the "White" army, between Trotsky, as commanding officer of the Communist forces, and Generals Kolchak and Deniken. This war was fought to decide who would control the countryside--the revolution had already decided who would control the major cities. During the civil war the propagandists had yet another task: that of overcoming chaos and restoring order to the areas under Bolshevik control. On January 23, 1918 (O.S.) Lenin gave a speech to a group of propagandists who were bound for the provinces. Pravda reported this speech on the following day. According to the Pravda account, Lenin spoke, in relevant part, as follows:

Chaos is our other enemy. It has to be fought with greater vigour now that the position of the Soviets has become stronger.

That struggle, comrades, is one you must promote. Great importance now attaches to your trip, the trip of propagandists from both government parties [the Bolsheviks and the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries] now at the head of Soviet power. I believe that in the backwoods you will derive a great deal of satisfaction from persistent efforts to build up Soviet power and spread revolutionary ideas in the villages, eliminate the chaos and liberate the toiling peasants from the village kulaks.

.
Comrades, you have before you some very difficult but, as I have said, satisfying work which boils down to getting the rural economy running and building up Soviet power. But you have assistants, for we know that every worker and peasant earning his own livelihood feels, deep down in his heart, that there is no salvation from famine and ruin but in Soviet power. We can save Russia.⁷⁵

Russia, it seems, was to be saved through the activities of the propagandists.

Agitation: Practical Instructions

On a few occasions Lenin gave specific instructions to the Party's professional persuaders. We may limit our discussion to agitation alone since Lenin seldom gave advice or instruction in the art of propaganda; what little he had to say about the actual practice of propaganda was said primarily in connection with the Party's newspapers. In such cases, his advice was simply to keep the newspaper at the level of propaganda, to not let it become another medium for agitation. It appears

⁷⁵Lenin, Works Vol. 26, pp. 513-14. Pravda No. 18, Feb. 6 (Jan. 24), 1918.

that Lenin did not concern himself with the techniques of propaganda; he seems to have taken them entirely for granted, presumably because propaganda was what the party leaders did and they, apparently, needed no instruction. Furthermore, he did not seem to be actively grooming a second generation of revolutionary leaders. At least if he were, it is not apparent in his writings, so he did not have an opportunity to instruct in the techniques of propaganda in that regard. It seems to be almost entirely ignored as an important consideration. However, Lenin was often concerned with agitational techniques; he wrote much about the use of agitation, and sometimes about the proper way to conduct it, the sources for materials agitators should utilize, the proper line for the agitators to take, etc.

In presenting an account of Lenin's instructions on the techniques of agitation, a major problem is that of organizing his writings on the subject. They seem to be, again, almost entirely ad hoc instructions, designed to help agitators overcome some particular problem. As a solution, we will simply present a number of specific instructions given by Lenin on a number of different occasions throughout his revolutionary career, keeping the examples typical and illustrative of his general concepts.

First, one must keep in mind Lenin's notion of the

dominant medium: agitation was to rely primarily on the spoken word. Also, one should remember the date--the early part of the twentieth century--during which Lenin was most directly concerned with agitation. At that time, of course, there were almost none of what we would call "mass media," and illiteracy was widespread in Russia, especially in the rural areas. Both of these factors probably dictated Lenin's prescription of media. The spoken word, at that time, could not be supplemented effectively by written materials, and had to rely on individual agitators present in the specific locale where agitation was to be conducted. Throughout his revolutionary career, Lenin upheld the dominance of the spoken word in agitation. In 1919, when addressing a plenary meeting of the All-Russia Central Council of Trade Unions, he referred to the "usual methods of agitation--lectures, meetings, etc. . . ." He then proposed additional measures, again primarily oral presentations by individuals present at the encounter with the audience: "house-to-house" contacts, "distribution of leaflets and personal talks."⁷⁶ Here we see that there was to be a legitimate role for written communications, but it was supplementary in nature.

⁷⁶Lenin, Works Vol. 29, p. 289. Report on the tasks of the trade unions in the mobilisation for the eastern front to the Plenary meeting of the All-Russia Central Council of Trade Unions, April 11, 1919.

Early in his career, Lenin indicated his awareness of a basic problem of communication which the agitator would face: that of using language which his audience would understand. In 1899 he wrote "Apropos of the Profession de Foi" in which he referred to this problem:

. . . it is untrue that the masses will not understand the idea of political struggle. Even the most backward worker will understand the idea, provided, of course, the agitator or propagandist is able to approach him in such a way as to communicate the idea to him, to explain it in understandable language on the basis of facts the worker knows from everyday experience.⁷⁷

In light of later developments in Russia, and in light of Lenin's later writings, the term "propagandist" appears unusual as used in this context. However, it must be remembered that at that early date the propagandists were those who were concerned with educating the worker circles. Later, the propagandists assumed a more institutionalized form, and contact with the workers was generally an agitational, rather than a propagandistic one. The reasons for this were explained in connection with the origins of the definitions of the two terms, "agitation" and "propaganda."

At any rate, Lenin sounded quite like a rhetorical theoretician in 1911 when he wrote concerning a specific slogan:

⁷⁷Lenin, Works Vol. 4, p. 291. "Apropos of the Profession de Foi," written at the end of 1899, first published in 1924.

Wherever a Social-Democrat makes a political speech, it is his duty always to speak of a republic. But one must know how to speak of a republic. One cannot speak about it in the same terms when addressing a meeting in a factory and one in a Cossack village, when speaking at a meeting of students or in a peasant cottage, when it is dealt with from the rostrum of the Third Duma or in the columns of a publication issued abroad. The art of any propagandist and agitator consists in his ability to find the best means of influencing any given audience, by presenting a definite truth in such a way as to make it most convincing, most easy to digest, most graphic, and most strongly impressive.⁷⁸

Earlier, Karl Kautsky had written about the problem of audience adaptation, and Lenin appears to have obtained many of his ideas on the subject from him. In 1899 Lenin quoted Kautsky favorably in A Retrograde Trend in Russian Social-Democracy:

"Tactics and agitation must not be confused," says Kautsky in his book against Bernstein. "Agitational methods must be adapted to individual and local conditions. Every agitator must be allowed to select those methods of agitation that he has at his disposal. One agitator may create the greatest impression by his enthusiasm, another by his biting sarcasm, a third by his ability to adduce a large number of instances, etc. While being adapted to the agitator, agitation must also be adapted to the public. The agitator must speak so that he will be understood; he must take as a starting-point something well known to his listeners. All this is self-evident and is not merely applicable to agitation conducted among the peasantry. One has to talk to cabmen differently than to sail-

⁷⁸ Lenin, Works Vol. 17, p. 341. "The Slogans and Organisation of Social-Democratic Work Inside and Outside the Duma," Sotsial-Demokrat No. 25, Dec. 21 (8), 1911.

ors, and to sailors differently than to printers. Agitation must be individualised, but our tactics, our political activity must be uniform."⁷⁹

Lenin often advised agitators to use examples taken from the locale in which they were conducting agitation. From Kautsky's book, it becomes clear that the examples were to be taken from the individual locality because these would be the ones most meaningful to the audience. Indeed, perhaps the local incidents would be the only ones even known, let alone meaningful, to the audience since the governmental censorship prevented news of disturbances such as strikes from ever leaving the districts in which they occurred. However, Lenin believed that each locality would certainly provide a large number of examples from which to choose. In April, 1901, he wrote:

The most common facts in the life of any Russian village provide a thousand issues for agitation in behalf of the above demands. This agitation must be based upon the local, concrete, and most pressing needs of the peasantry; yet it must not be confined to these needs, but must be steadily directed towards widening the outlook of the peasants, towards developing their political consciousness.⁸⁰

In this article Lenin was discussing agitation among the peasantry, but the same advice applied to agitation

⁷⁹Lenin, Works Vol. 4, p. 282. A Retrograde Trend in Russian Social-Democracy, written at the end of 1899, first published in 1924.

⁸⁰Lenin, Works Vol. 4, p. 425. "The Workers' Party and the Peasantry," written in February, 1901, published in Iskra No. 3, April, 1901.

among the proletariat: base the agitation on immediate local needs, but widen the scope at the same time. Political consciousness was to be developed by agitation, by widening the "outlook" of the masses to enable them to see the class struggle, not merely their own petty individual demands. A broader outlook could be accomplished by introducing political elements and political aspects to all economic questions: "Agitation on the basis of the direct and most urgent needs of the peasants will fulfil its purpose--i.e., carry the class struggle into the countryside--only when it succeeds in combining every exposure of some 'economic' evil with definite political demands."⁸¹

The central party would establish a program, a platform, which would enable the individual agitators to adapt to any given situation. The central organization would provide the principle, the abstraction, the agitators then had to make it concrete in their own localities. For example, Lenin thought that the agrarian program of the Party, established in 1902, provided

a guiding principle that will enable any Social-Democrat, even if he finds himself in some out-of-the-way village, even if he is faced with the most tangled web of agrarian relationships which bring general democratic tasks into the

⁸¹Ibid., p. 426.

foreground, to apply and stress his proletarian standpoint when he is tackling those tasks⁸²

Guided by these principles of agrarian policy, any Russian Social-Democrat who finds himself in the countryside will be able to see his way in the intricate maze of relationships there, and will be able to "adapt" his strictly consistent revolutionary propoganda and agitation to these relationships.⁸³

The principle was established by the Party, the individual agitator was to apply it.

