
THE ATTITUDE OF THE BOURGEOIS PARTIES AND OF THE WORKERS' PARTY TO THE DUMA ELECTIONS

The papers are full of news about the preparations for the elections.¹⁶ Almost every day we are informed either of a new government "interpretation" striking out of the voters' list one more category of unreliable citizens, or of new persecutions, prohibitions of meetings, suppression of newspapers and the arrest of suspected electors or candidates. The Black Hundreds¹⁷ have raised their heads, whooping and hooting more insolently than ever.

The parties that are objectionable to the government are also preparing for the elections. These parties are confident, and justly confident, that the *mass* of the voters will have their say, will take advantage of the elections to express their true convictions in spite of all the tricks, pinpricks and restrictions, great and small, that are directed against the voters. This confidence is based on the fact that the most ferocious persecutions, the most intolerable pinpricks will at most eliminate hundreds, thousands, let us say, tens of thousands of voters throughout Russia. But this will not alter the sentiments and the attitude of the *masses* towards the government. Ten or twenty thousand voters can be struck off the list in St. Petersburg, say, but this will only cause the 150,000 voters in the capital to withdraw into their shells, as it were, to lie low for a time. They will not disappear, however, and their mass sentiment will not change; if it does change, it will not, of course, be in favour of the government. Therefore, unless the electoral law is radically amended, unless all remnants of electoral legality are finally trampled upon (and they can still be further trampled upon by means of systematic arrests of electors:

one may expect the very worst from Stolypin!)—there is still no doubt that the mood of the masses will decide the elections, and the decision will certainly not be in favour of the government and its Black Hundreds.

And all non-supporters of the government are placing their hopes in the masses of the voters. But if you examine carefully what this hope in the masses really amounts to, what *the attitude* of the various parties is towards the masses—you will observe a vast difference between the bourgeois parties and the party of the proletariat.

The Cadets¹⁸ are at the head of the liberal-bourgeois parties. During the elections to the First Duma they shamefully betrayed the struggle, they refused to take part in the boycott; they themselves went tamely to the elections and drew the raw masses after them. Now they are placing their hopes on the inertness of these masses, and on the restrictions which have been imposed on agitation and on the Left parties in the conduct of their election campaign. The Cadet's hope in the masses is hope in the immaturity and servitude of the masses. He argues as follows: the masses will not understand our programme and tactics, they will not go beyond a peaceful and legal, the most peaceful and timid protest—not because they do not wish to, but because they will not be allowed to. They will vote for us, for the Lefts have no newspapers, no meetings, no leaflets, no security against arbitrary arrest and persecution. So thinks the Cadet. And he proudly raises his eyes to heaven and says: I thank thee Lord that I am not as one of those "extremists"! I am not a revolutionary; I shall be able to adjust myself most obediently and abjectly to any measures; I shall even get my election forms* from the Peaceful Renovators.¹⁹

Hence, the whole of the Cadets' election campaign is directed to frightening the masses with the Black-Hundred danger and the danger from the extreme Left parties, to adapting themselves to the philistinism, cowardice and flabbiness of the petty bourgeois and to persuading him that the Cadets are the safest, the most modest, the most

* See *Collected Works*, Vol. 11, p. 385.—Ed.

moderate and the most well-behaved of people. Every day the Cadet papers ask their readers: Are you afraid, philistine? Rely on us! We are not going to frighten you, we are opposed to violence, we are obedient to the government; rely on us, and we shall do everything for you "as far as possible"! And behind the backs of the frightened philistines the Cadets resort to every trick to assure the government of their loyalty, to assure the Lefts of their love of liberty, to assure the Peaceful Renovators of their affinity with their party and their election forms.

No enlightenment of the masses, no agitation to rouse the masses, no exposition of consistent democratic slogans—only a haggling for seats behind the backs of the frightened philistines—such is the election campaign of all the parties of the liberal bourgeoisie, from the non-party people (of *Tovarishch*) to the Party of Democratic Reforms.

