

Lenin's lessons and the 2022 elections

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This is a text directed to the political staff of the MES. As yesterday we inaugurated the discussion about the 2022 elections in the National Coordination, I believe that it is necessary to seek theoretical foundations to guide our action. This is the reason for this first written effort on the issue. It does not deal only with 2022, although it sheds some light on the subject. In general lines, it seeks to trace the principles that underlie the electoral politics of revolutionary Marxists. Its structure draws on the experience of the PT, the 2022 elections, and the lessons of Lenin. These lessons are pointed out throughout the text. At the end there is a selection of a series of quotes that I hope will stimulate the search for the work in its integrity. The purpose of this message is to help us develop our collective elaboration on elections and alliances, one of the most complex and important issues we have ahead of us.

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For the last 40 years the PT has been the hegemonic party of the Brazilian left, the main political representation of the working class. Since it took over the federal government in 2003, however, the PT has changed its nature, adopting a political line more to the center, and postulating itself as the manager of the bourgeois state; after all, in government, defending the interests of capital. From then on, a new stage began in the country, a new cycle of crisis of this hegemony and of new possibilities of configuring the political representation of the working classes and the exploited and

oppressed sectors. PSOL was founded with this diagnosis.

Now the dynamics of the Petist hegemony loss and the rise of the PSOL is visible; visible even in the terrain that still predominates in Brazilian politics: the electoral terrain. This is an ongoing process, unfinished. PSOL is still far from being the party with the rooting conquered by the PT, and electorally even farther from the strength obtained by the party commanded by Lula. But the PT can no longer recover its past strength, and the decline of its hegemony is an inexorable trend. What is not clear is if the PSOL will be able to postulate itself as a new project or if the dispersion of the working class forces will produce a prolonged void of reference and direction, which in part already constitutes the current subjective scenario of the mass movement.

This is an immense responsibility. Will the PSOL follow the path of the PT? As a repetition, in this case it would be as farce. This would be the case if and when public leaders of the PSOL try to wear the same costumes as the leaders of the great PT apparitions of the past, imitating their voices and above all repeating their program, their elaborations and even their methods. To fight for an original project, different, capable of fulfilling its historical purpose of being an anti-capitalist party, of defending the political independence of the exploited and oppressed workers, the PSOL must be clear about its principles, its program, the nature of Parliament and the State, the role of elections and the politics of alliances. This text will dwell more on electoral politics and alliances.

Its basic objective is to draw some lines that define and separate principles and strategies, on the one hand, and tactics, on the other, in the formulation of the politics of alliances, establishing the relations between them and making clear that, although they are their own instances, their relationship is indissoluble. When we refer to these concepts we use them in the sense of Clausewitz, one of the main

theorists of war, an important author in the formulations of Lenin, the latter the main revolutionary political strategist of the 20th century. Roughly speaking, strategy is the use of combat to achieve the purpose of war. It must therefore "fix a purpose for the whole act of war which corresponds to the aim of the war" (p. 172 Da Guerra). Strategy must always be on the battlefield, even if its time and space are wider than the scope of tactics, which consists precisely in the movement of troops. Tactics correspond to the measures necessary to carry out a task, to the movements so that the objectives are accomplished. It is clear that strategy is more directly related to principles, and that tactics, although they are means, cannot go against principles.

A Marxist or communist revolutionary strategy is characterized precisely by the defense of mass mobilization towards the destruction of the bourgeois state and the construction of a state of a new type, a state of transition to socialism led from below, which requires a politics that stimulates and contributes to the development of the critical and class consciousness of workers and the exploited and oppressed in general. At the same time, such a strategy presupposes the construction of a political body that consciously works towards this end. In relation to these objectives, there are numerous terrains of tactics, be it the union struggle, the parliamentary struggle, and in some cases even the guerrilla struggle, etc. It is known that one of the characteristics that lead to deviations to the left, that is, subjectivist and ultra-leftist, and to the right, that is, of adaptation and accommodation to the bourgeois order, in forces claiming to be revolutionary, is the transformation of tactics into permanent strategy. Thus, a political current becomes syndicalist when it elevates the unions to its almost sole orientation, and becomes electoralist and opportunist when it adopts elections as its exclusive orientation; guerrilla warfare itself, despite its heroism, can combine opportunist and adventurist pressures. These confusions between tactics and strategy

produce deviations or, if they are not corrected, transform the nature of an organization or a political body.