Constant repetition seems to be a technique Lenin considered essential for effective agitation. When the Social Democrats were accused of "hammering away at the same slogans" Lenin thought "such an accusation a compliment. For it is plainly our task to hammer away persistently at vital political slogans, while spreading the general truths of the Social-Democratic programme."⁸⁴

Another technique he favored was constant study of the enemy, to provide material for agitation.

For agitation among the masses, the study of extracts from the speeches of Shidlovsky, Bobrinsky, Lvov, Golitsyn, Kapustin and Co. is absolutely necessary. Up till now we have seen the autocracy almost exclusively when it was giving orders, and sometimes, rarely, publishing

⁸²Lenin, Works Vol. 6, p. 125. The Agrarian Programme of Russian Social-Democracy, written in February and March, 1902, published in August, 1902.

⁸³Ibid., p. 149.

⁸⁴Lenin, Works Vol. 9, p. 222. "In the Wake of the Monarchist Bourgeoisie, or in the Van of the Revolutionary Proletariat and Peasantry?," Proletary No. 15, Sept. 5 (Aug. 23), 1905.

statements in the spirit of Ugryum-Burcheyev [a dull-minded fictional character]. Now we have the open defence of the landlord monarchy and the Black-Hundred "constitution" by the organised representatives of the ruling classes, and this defence provides very valuable material for the awakening of those sections of the people who are politically unconscious or indifferent.⁸⁵

Quotations taken from non-Bolsheviks, also, would often prove helpful. During the civil war, on July 9, 1919, Lenin advised agitators to explain that the alternative was either "Kolchak and Denikin or Soviet power, the power (dictatorship) of the workers." He counseled the use of "testimony of non-Bolshevik eyewitnesses, of Mensheviks, Socialist-Revolutionaries, and non-party people who have been in the areas overrun by Kolchak or Denikin."⁸⁶

The above are some of the instructions given by Lenin, on various occasions, to revolutionary agitators. As a general rule, however, Lenin was more concerned about higher level abstractions than about specific instructions to agitators to govern their day-to-day affairs.

⁸⁵Lenin, Works Vol. 15, p. 305. "The Agrarian Debates in the Third Duma," Proletary No. 40, Dec. 14 (1), 1908.

⁸⁶Lenin, Works Vol. 29, p. 439. "All Out for the Fight Against Denikin!," letter of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik) to party organizations, Bulletin of the Central Committee, RCP(B), No. 4, July 9, 1919.

Summary

In this chapter we have discussed the two central concepts of persuasion: agitation and propaganda. Both terms had a significant history prior to Lenin's appearance as an active revolutionary. Propaganda was a long-range activity, primarily educational in nature, conducted within the worker circles. The propagandists sought to teach the workers various subjects ranging from simple literacy to political science and economics, and usually they attached their own party lines.

Agitation originated in Poland among the Union of Polish Workers. It was found that greater immediate success could be obtained by inflaming the workers to take some overt action, usually to stage a strike. To gain wider acceptance of agitation as a method, Kremer wrote a pamphlet, On Agitation, some copies of which were taken into Russia. Kremer's work was the form in which Lenin first contacted agitation as a persuasive method. Agitation was conceived as dealing strictly with economic demands of the workers.

Lenin opposed the concept of agitation at first. Following his term of exile, however, he revised both concepts, and accepted both as necessary. In 1902 What Is To Be Done? appeared, in which Lenin set forth his definitions for the two terms. Agitation was defined as a method of persuasion directed toward the masses. Con-

sequently, the agitator took one idea and illustrated it. Propaganda, on the other hand, was the method of persuasion directed toward the intellectual elite. Consequently, the propagandist took many ideas and presented them as a systematic theory. The agitator was to use primarily the spoken word, the propagandist the written word.

Both methods of persuasion had one overall goal: the education of the proletariat. Lenin believed the masses of workers were ignorant of their true class interests. He also believed that if the proletariat were simply shown their true class interests, their true long-range interests, and the true relation of their problems to other classes in Russian society, they would at once recognize that truth and adopt it as their belief system. In other words, Lenin thought that if the proletariat were simply shown the Marxist truth, they would become class conscious and therefore revolutionary. Thus, persuasion was designed to educate the masses to see their real class interests.

However, there were also a number of specific tasks that agitation and propaganda were to accomplish, and several of these were discussed. Through persuasion, the support for the Party was to be increased, and socialist ideas were to be disseminated. The masses were to gain an understanding of absolutism in all its mani-

festations.

On a number of occasions Lenin offered instructions or recommendations on the art of agitation. Basically, his advice was simply that the agitator adapt to his audience in all necessary ways. He recommended that examples be used, particularly examples drawn from the locale in which the agitation was being conducted. Repetition was another tactic of which Lenin approved. Observation of the enemy, the bourgeoisie, could be a valuable source of material for agitation.

In general, Lenin placed great tasks on persuasion as a revolutionary strategy. If the Party's persuasive attempts were unsuccessful, the masses would not become educated, would not develop class consciousness. Then the Party would remain a group of a few intellectuals alienated from the rest of society. If the Social Democratic Party were to lead the masses, the masses had to be persuaded to follow.

CHAPTER IV

SLOGANS

Slogans played a most important role in Lenin's concept of agitation and propaganda. In fact, from 1905 on much of his writing on the subject of persuasion dealt either with the topic of slogans generally or with a specific slogan. The Bolsheviks' slogans seem to have been an important factor in their success in November, 1917 (N.S.). The Russian historian Vernadsky attributed the strength of the Bolsheviks to "the force of their slogans and the efficiency of their organization."¹ Certainly Lenin believed that correct slogans were necessary for success. In this chapter, then, we will discuss Lenin's concept of slogans and their use. We will consider four different aspects of our subject: 1) the creation of slogans, 2) the functions of slogans, 3) phrase mongering, or incorrect slogans, and 4) the importance of slogans.

Lenin never offered a definition of the term "slogan," but perhaps by considering his methods of creating

¹George Vernadsky, A History of Russia (New York: New Home Library, 1944), p. 244.

correct slogans, his prescriptions for finding and selecting slogans to advance, the concept may become more clear. For Lenin, a correct slogan was not simply a catchy phrase used to win elections. It was not something which one would hire an advertising firm to write. A correct slogan had to be based on the realities of the political, economic, and social forces operative at the time the slogan was to be advanced. "Every particular slogan must be deduced from the totality of specific features of a definite political situation."² Basically, a slogan was considered to be the summary of the entire program, or the important points of the program, of a political party. From an analysis of a slogan, one could determine what class interests dominated the party advancing that slogan. Naturally, Lenin's theoretical basis for the criticism of slogans was his brand of Marxism. He always asked what class interests a slogan contained or represented, but he asked it from a socialist point of view. However, the point remains that a correct slogan had to be based on the active forces in a society; for Lenin it could not be otherwise. Thus, one had to analyze the active forces within the given society before one could decide what slogans would be proper to advance his class interests. As Lenin stated

²Lenin, Works Vol. 25, p. 183. On Slogans, July, 1917.

in the concrete situation of the 1905 revolution: "In its social and economic essence, the democratic revolution in Russia is a bourgeois revolution. It is, however, not enough merely to repeat this correct Marxist proposition. It has to be properly understood and properly applied to political slogans."³

Indeed, not only were class interests involved in the presentation of specific slogans, they were also involved in the absence of specific slogans. Lenin contended, again during the 1905 revolution, that "one must know what real political forces profit by the tactical slogans advanced--or perhaps by the absence of certain slogans."⁴ The latter consideration Lenin used primarily as an aid in analyzing proposed slogans. When a slogan appeared correct from a positive analysis, answering the question, "What class will benefit from this slogan?" Lenin then applied a negative analysis, answering the question, "What class will benefit if this slogan is not advanced?"

Political, social, and economic forces active at the time had to be analyzed before a slogan could be chosen or judged. The correct slogan would be implicit in the situation. One test of the correctness of a

³Lenin, Works Vol. 9, p. 111. Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution, July, 1905.

⁴Ibid., p. 105.

slogan was whether it merely obtained strength by being a "decree from above" by the top Party hierarchy, or whether it obtained its strength "from the conviction of the revolutionary workers themselves."⁵ One could not simply ask what forces were active; one also had to decide whether a specific demand was contained implicitly in the proletariat as it was affected by the active forces.