The attitude of the workers' party towards the masses is exactly the reverse. The important thing for us is not to get seats in the Duma by means of compromises; on the contrary, those seats are important only because and insofar as they can serve to develop the *political consciousness* of the masses, to *raise* them to a higher political level, to *organise* them, not for the sake of philistine happiness, not for the sake of "tranquillity", "order" and "peaceful [bourgeois] bliss", but for the *struggle*, the struggle for the complete emancipation of labour from all exploitation and all oppression. Only for this purpose, and only to the extent that they help us to achieve it, are seats in the Duma and the *whole* election campaign important for us. The workers' party places all its hopes on the masses; on the masses who are not frightened, not passively submissive and who do not humbly bear the yoke, but who are politically conscious, demanding and militant. The workers' party must treat with contempt the usual liberal method of frightening the philistine with the bogey of the Black-Hundred danger. The whole task of the Social-Democrats is to make the masses *conscious* of the real danger, of the actual aims in the struggle of these forces whose strength lies not in the

Duma, which find full expression not in Duma debates, and which will settle the question of Russia's future outside the Duma.

The workers' party therefore warns the masses against the clandestine election tricks of the Cadet bourgeoisie, against its stultifying cry: Entrust to us, lawyers, professors and enlightened landlords, the task of combating the Black-Hundred danger!

The workers' party tells the masses: trust only your socialist consciousness and your socialist organisation. To surrender priority in the struggle and the right to lead it to the liberal bourgeoisie is tantamount to selling the cause of liberty for grandiloquent phrases, for the tawdry brilliance of fashionable and gaudy signboards. No Black-Hundred danger in the Duma can be as harmful as the corruption of the minds of the masses who are blindly following the liberal bourgeoisie, its slogans, its candidates and its policy.

Among the masses to whom the workers' party is appealing, the strongest numerically are the peasants and various sections of the petty bourgeoisie. They are more determined than the Cadets, more honest and a thousand times more capable of fighting, but in politics they are too often led by the Cadet windbags. Even now they are wavering between the militant proletariat and the compromising bourgeoisie.

The advocates of blocs with the Cadets are not only doing harm to the proletariat and to the whole cause of liberty. They are prejudicing the development of political consciousness among the urban and rural poor. They are not performing their immediate duty, which is to free these people from the influence of the liberal bourgeoisie. Look at the Trudoviks, the "Popular Socialists" and the Socialist-Revolutionaries.²⁰ They, too, are wavering, and are also mainly occupied with plans for deals with the Cadets. The leaders of the Trudoviks, having failed to form a party of their own, are multiplying their Duma mistakes tenfold by appealing to the masses to vote for the Cadets (Anikin—through newspaper reporters, Zhilkin—in *Tovarishch*, etc.). This is downright treachery to the cause of the peasants'

struggle, downright betrayal of the peasants to the liberal landlords, who would rob the peasants by means of a "fair" compensation as thoroughly as their forefathers did in 1861.²¹ And as for the "Popular Socialists", even the Cadets are laughing at them and calling them "second reserve Cadets" (Milyukov in *Rech*). Their leaders (Annensky and others) also appeal for blocs with the Cadets. Their tiny party (which according to *Tovarishch*, a paper which is favourably disposed to them, is weaker even than the party of peaceful plunder,²² and which has only about 2,000 members throughout Russia!) is a mere appendage of the Cadets. The position of the Socialist-Revolutionaries is also ambiguous: both in the October period and in the period of the First Duma they concealed the fact that they had split with the Popular Socialists; they continued to collaborate with them and jointly published the same newspapers. Today, they are not conducting any open and independent struggle, are not sufficiently broadly, openly and sharply attacking the "second reserve Cadets", are not supplying the masses with adequate data for criticising that party, and are not making any appraisal in principle of the whole election campaign and all electoral agreements in general.

It is the great historical duty of the workers' party to help to create an *independent* political party of the working class. Those who advocate blocs with the Cadets hinder the fulfilment of this duty.

Another great duty that confronts the workers' party is to free the masses of the ruined, poverty-stricken and doomed urban petty bourgeoisie and peasantry from the influence of the ideas and prejudices of the liberal bourgeoisie. The fulfilment of this duty is also being hindered by those who advocate blocs with the Cadets. They are not divorcing the peasants from the liberals, but are strengthening this unnatural alliance, which is fatal to the cause of liberty and to the cause of the proletariat. They are not warning the peasant masses against the liberals' backstairs politics (or rather, political intrigue for the distribution of seats in the Duma), but are sanctioning this intrigue by taking part in it.

Down with all blocs! The workers' party must conduct its election campaign independently, not only in words, but in deeds. It must provide the whole people, and the masses of the proletariat in particular, with a model of courageous and consistent criticism based on principle. Only in that way shall we succeed in rallying the masses for effective participation in the struggle for freedom and not in the sham liberalism of the Cadet betrayers of freedom.

Ternii Truda No. 2,
December 31, 1906

Collected Works,
Vol. 11, pp. 414-18