Within each tactical terrain there are also strategies to be fulfilled and tactics to meet these challenges, to realize such strategies, showing that these are also relative terms, the revolutionary mobilization of the masses for the conquest of power by the proletariat being the permanent strategy of Marxism. If we are on a strike, the strategy is the victory of the struggle, and the tactic is whether or not we will picket, whether or not they will be violent, whether or not we will have a strike fund, etc. But we don't want to go far into these conceptual issues. Our focus here is on the lessons of the experience of the PT and the challenges of the PSOL.

The case of the PT still needs to be discussed by the militant vanguard. Originating as an expression of an independent working class project, the PT never assumed a revolutionary strategy. And this is not unusual in the history of the mass movement. There are countless experiences of political projects that are not originally revolutionary, that is, in which the objective is not to propel a revolution. They are reformist projects, or projects that are born without a program or a clear strategy, as expressions of the political development of the subaltern classes in general, all or some of their variants. There are also nationalist movements that in a framework of imperialist domination can produce confrontations on the national terrain whose strategy is not socialist revolution but national independence.

Throughout its development the PT did not have a theory or a previous idealized project that surpassed the idea of a party of the workers themselves. It was within this framework that the party was consolidating its profile and its nature. In 1987, however, an essential definition of the PT matured. The strategic objective defined by the PT in its 7th meeting was the moment of its greatest programmatic definition: to arrive with Lula at the presidency of the Republic. So, if this is

the criterion to define the electoral policy of the Workers Party, then the proof of the facts would be given. And it would be favorable to the PT in that, in 2002, Lula won the elections and took office the following year. For 13 years the PT governed Brazil.

Our position and strategy was always different. It was not a long term political plan to conquer the highest executive post of the bourgeois state, but the very destruction of the bourgeois state and the construction of a new institutionality, a state of a new type. This is a basic Leninist position, indeed a revolutionary Marxist position. This has been the strategy we have fought to build within the PSOL and for it we seek to win the majority of the party. In spite of the revolutionary phraseology that sometimes made some noise in the congresses of the PT, and especially flooded many of its internal theses, revolutionary Marxism, the only one worthy of Marx, ended up being, due to the excessive weight of Lula, a tremendous minority in the PT. This is not the case of the PSOL.

What prevailed in the PT's elaboration was what Lenin called the opportunist current of the workers' movement, whose main characteristic was the search for alliances with the bourgeoisie and the sacrifice of the fundamental interests of the proletariat for momentary advantages and considerations. In the long run the bourgeoisie always ends up winning. Lenin repeated the words of Bebel, the main workers' leader in Germany

"If I, as a social democrat, enter into an alliance with bourgeois supporters, you can bet 1000 to 1 that not the social democrats will win, but the bourgeois parties will win; that, as a result, we will be the losers. It is a law that everywhere where the right and the left fix an alliance, the left loses, the right wins..."

If I make a political alliance with a party that is hostile to

me, I will be forced to adapt my tactics, that is, my fighting procedures, in order not to break this alliance. I would then no longer be able to criticize mercilessly; I would not be able to fight for principles because I could cause harm to my allies; I would find myself obliged to keep silent, to cover up many things, to justify the unjustifiable, to dissimulate what cannot be dissimulated” (p. 14 Volume 20 of the Collected Works)

The PT did not give importance to these basic lessons. It ignored them. It is still fresh in our memory when Dilma defended the calling of a democratic Constituent Assembly to rechannel the June 2013 movement toward a progressive political objective, and withdrew the proposal, in less than 24 hours, so as not to displease Temer’s MDB, which repudiated the possibility of this democratic advance. The examples are countless. The choice of Joaquim Lewy as Finance Minister, and even his replacement by Nelson Barbosa, was part of the same logic. There is no need to recall the relations with Roberto Jefferson’s PTB, the trigger of the mensalão corruption scandal.