Perhaps greater clarity can be obtained by presenting several examples of Lenin's analyses of specific slogans. In 1913 Lenin wrote Theses on the National Question in which he confronted the slogan of "cultural-national autonomy":

The Social-Democratic attitude to the slogan of "cultural-national" (or simply "national") "autonomy" or to plans for its implementation is a negative one, since this slogan (1) undoubtedly contradicts the internationalism of the class struggle of the proletariat, (2) makes it easier for the proletariat and the masses of working people to be drawn into the sphere of influence of bourgeois nationalism, and (3) is capable of distracting attention from the task of the consistent democratic transformation of the state as a whole, which transformation alone can ensure (to the extent that this can, in general, be ensured under capitalism) peace between nationalities.⁶

⁵Lenin, Works Vol. 18, pp. 111-12. "The Slogans of the All-Russian Conference of the R.S.D.L.P. in January, 1912 and the May Day Movement," Sotsial-Demokrat No. 27, June 17 (4), 1912. Italics here and throughout the chapter are in the original.

⁶Lenin, Works Vol. 19, p. 246. Theses on the National Question, June, 1913, first published in 1925.

In analyzing this slogan, Lenin took into consideration not only the theory of internationalism, but the actual force of nationalism. Due to the latter, the slogan was rejected. In other words, for Lenin a slogan did not exist in a vacuum, but inevitably advanced certain interests and retarded others. Upon analysis of the affected interests rested the acceptance or rejection of a given slogan.

For a second example, we may consider the 1905 revolution and the slogan of a "constituent assembly." Lenin considered the conditions necessary for such an assembly and the consequent necessary amendments to the slogan:

To establish a new order "that will really express the will of the people" it is not enough to term a representative assembly a constituent assembly. Such an assembly must have the authority and power to "constitute". Conscious of this the [Third] Congress [of the R.S.D.L.P.] resolution does not confine itself to the formal slogan of a "constituent assembly", but adds the material conditions which alone will enable such an assembly to carry out its task properly. This specification of the conditions enabling an assembly that is constituent in name to become one in fact is imperatively necessary, for, as we have more than once pointed out, the liberal bourgeoisie, as represented by the Constitutional-Monarchist Party, is deliberately distorting the slogan of a popular constituent assembly, and reducing it to a hollow phrase.⁷

In this case, Lenin's Party had analyzed the conditions

⁷Lenin, Works Vol. 9, p. 26. Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution, July, 1905.

necessary for a truly "constituent" assembly and included them along with the central goal as conditions to work for and demands to be met. Again, knowledge and analysis of the forces within the society was needed before a slogan could be correct; otherwise, it would remain a mere "hollow phrase."

In other cases, also, Lenin thought that additional conditions were necessary for a slogan to be correct. For example, during the First World War Lenin advocated "Peace" as a slogan. However, he was not a pacifist. Thus, he analyzed "Peace" as a slogan as follows:

The peace slogan can be advanced either in connection with definite peace terms, or without any conditions at all, as a struggle, not for a definite kind of peace, but for peace in general In the latter case, we obviously have a slogan that is not only non-socialist but entirely devoid of meaning and content.⁸

In such a case, additional terms would have to be added to the slogan to give it meaning.

As a final example, let us take Lenin's analysis of the famous slogan, "All Power to the Soviets," in 1917. This, of course, was the slogan he advanced shortly after returning to Russia in April. However, by July he no longer liked the people and parties in control of the Soviets, so he abandoned the slogan. He was to take it up again in October, but the analysis to be quoted

⁸Lenin, Works Vol. 21, p. 290. The Question of Peace, written, July-August, 1915, first published, 1924.

here was written in July, 1917:

The slogan calling for the transfer of state power to the Soviets would now sound quixotic or mocking. Objectively it would be deceiving the people; it would be fostering in them the delusion that even now it is enough for the Soviets to want to take power, or to pass such a decision, for power to be theirs, that there are still parties in the Soviets which have not been tainted by abetting the butchers, that it is possible to undo what has been done.⁹

The substitution of the abstract for the concrete is one of the greatest and most dangerous sins in a revolution. The present Soviets have failed, have suffered complete defeat, because they are dominated by the Socialist-Revolutionary and Menshevik parties. At the moment these Soviets are like sheep brought to the slaughter-house and bleating pitifully under the knife. The Soviets at present are powerless and helpless against the triumphant and triumphing counter-revolution. The slogan calling for the transfer of power to the Soviets might be construed as a "simple" appeal for the transfer of power to the present Soviets, and to say that, to appeal for it, would now mean deceiving the people. Nothing is more dangerous than deceit.¹⁰

Attempting to justify an abrupt shift of slogans, he appealed to an abrupt shift of forces. After the Bolsheviks had obtained a majority in the Soviets, naturally, he again advocated transfer of "All Power to the Soviets."

The second aspect of slogans to be considered is

⁹Lenin, Works Vol. 25, p. 185. On Slogans, July, 1917.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 189-90.

the functions they were to perform in the revolution. In Lenin's writings three primary functions stand out. First, a slogan was to be used to gain the attention of an audience. Gaining attention seems to have been particularly important in relation to the peasantry. Since the Social Democratic Party professed to be a party of the proletariat, the peasantry could not be much involved. Yet, since the Russian population was predominantly peasant, the Social Democrats could not ignore them. So, the programs of the Bolsheviks always included a section on agrarian problems. To draw the attention of the peasants to what the Social Democrats proposed to do for them, Lenin advocated the use of a slogan: "The practical demands and slogans, or, more properly, the proposals that have to be made to gain the attention of the peasants, should be based on vital and urgent issues."¹¹

Following the same analysis, Lenin advocated the use of a slogan at the end of the Social Democratic election platform. Such a slogan would be a "watchword" for the election campaign, "stating the most cardinal issues of current political practice, and providing a most convenient and most immediate pretext, as well as

¹¹Lenin, Works Vol. 24, p. 168. "Congress of Peasants' Deputies," Pravda No. 34, April 29 (16), 1917.

subject matter, for comprehensive socialist propaganda."¹² The use of a "watchword" seems closely related to the use of a slogan to gain the attention of an audience, but it included the additional function of keeping the attention of the propagandist or agitator focused on the major issues.

A second function slogans were to perform was that of leading the masses. Lenin even argued that without slogans to lead the masses, the masses possibly would not be led. In 1905, during the first Russian revolution, he wrote: "It is exceptionally important at the present time for Social-Democrats to have correct tactical slogans for leading the masses. There is nothing more dangerous in a revolutionary period than belittling the importance of tactical slogans that are sound in principle."¹³

Later in 1905 he expanded on his claim that the slogans of the Bolsheviks must guide the masses. The slogans, he contended, must not "limp behind events," being merely "adapted to events after their occurrence." The slogans must "lead us forward, light up the path before us, and raise us above the immediate tasks of the

¹²Lenin, Works Vol. 17, p. 281. "The Election Campaign and the Election Platform," Sotsial-Demokrat No. 24, October 31 (18), 1911.

¹³Lenin, Works Vol. 9, p. 19. Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution, July, 1905.

moment." The slogans must provide a steady, constant, stable point around which the everyday tasks could be done; otherwise it would be impossible to "wage a consistent and sustained struggle" on the part of the proletariat, for the Party could not "determine its tactics from occasion to occasion" and maintain consistency.¹⁴ In other words, the slogans must guide not only the masses but the Party members as well, enabling them to meet various situations in a consistent manner. In the latter sense, the second function of slogans was quite closely related to the first function.

An outstanding example of the second function of slogans, leading the masses, occurred in 1912 when the police arrested a large number of the more important Social Democrats and labor leaders in St. Petersburg, shattering the labor organization. However, a few remaining Social Democrats were seemingly able to re-establish the organization quite rapidly because the Social Democrats' slogans had led the masses and had been accepted. The Social Democrats who

had lost their guiding centre, re-established contact with all the various groups by winning over workers regardless of the views they held and advocating to them all their Party slogans. And precisely because these Party slogans are correct, because they are in keeping with the proletariat's revolutionary tasks and comprise

¹⁴Lenin, Works Vol. 9, p. 153. "Revolution Teaches," Proletary No. 9, July 26 (13), 1905.

the tasks of a revolution of the whole people, they were accepted by all workers.¹⁵

In 1915, also, Lenin discussed the leadership function of slogans: "The appalling misery of the masses, which has been created by the war, cannot fail to evoke revolutionary sentiments and movements. The civil war slogan must serve to co-ordinate and direct such sentiments and movements."¹⁶

A third function of slogans was to clearly differentiate for the masses the various parties. Specifically, Lenin warned that the Bolshevik faction of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party would have to make certain that its slogans were such as to set it apart from all other parties and from all other classes than the proletariat. On a number of occasions Lenin condemned the continued use of a slogan which the Bolsheviks had previously advanced simply because one of the bourgeois parties had adopted the same slogan. Lenin always maintained that:

Slogans must be brought forward so as to enable the masses, through propaganda and agitation, to see the unbridgeable distinction between socialism and capitalism (imperialism), and not for the purpose of reconciling

¹⁵Lenin, Works Vol. 18, p. 113. "The Slogans of the All-Russian Conference of the R.S.D.L.P. in January, 1912 and the May Day Movement," Sotsial-Demokrat No. 27, June 17 (4), 1912.

