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## ON CONFOUNDING POLITICS WITH PEDAGOGICS

We have quite a few Social-Democrats who give way to pessimism every time the workers suffer a reverse in single battles with the capitalists or with the government, and who scornfully dismiss all mention of the great and lofty aims of the working-class movement by pointing to the inadequate degree of our influence on the masses. Who and what are we, they say, to strive towards such things? It is purposeless to speak of the role of Social-Democracy as vanguard of the revolution when we do not even really know the mood of the masses, when we are unable to merge with them and to rouse the working masses! The reverses suffered by the Social-Democrats last May Day have considerably intensified this mood. Naturally, the Mensheviks, or new-Iskristis, have seized this opening to raise anew the special slogan "To the masses!"—as if in spite, as if in answer to those who have thought and spoken of the provisional revolutionary government, of the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship, etc.

It must be admitted that in this pessimism, and in the conclusions which the hasty publicists of the new *Iskra* draw from it, there is one very dangerous feature that may cause great harm to the Social-Democratic movement. To be sure, self-criticism is vitally essential to every live and virile party. There is nothing more disgusting than smug optimism. There is nothing more warranted than the urging of attention to the constant, imperative necessity of deepening and broadening, broadening and deepening, our influence on the masses, our strictly Marxist propaganda and agitation, our ever-closer connection with the

economic struggle of the working class, etc. Yet, because such urging is at all times warranted, under all conditions and in all situations, it must not be turned into special slogans, nor should it justify attempts to build upon it a special trend in Social-Democracy. A border-line exists here; to exceed the bounds is to turn this indisputably legitimate urging into a narrowing of the aims and the scope of the movement, into a doctrinaire blindness to the vital and cardinal political tasks of the moment.

It is our duty always to intensify and broaden our work and influence among the masses. A Social-Democrat who does not do this is no Social-Democrat. No branch, group, or circle can be considered a Social-Democratic organisation if it does not work to this end steadily and regularly. To a great extent, the purpose of our strict separation as a distinct and independent party of the proletariat consists in the fact that we always and undeviatingly conduct this Marxist work of raising the whole working class, as far as possible, to the level of Social-Democratic consciousness, allowing no political gales, still less political changes of scenery, to turn us away from this urgent task. Without this work, political activity would inevitably degenerate into a game, because this activity acquires real importance for the proletariat only when and insofar as it arouses the mass of a definite class, wins its interest, and mobilises it to take an active, foremost part in events. This work, as we have said, is always necessary. After every reverse we should bring this to mind again, and emphasise it, for weakness in this work is *always* one of the causes of the proletariat's defeat. Similarly, we should always call attention to it and emphasise its importance after every victory, otherwise the victory will be only a seeming one, its fruits will not be assured, its real significance in the great struggle for our ultimate goal will be negligible and may even prove adverse (particularly if a partial victory should slacken our vigilance, lull our distrust of unreliable allies, and cause us to forgo the right moment for a renewed and more vigorous attack on the enemy).

But for the very reason that the work of intensifying and broadening our influence on the masses is always

necessary, after each victory as after each defeat, in times of political quiescence as in the stormiest periods of revolution, we should not turn the emphasis upon this work into a special slogan or build upon it any special trend if we do not wish to court the risk of descending to demagoguery and degrading the aims of the advanced and only truly revolutionary class. There is and always will be an element of pedagogics in the political activity of the Social-Democratic Party. We must educate the whole class of wage-workers to the role of fighters for the emancipation of mankind from all oppression. We must constantly teach more and more sections of this class; we must learn to approach the most backward, the most undeveloped members of this class, those who are least influenced by our science and the science of life, so as to be able to speak to them, to draw closer to them, to raise them steadily and patiently to the level of Social-Democratic consciousness, without making a dry dogma out of our doctrine—to teach them not only from books, but through participation in the daily struggle for existence of these backward and undeveloped strata of the proletariat. There is, we repeat, a certain element of pedagogics in this everyday activity. The Social-Democrat who lost sight of this activity would cease to be a Social-Democrat. That is true. But some of us often forget, these days, that a Social-Democrat who would reduce the tasks of politics to pedagogics would also, though for a different reason, cease to be a Social-Democrat. Whosoever might think of turning this “pedagogics” into a special slogan, of *contraposing* it to “politics”, of building a special trend upon it, and of appealing to the masses under this slogan against the “politicians” of Social-Democracy, would instantly and unavoidably descend to demagoguery.

That comparisons are odious is an old axiom. In every comparison a likeness is drawn in regard to only one aspect or several aspects of the objects or notions compared, while the other aspects are tentatively and with reservation abstracted. Let us remind the reader of this commonly known but frequently ignored axiom and proceed to compare the Social-Democratic Party to a large school which

is at once elementary, secondary, and collegiate. The teaching of the ABC, instruction in the rudiments of knowledge and in independent thinking, will never, under any circumstances, be neglected in this big school. But if anyone sought to invoke the need for teaching the ABC as a pretext for dismissing questions of higher learning, if anyone attempted to offset the impermanent, dubious, and "narrow" results of this higher learning (accessible to a much smaller circle of people than those learning the ABC) to the durable, profound, extensive, and solid results of the elementary school, he would betray incredible shortsightedness. He might even help to pervert the whole purpose of the big school, since by ignoring higher education he would simply be making it easier for charlatans, demagogues, and reactionaries to mislead the people who had only learned the ABC. Or again, let us compare the Party to an army. Neither in peace-time nor in war-time dare we neglect the training of recruits, dare we neglect rifle drill, or the dissemination of the rudiments of military science as intensively and extensively as possible among the masses. But if those directing the manoeuvres or actual battles. . . .\*

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\* Here the manuscript breaks off.—*Ed.*