In any case, it is necessary to recognize that “the advantages and momentary considerations” that the PT’s opportunistic strategy postulated were not small. It was the presidency of the republic, the main post of the bourgeois democratic regime, a substitute regime for the military dictatorship in Brazil since 1984. It reached the limit of wanting to go beyond the bourgeois regime, but, in the end, due to the essential weight of Lula, it stayed within these limits. A rupture with the bourgeois state was not part of its strategy. In spite of this, by proposing an ambitious strategy within the framework of the bourgeois regime, and because of the cultural formation of many of its leaders during their youth, a component of Leninism was maintained in the PT, namely, the postulation of the party as an alternative.

In this way, it is undeniable that the PT had two

characteristics in its electoral politics. On the one hand, the insistence on presenting its own board, or at least being the head of the board of its alliances. This position allowed it to postulate itself as an alternative. He was often criticized by liberal politicians who accused the party of splitting the opposition. As a rule, it did not succumb to these pressures and grew. This aspect was derived from its historical link with the traditions of the workers' movement and from the political education inherited from Leninism. But another characteristic of PT politics, that gained weight after 1989, was its alliance with bourgeois parties. It was this line, derived from the growing ideological influence of social democracy and the Stalinist education of a part of its leading staff, that allowed the agreement that gave way to the acceptance of Lula's government in 2003. As we know, although it is not the object of this work, the bourgeoisie is a dominant social class, a class conscious of its interests, and it only accepted the alliance with the PT because it was in exceptional circumstances. After accepting a period of PT governments capable of relatively stabilizing Brazilian capitalism, they got rid of the PT when the party gave signs of losing control of the mass movement and the economic crisis demanded harsher measures against the people.

In fact, the politics of alliances marked the PT's nature in a decisive way. Although there were in the history of the PT positions critical of the majority line, it is certain that the electoral and alliance politics put into practice was in accordance with the essence of the PT project: a reformist workers' party project framed within the bourgeois democratic regime that emerged from the New Republic. A party whose beginning expressed a certain class independence and became an advocate of a program of reforms of capitalism, reforms that were replaced, during the government, by compensatory social measures.

Psol emerged and developed in this process. It proposed to be

a representation of workers and youth of a different kind. Originally linked to Trotskyist forces and to the left that claims to be revolutionary, it was under this perspective that it was founded. Founded under the New Republic, even though already at the beginning of its decadence, and at a time when the PT was assuming the role of manager of the bourgeois regime, the first

movements of the PSOL in electoral and alliance politics were to deny the alliances made by the PT to reach the presidency and to deny alliances with the PT itself, which, moreover, did not seek out the PSOL to ally itself with. It was a policy that did not face difficulties because it was a matter of affirming the party, its independent project, and there were not many allies willing to follow this strategy, nor those who would agree to agree with the principles of the PSOL.

The politics of the PSOL responded to the defense of class independence, and between strategy and principles, on the one hand, and tactics, on the other, there was such an identity that the two spheres of politics became confused. It was a period when alliances were minimal. We even joined the PV as a vice-president in the municipal elections in Porto Alegre and tried alliances with the Rede at a national level, parties of a petty bourgeois nature, representing small parcels of the urban middle classes. In Pará we made alliances with PC do B, a workers' party whose origin goes back to the defense of Stalin's positions during the Brezhnev period (today they have relaxed this connection) and with PSB, the latter a center-left bourgeois party. In Amapá, by orientation of a faction of the PSOL, the same as the current president of the party, alliances were made with right-wing bourgeois parties, which was an exception in the history of the party and a case that produced constant confrontations within the PSOL. But in general the alliances were the exception, and when they occurred they were more with PSTU and PCB, two parties that claim to be revolutionary, almost always with the PSOL at the

head of the list.

After the explosion of the New Republic by the irruption of political events or processes and clashes on the left and on the right, starting with June 2013, through the parliamentary coup of 2016, and finally in the election of Bolsonaro, the situation in Brazil has totally changed, as well as the place of the parties and their system of alliances. In a first moment, in the configuration of this new bourgeois regime of high instability and with reactionary traits, the PT, for example, after being a national government in the previous regime and heading alliances with several bourgeois parties, became preterrified by these same parties. At the same time it became part of the possible alliance arc of the PSOL, expressed for the first time in the unanimous support given by the PSOL to Fernando Haddad in the second round of 2018 in the confrontation to prevent Bolsonaro's victory. It is that with Bolsonaro's rise to power a new political component was added to the determinations and delimitations of electoral politics and the system of alliances: the need to defend democratic freedoms, threatened by the counterrevolutionary strategy of the new government.