¹⁶Lenin, Works Vol. 21, p. 160. "The Conference of the R.S.D.L.P. Groups Abroad," Sotsial-Demokrat No. 40, March 29 (16), 1915.

two hostile classes and two hostile political lines, with the aid of a formula that "unites" the most different things.¹⁷

Perhaps a few examples will best clarify Lenin's thought. In 1905, during the revolution, Lenin proposed two slogans for the Social Democrats:

To advance the revolution, to take it beyond the limits to which the monarchist bourgeoisie advances it, it is necessary actively to produce, emphasise, and bring into the forefront slogans that will preclude the "inconsistency" of bourgeois democracy. At present there are only two such slogans: 1) a provisional revolutionary government, and 2) a republic, because the slogan of a popular constituent assembly has been accepted by the monarchist bourgeoisie (see the programme of the Osvobozhdeniye League) and accepted for the very purpose of devitalising the revolution, preventing its complete victory, and enabling the big bourgeoisie to strike a huckster's bargain with tsarism.¹⁸

In this case, we can discern two functions of the slogans advocated: 1) they must lead the masses, or, as Lenin put it, "advance the revolution," and 2) they must clearly differentiate the Social Democrats from the bourgeoisie, in this case specifically the Osvobozhdeniye League, which, led by Peter Struve, was the nucleus that eventually formed the Cadet Party.

A year later, in 1906, Lenin contested the proposal

¹⁷Lenin, Works Vol. 21, pp. 290-91. The Question of Peace, written July-August, 1915, first published, 1924.

¹⁸Lenin, Works Vol. 9, p. 45. Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution, July, 1905.

to advance the slogan, "a responsible ministry." We have already mentioned the controversy which arose concerning the czarist ministry. It will be remembered that the ministers were responsible only to the czar, and that some liberals advocated adoption of a ministry responsible to, hence removable by, the Duma or parliament. It will also be remembered that the Bolsheviks were suspicious of this proposal. Lenin took issue with a resolution proposing the slogan, "substitute for the present Ministry a Ministry appointed by the Duma."

This slogan is ambiguous. It confuses the minds of the proletariat. For the Cadets use the demand for a Duma Ministry as a screen to hide their desire to strike a bargain with the autocratic government and to weaken the revolution, to hamper the convocation of a constituent assembly.¹⁹

He did not want the possibility to exist of confusing the Bolsheviks with even so liberal a party as the Mensheviks, let alone the Cadets.

As a final example, we may turn to the slogan, "confiscation of the landed estates," which Lenin advocated in 1911. His analysis of this slogan concluded that it was a desirable one:

At a time when the Russian villages never cease groaning under the burden of the Stolypin "reform", when an extremely fierce struggle is going on between the mass of the population on the one hand and the "new land-

¹⁹Lenin, Works Vol. 10, p. 483. "The Slogan of a Duma Ministry," Vperyod No. 2, June 9 (May 27), 1906.

owners" and the rural police on the other, and when, according to the testimony of extremely conservative people hostile to the revolution, bitterness such as has never before been seen is making itself felt ever more strongly--at such a time the demand must be made a central plank of the whole democratic election platform. We shall only point out that this is the very demand that will draw a clear line of demarcation between consistent proletarian democracy and not only the landlord liberalism of the Cadets, but also the intellectual-bureaucratic talk about "standards", "consumption standards", "production standards", "equalitarian distribution", and similar nonsense, of which the Narodniks are so fond, and at which every sensible peasant laughs.²⁰

Here again, the major advantage presented for the proposed slogan was that it would clearly differentiate the Social Democrats from all other groups which were seeking the support of the peasantry. It is clear, then, that a major function of the Party's slogans was to be the clear differentiation of the Party from all other political groups in Russia.

Of course, not everyone agreed with Lenin in his analysis of specific slogans; not everyone held the same convictions about specific slogans to advance. The parties representing classes other than the proletariat naturally often disagreed entirely with Lenin's conclusions and standards. When such people proposed their own slogans, Lenin labeled them "phrase-mongers," and

²⁰Lenin, Works Vol. 17, p. 284. "The Election Campaign and the Election Platform," Sotsial-Demokrat No. 24, October 31 (18), 1911.

their activity, "phrase-mongering." In general, the term "phrase" referred to any slogan incorrect from the Marxist point of view. For example, in 1918 Lenin wrote an article entitled "The Revolutionary Phrase" devoted to the subject of incorrect slogans. At other times, he referred to an incorrect slogan as a "hollow phrase" or as a "mere phrase." Lenin defined "revolutionary phrase making" or "phrase-mongering" as the "repetition of revolutionary slogans irrespective of objective circumstances at a given turn in events, in the given state of affairs obtaining at the time."²¹

One common type of "phrase-mongering" which Lenin warned against was the use of "some 'charming' terms from the outworn past . . . to conceal the tasks of the future. In such cases the charm of a term which has already played its part in history becomes so much useless and harmful tinsel, a child's rattle."²² Social Democrats had to be careful not to fall into the mistake of using historical slogans simply because they were historical. Lenin cautioned:

. . . it is just because we cherish this concern for revolutionary traditions that we must vigorously protest against the view that by using one of the slogans of a particular his-

²¹Lenin, Works Vol. 27, p. 19. "The Revolutionary Phrase," Pravda No. 31, February 21, 1918.

²²Lenin, Works Vol. 9, p. 80. Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution, July, 1905.

torical period the essential conditions of that period can be restored. It is one thing to preserve the traditions of the revolution, to know how to use them for constant propaganda and agitation and for acquainting the masses with the conditions of a direct and aggressive struggle against the old regime, but quite another thing to repeat a slogan divorced from the sum total of the conditions which gave rise to it and which ensured its success and to apply it to essentially different conditions.²³

"Phrase-mongering" was an activity especially engaged in by the bourgeois parties. In fact, Lenin believed that "one of the manifestations of the traces of the petty-bourgeois spirit is surrender to revolutionary phrases."²⁴ Since the bourgeoisie did not, and indeed could not, have proletarian interests foremost, they were bound to be less revolutionary in Lenin's eyes. Their lesser zeal for revolution became evident in the bourgeoisie's slogans: "But bourgeois democracy always drags at the tail of events; while adopting more advanced slogans, it always lags behind; it always formulates the slogans several degrees below the level really required in the real revolutionary struggle for real liberty."²⁵ Consequently, the slogans advanced by the

²³Lenin, Works Vol. 13, pp. 39-40. Against Boycott, 1907.

²⁴Lenin, Works Vol. 27, p. 28. "The Revolutionary Phrase," Pravda No. 31, February 21, 1918.

²⁵Lenin, Works Vol. 8, p. 513. "The Democratic Tasks of the Revolutionary Proletariat," Proletary No. 4, June 17 (4), 1905.

bourgeoisie had, Lenin believed, two important characteristics: they were vague, incomplete and non-committal; and they were attempts to turn the proletarian slogans into "mere phrases, to substitute empty promises for real safeguards of liberty and revolution."²⁶ In short, the bourgeoisie were "phrase-mongers."

A couple of examples of Lenin's analyses of mongered phrases may aid in clarification of the concept. In 1915 he denounced the slogan calling for peace as one which "would mean encouraging pompous airs of impotent (and frequently what is worse: hypocritical) phrase-mongers; it would mean deceiving the people with illusion that the existing governments, the present-day master classes are capable" of granting peace acceptable to the working class without first being eliminated. Lenin believed that the deception which would result from the peace slogan would be extremely harmful. It would throw "dust in the eyes of the workers" and prevent them from seeing the "deep contradictions between capitalism and socialism" ²⁷ Such a phrase would have to be rejected.

In 1905 the Cadets advanced a slogan calling for

²⁶Ibid., p. 517.

²⁷Lenin, Works Vol. 21, p. 292. The Question of Peace, written July-August, 1915, first published, 1924.

"revolutionary communes." However, Lenin thought this phrase had no content:

What is meant by "revolutionary communes"? Does this concept differ from "a provisional revolutionary government", and, if so, in what respect? The gentlemen of the Conference do not know themselves. Confusion of revolutionary thought leads them, as very often happens, to revolutionary phrase-mongering.²⁸

In 1908 during the reaction to the 1905 revolution Lenin carried his analysis of the effects of "confusion of revolutionary thought" further, concluding that the revolutionary must understand his own slogans completely:

These people /Socialist-Revolutionaries/ have learned by heart the "slogan" of armed uprising, without having understood the meaning of this slogan or its applicability. That is why, after the first defeats of the revolution they so lightly throw aside their ill-digested slogans, taken on trust. Whereas if these people valued Marxism as the only revolutionary theory of the twentieth century, if they had studied the history of the Russian revolutionary movement, they would have seen the difference between phrase-mongering and the development of really revolutionary slogans. The Social-Democrats did not put forward the "slogan" of insurrection either in 1901, when the demonstrations caused Krichevsky and Martynov to begin shouting about "the assault", or in 1902 and 1903, when the late Nadezhdin called the plan of the old Iskra "literary exercises". They put forward the slogan of insurrection only after January 9, 1905, when not a single person could doubt any longer that a general political crisis had broken out, that it was growing more acute daily and hourly, by the

²⁸Lenin, Works Vol. 9, p. 80. Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution, July, 1905.

direct movement of the masses. And within a few months this crisis led to insurrection.²⁹

Insufficient understanding of the content of a slogan, Lenin thought, would often lead to mere "phrase-mongering."

Even with the danger of "phrase-mongering," Lenin maintained that slogans were crucial for the revolution. He seems to have obtained his initial concept of the importance of slogans from Karl Marx himself. In 1894 Lenin referred to a work by Marx in which the latter wrote that the function of a communist was to provide the world "with a true slogan of struggle. We only show the world what it is actually struggling for, and consciousness is a thing which the world must acquire, whether it likes it or not."³⁰ The most important theoretician of Social Democracy, in other words, had claimed that slogans were important; his disciple quite understandably accepted the claim.

Modern analysis of propaganda also recognizes the importance of slogans. Lasswell has written that a "strong presumption of effectiveness exists, for instance, when investigation demonstrates the degree to which

²⁹Lenin, Works Vol. 15, p. 153. "Some Features of the Present Collapse," Proletary No. 32, July 15 (2), 1908.

³⁰Lenin, Works Vol. 1, pp. 184-85. What the "Friends of the People" Are and How They Fight the Social-Democrats, 1894.

propaganda phrases are taken over by 'target audiences.'³¹ A similar methodological assumption seems to have been made by Lenin, for he often referred to the success of Social Democratic agitation as indicated by the acceptance of a slogan by the masses. For example, in 1911, Lenin advocated adoption of a new slogan calling for a republic. Apparently his proposal met with some opposition, to which he replied:

. . . let no one try to tell us that the slogan calling for a republic does not apply to the present stage of the political development of the workers and peasants. About ten or twelve years ago there were not only some Narodniks who would not dare even to think of the slogan, "Down with the autocracy", but even certain Social-Democrats, the so-called Economists, opposed that slogan as being inopportune. Yet by 1903-04 the slogan, "Down with the autocracy", had become a "household word"!³²

One standard by which he judged the correctness of this, as of other slogans, was its acceptance after-the-fact. There obviously were other standards which were considered, for example, those we have discussed as bearing on the development of new slogans, but the only standard for the success of a slogan was its acceptance by the masses.

³¹Harold D. Lasswell, introduction to Karin Dovring, Road of Propaganda (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959), p. 1.

³²Lenin, Works Vol. 17, pp. 337-38. "The Slogans and Organisation of Social-Democratic Work Inside and Outside the Duma," Sotsial-Demokrat No. 25, Dec. 21 (8), 1911.

We have already referred to the 1912 arrests in St. Petersburg which would have destroyed Social Democratic activity in that city, Lenin believed, but for the existence of Social Democracy's correct slogans, which not only provided a guide for the proletarians of that city, but also a rallying point around which the St. Petersburg workers became united. In this case, also, acceptability and correctness were, for him, two sides of the same coin.

Later in 1912 Lenin felt that the decisions of a recent Social Democratic conference had been successful, basing his belief on the acceptance of the Party's slogans adopted by that conference:

In the six months since the Conference, work has been going on through the Party press and dozens of reports, in hundreds of speeches in factory groups and at the meetings held in April and May, to explain the Conference decisions and to put them into effect. The Party's slogans--a republic, an eight-hour working day, confiscation of the landed estates--have spread throughout Russia and have been accepted by the foremost proletarians. The revolutionary upsurge of the masses, its expression ranging from strikes and meetings to revolts in the armed forces, have proved these slogans to be correct and vital.³³

After the Bolshevik Revolution had succeeded in the major cities, it was carried, in the form of a bloody civil war, to the countryside. Finally the

³³Lenin, Works Vol. 18, p. 237. "On the Eve of the Elections to the Fourth Duma," Rabochaya Gazeta No. 9, Aug. 12 (July 30), 1912.

Bolsheviks controlled all of Russia. Eulogizing the results of the civil war, Lenin attributed much of the Bolsheviks' success to the acceptance of their slogans. He reported to the Communist Party:

. . . everywhere we achieved victory with extraordinary ease precisely because the fruit had ripened, because the masses had already gone through the experience of collaboration with the bourgeoisie. Our slogan "All Power to the Soviets", which the masses had tested in practice by long historical experience, had become part of their flesh and blood.³⁴

Lenin, then, believed successful slogans to be crucial for successful revolution. And he believed the success of a slogan depended on the extent of its acceptance.

The slogan, apparently, occupied a central position in Lenin's concept of agitation. A slogan was, in effect, a summary of the entire Social Democratic Party position, or a significant portion of it. A slogan focused both the agitator's and the audience's attention on the issues of the era, and helped them maintain a consistent position under all circumstances. In doing so, the slogans represented, and advanced, certain class interests. Therefore, all forces operative at a given moment had to be analyzed before a slogan could be advanced. Once advanced, the slogan, if successful,

³⁴Lenin, Works Vol. 27, p. 89. "Political Report of the Central Committee, March 7, 1918, to the Extraordinary Seventh Congress of the R.C.P.(B.)"

would be accepted by the masses and guide them in or toward the revolution.

CHAPTER V

PARTY ORGANIZATION AND MEDIA

Lenin's concern for persuasion as a revolutionary strategy led him to deal not only with the central concepts of persuasion which have been covered in the last three chapters, but also with a number of issues, while somewhat tangential to persuasion, nevertheless related to it. This study has sought to focus on the central issues, the concepts of agitation and propaganda, and the topic of slogans. However, two of the other areas are important and must be considered briefly here: 1) the organizational structure of the Party and 2) the media for persuasion.

The organizational issue must be considered since it was crucial in Lenin's thought. As is well known, it was primarily over the question of the organization of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party that the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks split at the 1903 Party Congress. The Bolsheviks, under the leadership of Lenin, advocated a Party of the elite among revolutionaries, small in membership, and highly centralized. The Mensheviks advocated a Party organized more loosely,

with almost open membership, and little central control over the members. Lenin's view, of course, prevailed, at least after 1917; and even today the Communist Party of the Soviet Union seems to be limited in membership to relatively few among the entire population.

Perhaps the best way to begin a discussion of Lenin's concepts of organization as they relate to his theory of persuasion would be with a brief overview, a few generalizations about Lenin's beliefs. Later, then, they will be discussed in more depth. One cannot help but notice as he reads Lenin's works that the famous revolutionary often connects the terms "agitation," "propaganda," and "organization" in his writings. He often refers to them seemingly in one breath: "agitation, propaganda, and organization." Apparently, in his mind, the three terms were intimately connected. The connection may seem more reasonable than it does at first glance as we proceed, for the primary purpose of the Party was to propagate the revolutionary line and to organize the country for the revolution; hence the Party's own organization was vital.

A brief review of a few historical factors may help one to understand Lenin's reasoning. It must be remembered that he was dealing with a party of Russians, and his organizational prescriptions seem to have been limited to the Russian Party. If he prescribed at all

for the Parties of other countries, he either did so seldom, or did so orally so these remarks are not included in his works. Now, Russia was unique in a number of respects, especially from the point of view of a revolutionary. For one, during much of the time in question mass assemblies and organizations, such as trade unions, were simply outlawed by the Russian government. In Western Europe, labor organizations were relatively common. In Russia, those organizations which were allowed to exist were usually either czarist controlled or heavily infiltrated by the Okhrana, the secret police. The extent of police infiltration may be seen in the fact that later one of the most important Bolshevik representatives in the Duma, Roman Malinovsky, was actually an agent of the secret police. Naturally, the more open the organization, the easier it would be for the government to infiltrate and control it. Once a group had been infiltrated, it was common for members of the group to suffer arrest and imprisonment or exile. Thus the autocratic nature of the Russian government may explain to a great extent Lenin's theory of organization and the success it eventually enjoyed.