Electoral politics must have principles and rules

PSOL is a case of relative electoral success in the so-called left, or, if you like, the left of the left. It is not like the PT, which in less than ten years went to the second round of presidential elections and, in eight years of existence, had conquered key city halls in the country, including that of SP, the capital. But the PSOL in less than ten years came to have mass electoral influence in several capitals and large cities, and in about 15 years went to the second round in the capital of SP, winning the mayoral election in Belem. Among the forces that claim the Trotskyist movement is a case in point. Our current, the MES, has four federal deputies connected to our ranks, out of the ten PSOL federal deputies. There is no Trotskyist current today with this electoral

weight.

It is evident, and the numbers indicate, that our electoral strength, the strength of the PSOL, in general, is far below what is needed. But for some time now we have defined that the electoral successes of the PSOL have so far been the main explanation of its growth and the accessions it has received. The latest batch of affiliates came from the PSTU, for example. This is a symptomatic displacement because the PSTU, which at the beginning of the PSOL had more organic strength and even a larger number of militants, has been a case of electoral failure throughout its history. And this is one of the main, if not the main reason for its crisis. Such a fact, combined with the relative electoral success of the PSOL, is what largely explains the displacement of almost 40% of PSTU militants to the PSOL at once in 2017. This is not to say that militants have joined the PSOL for this reason consciously, chasing advantages in the electoral contest. But it is undeniable that this difference between the experience of the PSTU and the PSOL has weighed. The greater success of the PSOL is basically due to the fact that the PSOL had in its beginning a name of the masses like Heloisa Helena, besides the so-called radical deputies, and organized inside a series of tendencies and factions, adding forces in the electoral dispute, while the PSTU continued to be a party of a single fraction.

The electoral successes of the PSOL, however, never provided for a deep theoretical debate in the party about its program nor about the politics of alliances. And contempt for theory has always been a hallmark of opportunism. The PSTU had the merit of having discussed more in theoretical terms, trying to debate what Lenin held, for example. It was an interesting debate. We will indicate here the reading of the texts that polarized the discussion (they are in issue X of *Marxismo Vivo*). It is curious that the wing of the PSTU that broke away and joined the PSOL sustained a globally mistaken position

while the majority wing was right in the essence of the debate in its theoretical aspect, although it had many errors also in the theory and even more in the practical line. I am referring then to the theoretical conclusions, not to the concrete analysis of the concrete situation about who should be allied with the PSTU, since the minority sector defended alliances with the PSOL – and therefore, from my point of view, was right in seeing the PSOL as an ally – while the majority was against the alliance with the PSOL and defended presenting its own candidacy. But in the theoretical aspect the majority was right, and the theoretical position of the minority was false.

The majority of the PSTU sustained that the electoral politics should respond to principles and rules, being the fundamental rule of a revolutionary party to present its own candidacy in the elections, while the minority current defended that the electoral politics should respond to each moment, should respond to a concrete analysis of the concrete situation – which is obviously theoretically and politically correct – but that this did not require previous rules or principles, a false and opportunistic position. The reading of the text is clear. The fact is that the position of the leader who later headed the rupture of the PSTU and joined the PSOL sustained an electoral policy without principles. I am not quite sure if this is what he would like to defend. This is a comrade with valuable militancy. But that is what was written. His defense is that Lenin argued that alliance policy should be defined on a case-by-case basis, while Lenin argued for clear rules and in this framework the analysis of the concrete situation. In the end, the logic of the then minority of the PSTU led to an absolute separation between strategy and tactics, which, taking logic to its ultimate consequences, authorized tactics against principles. So I believe that the two positions that developed inside the PSTU were false. But the merit is that the discussion was taken to the theoretical field. The PSOL owes to its militancy a profound debate about these themes.