Yet another problem was the governmental censorship; a highly organized party was needed, Lenin thought, to get the party propaganda past the police. Furthermore, the nature of the party he envisioned affected

his concept of its organization. It was not to be a political party attempting to win elections, but a revolutionary party out to overthrow not only the government but the entire structure of Russian society. Hence, it would have to be highly organized. In What Is To Be Done? Lenin summarized his arguments when he contended, in refutation of the "democratic" view, that

"broad democracy" in Party organisation, amidst the gloom of the autocracy and the domination of gendarmerie, is nothing more than a useless and harmful toy. It is a useless toy because, in point of fact, no revolutionary organisation has ever practised, or could practise, broad democracy, however much it may have desired to do so. It is a harmful toy because any attempt to practise "the broad democratic principle" will simply facilitate the work of the police in carrying out large-scale raids, will perpetuate the prevailing primitiveness, and will divert the thoughts of the practical workers from the serious and pressing task of training themselves to become professional revolutionaries to that of drawing up detailed "paper" rules for election systems.¹

Payne suggested yet another reason why Lenin advocated a tightly organized band of a few professional revolutionaries for the Social Democratic Party in Russia. He argued that Lenin saw that the strength of the bourgeoisie lay in its organization, while the weakness of the proletariat lay in its lack of organization.² To

¹Lenin, Works Vol. 5, p. 479. What Is To Be Done?, March, 1902. Italics here and throughout the chapter are in the original.

²Robert Payne, The Life and Death of Lenin (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1964), p. 282.

organize the proletariat for the final revolution against a foe already highly organized a centralized, small group of professionals was necessary.

There was a definite connection in theory between organization and propagation of the Party line. In the first place, a tightly organized, centrally controlled party would help maintain the purity of the Party line that was to be propagated. That the Party line had to be pure, fairly constant, and continuously advocated, is basically what Lenin meant in 1902 when he wrote:

" . . . our primary and imperative practical task [is] to establish an organisation of revolutionaries capable of lending energy, stability, and continuity to the practical struggle."³ Furthermore, the proletariat had to be maintained as an independent class, free from ideological corruption. The workers, of course, were exposed to propaganda from many sources other than the Social Democrats. The monarchy kept up a steady stream of propaganda, but more dangerous by far were the bourgeoisie who spread "democratic" propaganda among the workers. Bourgeois propaganda made an organized Social Democratic vanguard party all the more essential. As Lenin wrote in 1905, "The more the democratic propaganda and agitation conducted independently of us works to

³Lenin, Works Vol. 5, p. 446. What Is To Be Done?, March, 1902.

our advantage, the greater becomes the importance of an organised Social-Democratic leadership to safeguard the independence of the working class from the bourgeois democrats."⁴

From the point of view of the Party itself, an organization of revolutionaries was necessary, Lenin thought, to use properly the forces of Social Democracy. Such an organization was needed to carry out agitation properly. In 1899 Lenin argued:

. . . only an organised party can carry out widespread agitation, provide the necessary guidance (and material) for agitators on all economic and political questions, make use of every local agitational success for the instruction of all Russian workers, and send agitators to those places and into that milieu⁵ where they can work with the greatest success.⁵

Lenin's statements concerning provision of guidance and material for agitators, and the use to be made of local successes for nation-wide instruction can best be understood by examining one aspect of the czarist censorship. Elsewhere Lenin explained more fully exactly what happened during, for example, a strike. Those who participated in it, naturally, knew that it had happened and knew what events took place, but in the majority of

⁴Lenin, Works Vol. 8, pp. 216-17. "New Tasks and New Forces," Vperyod No. 9, March 8 (Feb. 23), 1905.

⁵Lenin, Works Vol. 4, p. 283. A Retrograde Trend in Russian Social-Democracy, written in 1899, first published in 1924.

cases even its occurrence remained unknown by the rest of the country. The government, he claimed, "takes care to cut all communication with strikers, to prevent all news of strikes from spreading." To spread the news of the results, or for that matter, even the occurrence, of a strike, a revolutionary organization was needed. Otherwise, he continued, the censorship would be successful: the only people who would know of a strike would be those in the immediate vicinity, those close enough to be eyewitnesses or to hear about it from the participants.⁶

As more and more people came to support the ideas of Social Democracy, an organization, highly centralized, was necessary, Lenin thought, to make use of their time and talents. In 1902 he complained that, "A basic political and organisational shortcoming of our movement is our inability to utilise all these forces and to give them appropriate work The overwhelming majority of these forces entirely lack the opportunity of 'going among the workers'" ⁷ Better organization would help solve this problem, would enable the Party to use the forces available.

Not only would a highly centralized organization

⁶Lenin, Works Vol. 5, p. 451. What Is To Be Done?, March, 1902.

⁷Ibid., p. 429.

enable the Party to use the forces available, but it would allow them to be used most efficiently. Here Lenin was concerned with the various specialized tasks involved in spreading the Party line, while at the same time avoiding the police. In 1899 he discussed the necessity of specialization as it related to the persuasive function of the Party:

It is essential for individual Party members or separate groups of members to specialise in the different aspects of Party work--some in the duplication of literature, others in its transport across the frontier, a third category in its distribution inside Russia, a fourth in its distribution in the cities, a fifth in the arrangement of secret meeting places, a sixth in the collection of funds, a seventh in the delivery of correspondence and all information about the movement, an ⁸ eighth in maintaining relations, etc., etc.

In the same article he maintained that a single party was necessary to coordinate all these specialized activities, "to observe the principles of division of labour and economy of forces, which must be achieved in order to reduce the losses and build as reliable a bulwark as possible against the oppression of the autocratic government and against its frantic persecutions."⁹

In 1902 Lenin summarized his concept of party organization as follows:

⁸Lenin, Works Vol. 4, p. 222. An Urgent Question, written in 1899, first published in 1925.

⁹Ibid.

I assert: (1) that no revolutionary movement can endure without a stable organisation of leaders maintaining continuity; (2) that the broader the popular mass drawn spontaneously into the struggle, which forms the basis of the movement and participates in it, the more urgent the need for such an organisation, and the more solid this organisation must be (for it is much easier for all sorts of demagogues to side-track the more backward sections of the masses); (3) that such an organisation must consist chiefly of people professionally engaged in revolutionary activity; (4) that in an autocratic state, the more we confine the membership of such an organisation to people who are professionally engaged in revolutionary activity and who have been professionally trained in the art of combating the political police, the more difficult will it be to unearth the organisation; and (5) the greater will be the number of people from the working class and from the other social classes who will be able to join the movement and perform active work in it.¹⁰

The center of the entire organization was to be a Central Committee. Under the Central Committee there would be district groups. The primary function of the latter would be to organize the actual propagation of the Party's principles. Their main task, therefore, would be persuasive in nature. Furthermore, the organization for distributing propaganda material would eventually function as the organization of the revolution. Lenin explained this in more detail:

[The district groups'] chief task should be the proper distribution of the literature received from the committee in accordance with the rules of secrecy. This is an extremely important

¹⁰ Lenin, Works Vol. 5, p. 464. What Is To Be Done?, March, 1902.

task, for if we secure regular contact between a special district group of distributors and all the factories in that district, as well as the largest possible number of workers' homes in that district, it will be of enormous value, both for demonstrations and for an uprising. Arranging for and organising the speedy and proper delivery of literature, leaflets, proclamations, etc., training a network of agents for this purpose, means performing the greater part of the work of preparing for future demonstrations or an uprising. It is too late to start organising the distribution of literature at a time of unrest, a strike, or turmoil; this work can be built up only gradually, by making distributions obligatory twice or three times a month. If no newspapers are available, leaflets may and should be distributed, but the distributive machine must in no case be allowed to remain idle. This machine should be brought to such a degree of perfection as to make it possible to inform and mobilise, so to speak, the whole working-class population of St. Petersburg overnight.¹¹

The district committee would be in charge of the whole apparatus within its area, especially the propagandists. Later in the same letter Lenin wrote that the district committee should instruct several of its members to organize a group of propagandists to be a branch of the committee or "one of the institutions of the committee." This group of propagandists, using the services of the district committee, should then conduct propaganda throughout the town. (It seems a bit unclear exactly what Lenin meant by "propaganda" but presumably he meant the long-range educational work that the students had done in the worker circles in his earlier days in St.

¹¹ Lenin, Works Vol. 6, pp. 240-41. "A Letter to a Comrade on Our Organisational Tasks," September, 1902.

Petersburg.) If necessary, the group of propagandists should establish subgroups and delegate certain functions to them, but only with the sanction of the district committee.¹² At all times the committee remained supreme in its district, subject only to the Central Committee.

Lenin's basic formula for the Party's organization was: "The greatest possible centralization in the ideological and practical leadership of the movement, and the greatest possible decentralization in keeping the party informed about the movement."¹³ It seems that he recognized the dangers inherent in strict centralization and attempted to devise a workable alternative, since it was of the utmost importance that communication flow upwards within the organization.

Next we must look at Lenin's discussion of the media for persuasion. Basically, he believed that any media that were available and would work should be used. However, although he never discussed media systematically, nor did he ever discuss the topic in depth, he nevertheless was concerned with the subject a number of times in his career. His concern almost always arose as the result of a specific incident which focused his attention on a specific medium. Thus, when a comrade was in a position to use a specific medium, Lenin offered advice

¹²Ibid., pp. 241-42.

¹³Payne, op. cit., p. 162.

on how best to use it. Therefore, we must briefly look at a few representative media and at Lenin's advice on their use.

The Social Democrats had participated in the election campaigns for the Duma and had won a few seats in the parliament. So, several times Lenin had the opportunity to advise his comrades in the Duma on how to use their positions to greatest advantage. Naturally, their speeches were to be propagandistic or agitational in nature, but the Duma offered other opportunities as well. One which he once discussed in some depth was the opportunity to introduce bills. Lenin advised:

The main aim of the Bills introduced by the Social-Democrats in the Third Duma must lie in propaganda and agitation for the Social-Democratic programme and tactics. Any hopes of the "reformism" of the Third Duma would not only be ludicrous, but would threaten completely to distort the character of Social-Democratic revolutionary tactics and convert it into the tactics of opportunist, liberal social-reformism. . . .

For Bills introduced by the Social-Democratic group in the Duma to fulfill their purpose, the following conditions are necessary.

(1) Bills must set out in the clearest and most definite form the individual demands of the Social-Democrats included in the minimum programme of our Party or necessarily following from this programme;

(2) Bills must never be burdened with an abundance of legal subtleties; they must give the main grounds for the proposed laws, but not elaborately worded texts of laws with all details;

(3) Bills should not excessively isolate various spheres of social reform and democratic changes, as might appear essential from a narrowly legal, administrative or "purely parlia-

mentary" standpoint. On the contrary, pursuing the aim of Social-Democratic propaganda and agitation, Bills should give the working-class the most definite idea possible of the necessary connection between factory (and social in general) reforms and the democratic political changes without which all "reforms" of the Stolypin autocracy are inevitably destined to undergo a "Zubatovist" Zubatov was chief of the Moscow Secret Police distortion and be reduced to a dead letter. As a matter of course this indication of the connection between economic reforms and politics must be achieved not by including in all Bills the demands of consistent democracy in their entirety, but by bringing to the fore the democratic and specifically proletarian-democratic institutions corresponding to each individual reform, and the impossibility of realising such institutions without radical political changes must be emphasised in the explanatory note to the Bill;

(4) in view of the extreme difficulty under present conditions of legal Social-Democratic propaganda and agitation among the masses, Bills must be so composed that the Bill taken separately and the explanatory note to it taken separately can achieve their aim on reaching the masses (whether by being reprinted in non-Social-Democratic newspapers, or by the distribution of separate leaflets with the text of the Bill, etc.), i.e., can be read by rank-and-file unenlightened workers to the advantage of the development of their class-consciousness. With this end in view the Bills in their entire structure must be imbued with a spirit of proletarian distrust of the employers and of the state as an organ serving the employers: in other words, the spirit of the class struggle must permeate the whole structure of the Bill and ensue from the sum of its separate propositions;

finally (5) under conditions in Russia today, i.e., in the absence of a Social-Democratic press and Social-Democratic meetings, Bills must give a sufficiently concrete idea of the changes demanded by the Social Democrats and not limit themselves to a mere proclamation of principle. The ordinary unenlightened worker should find his interest aroused by the Social-Democratic Bill, he should be

inspired by its concrete picture of change so that later he passes from this individual picture to the Social-Democratic world outlook as a whole.¹⁴

The Duma, then, was to be used as a sounding board to the greatest degree possible. The opportunity to introduce bills could be of significant persuasive value.

In 1905 Lenin elaborated on the use of a trial as a forum for agitation. A number of Social Democrats had been imprisoned in Moscow, among them one Y. D. Stasova, to whom Lenin addressed a letter advising them on their actions during the upcoming trial. He advised participation in the trial to "show up" witnesses and agitate against the court, adding a warning not to "slip into a tone of unbecoming self-vindication." If a possibility of "showing up" the witnesses existed, the case should be exposed as a "frame-up." On the other hand, he recognized the possibility (he apparently did not know the facts of the case) that the comrades might be completely guilty as charged, and the case against them air tight. In the latter case, he advised that the comrades refrain from taking part in the court proceedings, and concentrate all their attention on a declaration of principles. In either case a speech on "the principles, the pro-

¹⁴Lenin, Works Vol. 16, pp. 110-12. "Explanatory Note on the Draft of the Main Grounds of the Bill on the Eight-Hour Working Day," written in the autumn, 1909, first published in 1924.

gramme, and the tactics of the Social-Democratic Party, on the working-class movement, on the socialist aims, and on the uprising" was the "most important thing."¹⁵ Trials, Lenin realized, had been extremely effective forums for agitation before, and he recommended that they be so used then.

At various other times Lenin analyzed and advised on the use of other media, among them trade union pamphlets,¹⁶ factory exposure leaflets,¹⁷ and propaganda by example.¹⁸ However, the most important medium, based on the amount of attention it received, was the newspaper. The Party newspaper was to have a number of important functions, primarily as an intra-Party organ.

In 1901 Lenin wrote an article for Iskra entitled "Where to Begin" in which he contended that an All-Russian illegal newspaper was what the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party needed most. Without such a paper, the Party "cannot conduct that systematic, all-round

¹⁵Lenin, Works Vol. 8, p. 69. "A Letter to Y. D. Stasova and to the other comrades in prison in Moscow," January 19, 1905 (N.S. assumed because of dates of articles appearing around this one).

¹⁶Lenin, Works Vol. 5, pp. 490-92. What Is To Be Done?, March, 1902.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 398-99.

¹⁸Lenin, Works Vol. 33, p. 73. "Report to the Second All-Russia Congress of Political Education Departments, October 17, 1921," Bulletin of Second All-Russia Congress of Political Education Departments, No. 2, October 19, 1921.

propaganda and agitation, consistent in principle, which is the chief and permanent task" of the Party, as well as the "pressing task of the moment." Agitational attempts at rousing the Russian masses were dispersed "in the form of individual action, local leaflets, pamphlets, etc.," and were not unified in content, scope or goal. A "generalised and systematic agitation" could "only be conducted with the aid of the periodical press." The Party tasks were "fragmented" and from this fragmentation the Party suffered both "ideologically" and in "practical and organisational respects." The vast majority of the Social Democrats were immersed in local work which "narrows their outlook, the scope of their activities, and their skill in the maintenance of secrecy and their preparedness." This fragmentation provided the roots for both ideological and organizational instability of the Party. The "first step towards eliminating this short-coming, towards transforming divers local movements into a single, All-Russian movement, must be the founding of an All-Russian newspaper."¹⁹

Lenin viewed the newspaper's organization as the primary organization prior to the revolution, and, in fact, the organization that would actually carry out the revolution. The newspaper's organization was to be

¹⁹Lenin, Works Vol. 5, pp. 20-21. "Where to Begin," Iskra No. 4, May, 1901.

quite basic to the Party, so basic that Lenin compared it to the scaffolding around a building under construction, "which marks the contours of the structure and facilitates communication between the builders, enabling them to distribute the work and to view the common results achieved by their organised labour."²⁰

Lenin thought that the Central Organ, as the proposed All-Russian illegal newspaper was often called, would also serve an ideological function: it would help maintain the purity of the Party line as it finally reached the masses. The newspaper would be the ideological leader of the Party, "evolving theoretical truths, tactical principles, general organisational ideas, and the general tasks of the whole Party at any given moment" with which the agitators could then approach the masses.²¹

The Central Organ would provide aid to the local organizations and local agitators which they could receive in no other way. The All-Russian paper would strengthen the local Party workers and preserve the purity of the Party line, as Lenin firmly believed it "beyond the strength" of the individual local organizations to raise their own local newspapers to the "level of a political organ maintaining stability of principles"

²⁰Ibid., p. 22.

²¹Lenin, Works Vol. 6, p. 236. "A Letter to a Comrade on Our Organisational Tasks," September, 1902.

and to "collect and utilise sufficient material to shed light on the whole of our political life."²² Such material would be provided for the local Party groups by the Central Organ, which they could then use to maintain stability of principles and to develop and keep a wider outlook, shedding light on the whole of political life.