Our entire thesis is summarized in two fundamental conclusions: 1) the PSOL must learn from the experience of the PT, assimilating one of its marks, precisely that of presenting itself as a party that disputes the hegemony and prioritizes itself as head of the party. Even during the military regime the PT did not give up the head of the party. This is what I call its Leninist learning component. The PSOL must present its own profile in the electoral campaigns, and postulate itself as the leadership. This is a positive lesson from the experience of the PT, especially in the 80s. The alliances that occur must be made trying to maintain this rule, which requires that the PSOL has the head of the slate. Thus, the PSOL's own sheet must be affirmed as the rule; 2) the PSOL must reject alliances with bourgeois parties. Accepting such alliances was the component that I call social democratic and Stalinist in the petist elaboration.

Exceptions to this policy may exist, but they must be well justified. What are these exceptions? There is the case of semi-colonial or colonial countries (now colonial ones have practically disappeared). In these cases it can be correct, and within principles, to participate or support parties that present themselves not only as expressions of the organized working class but revolutionary nationalist forces – or even when mass peasant and indigenous movements have formed into a party, as in the case of the MAS in Bolivia. The support of revolutionaries for the PT in the 1980s was an exception variant to the rule, based on the need for revolutionaries to support the workers' struggle to form their own party. But that was in the 80s. In the 1990s and 2000s the electoral support of revolutionaries for the PT can also be considered an exception, but of a different kind. It was a definition of helping a reformist party to come to power, to defeat the bourgeois parties, and to produce or accelerate, with the coming to power of the reformist party, the experience of the mass movement with this party. This was the tactic of the MES in 2002 in supporting Lula as president.

Lenin also made the exception of supporting reformist positions, if this is useful to accelerate the experience of the masses with the reformist leaderships, to advance class consciousness and produce ruptures of the masses with these leaderships. In this case Lenin advocated helping the reformists to defeat the liberals and get to the government, so that the masses would have the experience with the reformists. Also worth quoting here

From the fact that the majority of the workers in England still follow Kerensky or the English Scheidemann, that they have not yet known the experience of a government formed by these men – an experience which was necessary both in Russia and in Germany for the workers to pass en masse to communism – it follows undoubtedly that the communists must participate in parliamentarianism; they must help the working class masses, from within parliament, to see the results of the Henderson and Snowden governments in practice; they must help the Hendersons and Snowdens to defeat the coalition of Lloyd George and Churchill. To do otherwise is to hinder the work of the revolution, for unless there is a change in the thinking of the majority of the working class, revolution will be impossible. And this change is achieved through the political experience of the masses, never through propaganda alone. The slogan “Forward, without compromise, without deviating from the path!” is erroneous in all respects, if those who speak thus are a minority of workers, powerless certainly, who know (or, at least, must know) that in a short time if Henderson and Snowden triumph over Lloyd George and Churchill, the majority will lose faith in their bosses and approve communism (or, in any case, will adopt an attitude of benevolent neutrality towards the communists) (p. 71 and 72 volume 41)

After 13 years of PT government, a reformist and bureaucratic party, advocating at most reforms in capitalism, does it make sense to continue with this tactic of supporting the PT?

There are exceptions, even in the rejection of supporting

bourgeois parties. They are rarer, but they exist. Lenin, as we have seen, strongly rejected alliances with bourgeois parties. Here is a central point of division between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks. At the same time he knew that the path of political action is not taken in a straight line. "Political action is not a sidewalk of Nevsky Avenue (the clean, wide and smooth sidewalk of the main street of Petersburg, absolutely straight", he repeated. (p 57 volume 41 – leftist). The long quotation is worth it here:

The revolutionary Social-Democrats of Russia took advantage of the services of the bourgeois liberals on several occasions before the fall of tsarism, that is, they made numerous practical compromises with them. Already in 1901 and 1902, even before Bolshevism was born, the old Iskra (of which Plejávov, Axelrod, Zasúlich, Martov, Potrésov and I formed a part) fixed (admittedly not for long) a formal alliance with Struve, the political head of bourgeois liberalism, while at the same time sustaining a more implacable ideological and political struggle against bourgeois liberalism and against the slightest manifestation of its influence within the workers' movement. The Bolsheviks have always applied the same policy. Since 1905 they have systematically defended the alliance of the working class with the peasantry against the liberal bourgeoisie and tsarism, without ever at the same time refusing to support the bourgeoisie against tsarism (for example, in the second round of elections or the second rounds of elections) and without interrupting the most uncompromising ideological and political struggle against the bourgeois revolutionary peasant party" (p 58 volume 41 Leftism).