Particular problems are related to the latter of the above two goals. It will be remembered that the czarist government kept a rather rigid censorship imposed on all of Russia. When a disturbance, perhaps a strike, broke out in one section of the country, the police were quite successful in keeping the other sections of the country ignorant even of the fact that a strike had occurred, let alone any of the details of the disturbance. The success of the censorship was to be overcome by the illegal newspaper; it was to present to the Party groups in all parts of the country the facts of such disturbances. Lenin gave an example in What Is To Be Done? which may help to illustrate this point. He referred to the articles printed in a local newspaper concerning a mine owners' convention and the problem of unemployment. These articles, he maintained, were not strictly local material but were required for the "whole of Russia." An All-Russian newspaper would have given

²²Lenin, Works Vol. 5, p. 484. What Is To Be Done?, March, 1902.

those articles nationwide distribution and thus helped solve the problem of parochialism.²³ It must be remembered throughout this discussion that the proposed newspaper was to be illegal; it was to present facts and opinions which the censor outlawed.

Yet another function, or at least advantage, of an All-Russian newspaper would be the opportunities it would provide to develop Party propagandists, agitators and polemicists.

If we join forces to produce a common newspaper this work will train and bring into the foreground, not only the most skillful propagandists, but the most capable organisers, the most talented political party leaders capable, at the right moment, of releasing the slogan for the decisive struggle and of taking the lead in that struggle.²⁴

For Lenin, the two problems of organization and the media for propaganda and agitation became issues several times, the former being a central issue in his thought taken in its entirety, the latter being only of occasional significance. When a medium became an issue, he gave his advice. The organization, however, was of crucial importance, especially to get the Social Democratic Party line to the masses in autocratic Russia. Without a tightly organized, highly centralized, rigidly

²³Ibid., p. 489.

²⁴Lenin, Works Vol. 5, p. 24. "Where to Begin," Iskra No. 4, May, 1901.

restricted Party, the revolution would be lost. The Party would not be able to get its message to the people and hence would never obtain power.

The various media were all considered on an ad hoc basis, with the exception of the newspaper. The newspaper was to play a central role in the Party's activities, and thus Lenin's discussion of it was much more detailed. The newspaper was to provide a basis for the revolutionary organization; it would help preserve the purity of the Party line, provide material for the agitators and propagandists, and develop new agitators, propagandists, and organizers. Lenin believed these functions were crucial for the revolutionary Party.

Summary of the Study

In this study we have traced Lenin's thought on the subject of persuasion as a revolutionary strategy. We have drawn together Lenin's writings on the subject and attempted to present them in a systematic manner, although Lenin himself did not so present them. Since the mastermind of the Bolshevik Revolution was often concerned with persuasion, and since agitation and propaganda seem to have played a decisive role in the final success of the Bolsheviks, a systematic presentation seemed justifiable.

Classical or orthodox Marxism would seem to hold

that economic development by itself would be sufficient to generate a revolution. Although Lenin considered himself a Marxist, he nevertheless believed persuasion was necessary for revolution, an apparent contradiction. Therefore, in systematically presenting his thought, the first concept discussed was the justification for the existence and necessity of persuasion as a revolutionary strategy.

Lenin seems to have revised Marxism considerably on this point. He held that the theory of spontaneous generation, the theory that a revolution would spontaneously result from economic development alone, was disproven by all past history of the working class movement. Lenin believed that, if left on their own, the proletariat would spontaneously produce only trade unions dealing with everyday "petty" economic demands; the working class would never, on its own, develop into a truly revolutionary class. Class consciousness was prerequisite for revolution, and class consciousness could only be brought to the proletariat from outside the class of workers. Only the revolutionary intellectuals could lead the workers to become class conscious. For such a task, persuasion was needed.

Agitation and propaganda were the central concepts in Lenin's theory of persuasion as a revolutionary strategy. In tracing these two concepts, one finds that

each had a significant history before Lenin appeared on the political scene. Propaganda was the method long used by the "intelligentsia," or the student revolutionaries, throughout Russia to widen their ranks. Propaganda was a long-range proposition, an educational method designed to win converts to the revolutionary position. It focused attention on theoretical problems, on the long-range development of society and of a given economic system.

Agitation, on the other hand, came into its own shortly after Lenin became a revolutionary. Yet it, too, had a significant history as a method of persuasion before Lenin came into contact with it. Agitation was a method designed to stir up the masses to seek an immediate goal. At first it was economic in content, dealing with working conditions, wages, hours, and the like at the huge factories in Russia. Agitation, then, sought an immediate goal, propaganda a long-range one.

Agitation as a method was developed among the Polish revolutionary groups, specifically, by the Union of Polish Workers, and from there spread to St. Petersburg and Lenin. The form in which the agitational method was introduced to Lenin was a pamphlet by Kremer entitled On Agitation, which was widely read and discussed among the intellectuals in the Russian capital. Lenin opposed the new method at first, concentrating his attention

on purely theoretical, literary activities. Nevertheless, he did write a few leaflets for distribution among the workers, all of which were propagandistic rather than agitational in nature.

Lenin was exiled in 1897 and spent three years rather pleasantly in Siberia. After returning he re-entered revolutionary activity, soon took up the problem of agitation and propaganda, and revised the concepts. By 1902 his thought had crystalized and was published in What Is To Be Done? In this work agitation was defined as persuasion directed to the masses, propaganda to the intellectual elite. Agitation stressed one idea and illustrated it with local examples, propaganda dealt with many ideas as a theoretical system. Agitation relied primarily on the spoken word, propaganda on the written word. These distinctions Lenin was to use for the rest of his life, more or less rigidly adhering to them.

The overall function of both methods of persuasion was the same: education of the proletariat. Lenin always held that the lack of class consciousness on the part of the workers was merely due to ignorance. If they were shown the truth about their class interests, they would recognize it as truth and believe it, thereby becoming class conscious. Education of the masses would enable them not only to become revolutionary in nature,

but to avoid deception by opposition classes and groups: if class consciousness were acquired, attempts at deception would be recognized as such and rejected. The latter was a very important consideration, since Lenin believed that the bourgeoisie were always attempting to divert the energies of the proletariat to "harmless," i.e., non-revolutionary, activities and beliefs.

Agitation and propaganda also had a number of specific functions which were discussed in this study. They would help obtain support for the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party as the most basic practical function. The Party's persuasive attempts should disseminate scientific socialism, propagate democratic ideas, and spread an understanding of absolutism. All these would increase the support for the revolutionary Party. Persuasion would also enable theoreticians to be developed from among the workers themselves. It would help isolate the czar and the monarchists, aiding in their final elimination. Agitation could help stir up the peasantry, not a truly revolutionary class, and yet restrain them from excessive destruction.

Lenin also on occasion gave specific instructions to agitators about the performance of their art. Although he almost never advised propagandists. The agitator should, as previously mentioned, use primarily the spoken word, largely, perhaps, because of the widespread illit-

eracy and the lack of mass media in Russia at the time. The agitator had to know how to choose language which his audience would understand, and, indeed, he had to adapt to his audience in all ways necessary to be effective. Examples were recommended as an excellent strategy, especially examples taken from the immediate locale. Constant repetition was another tactic recommended. Much material for agitation could and should be obtained by watching the enemy.

One of the major aspects of the content of agitation was the slogans which were to be advanced. A correct slogan summarized the proper demands of the moment. It was obtained after careful study of all the forces operative in the society. It had to be implicit in the proletariat; that is to say, the slogan had to demand something which would meet a real need of the proletariat. Advancing incorrect slogans was termed "phrase-mongering." The slogans could not be taken from the past, nor could they be simply catchy phrases; such were termed "mere" or "hollow" phrases. A true slogan, to have content, had to be based on the active forces within the society in which it was to be advanced.

Finally, two issues Lenin raised, somewhat tangential to our central concern, were briefly considered. First, there was the question of organization, that all-important question over which the Bolsheviks and Menshe-

viks split in 1903. For Lenin, the Party was to be highly centralized, and limited in membership to the revolutionary elite. Such a concept of the Party organization was derived largely from the fact that the Party had to carry on a persuasive function in an autocratic state. Without an extremely tight organization, Lenin believed, the Party would not be successful in getting its messages to the people, and thus would fail to lead a successful revolution.

Secondly, Lenin advised comrades on a number of occasions on the correct use of a specific medium. Three media were considered briefly in this study: the Duma, trials, and the newspaper. Lenin advocated the use for the best agitational advantage of even the opportunity to introduce bills in the Duma. In a trial the Social Democrat should certainly include a statement of principles, and, if conditions permitted, attempt to expose the trial as a fraud. The newspaper, however, was the most important. Lenin thought the intra-Party, illegal newspaper, with its network of reporters, writers, editors, and distributors could not only provide news and information, but could also become the organizational base for the revolution. The newspaper was crucial for a number of other reasons, also, among them being the purity of the Party line it could foster, the material it could provide to widen the scope of local Party work,

and the opportunities it would provide to develop agitators, propagandists, and organizers.

That the Bolsheviks were successful in their agitation and propaganda can hardly be denied. No less can one deny the dire consequences of their success for the West. Perhaps a study such as this one can help us to understand why and how such a party, having almost no support in the beginning, could, after a few short years, control a large share of two continents.

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