When we see in the PSOL party sectors either rejecting on principle any compromise or, on the other hand, treating any close ally as a sister party, how different is all this to Lenin's method. Our theory is not a dogma, but a guide for action, he always repeated. Here too there are two ideas: theory is not a dogma, but it exists. Those who turn it into a

dogma are wrong, and those who disregard it are wrong.

Lenin's fundamental principle was the quest to present the party as an alternative and to combat the influence of other class interests within the workers' movement, but at the same time he made exceptions, especially when it was necessary to conclude such agreements and deviations from the course in the face of the struggle against tsarism. In addition to the fight against dictatorial regimes, this criterion was also used in the fight against the extreme right.

Therefore, the strongest exception to the rule of presenting one's own slate of candidates is the possibility that a party that claims to be socialist could clearly facilitate the victory of an extreme right-wing force. But in this case the concrete situation must be studied very rigorously. It is worth noting that Lenin wrote his theses and formulated his principles before the rise of Nazism. The Black Centurions in Russia were antecedents to this position. Yet Lenin never fails to attach importance to the need to defeat them. In one of his articles on electoral tactics he maintained

Suppose the Black Centurions get 26% of the vote, the Trudoviques 25%, the constitutional democrats the same, and the social democrats 24%. The Black Centurion will be elected, if a bloc is not formed between social democrats, trudoviques and constitutional democrats. This is an objection that should be taken seriously and should be considered carefully. But for this, it is necessary to examine in detail what the present electoral system is, that is, the present electoral system in Russia." (p. 84-85, volume XIV)

Cases of support for liberals against the government or against conservatives and reactionaries were not abundant, Lenin maintained. It would be more common in the parliaments of the interior. "Undoubtedly, the cases where the liberals are weaker than the ultra-reactionaries will predominate, and therefore the general opposition bloc must be formed to defeat

the latter" (p 255 tome 21).

He then accepted the task of confronting the reactionary government and the ultra right with electoral agreements with reformists or with liberals, but his preference was to present an independent alternative and denounced those who exaggerated the threat of the extreme right to fix agreements with the bourgeoisie. The current world situation registers a rise of extreme right wing positions and even in the US it was correct to vote for Biden against Trump. So the concrete analysis of the concrete situation is a necessity, which does not exempt us from having principles and rules. It is from these that we must define our elaborations. And within this framework to present the exceptions, which arise from the concrete analysis of the concrete situation. But these exceptions must be justified and cannot weaken the mobilization strategy.

In other words, it could be said that the need to defeat the extreme right is a rule, such is the importance of this task, but let's consider that Lenin treated this orientation as an exception to two fundamental rules, namely to have our own candidacy and not to ally with bourgeois parties. This is our position.

It is preferable to call for a vote for a liberal party against a fascist party, but before calling for a vote in any such variant the effort, if there is no serious risk of the extreme right winning, is to have one's own face. Concretely, in a presidential election like we had in Brazil in 2018, it was better to have called for a vote for Haddad than it would have been to call for a vote for Alckmin against Bolsonaro. I don't think it would make much difference to call for a vote for Ciro or for Haddad, given the huge similarity between their programs, both bourgeois and reformist. But it was very important that we presented the PSOL's name in the first round.

Even in the case of a possible victory of the extreme right,

we should seek, preferably, to present our own slate in the first round, leaving for the second round (mechanism foreseen by Brazilian law) the moment to support the lesser evil against the extreme right. As we have seen, these positions are based on the elaborations of Lenin, the main political leader of the proletariat in the 20th century:

To address these theoretical and political questions is a requirement to debate the 2022 elections. Although it is not in the axis of our action, the 2022 elections need to be debated. The tactical hypotheses must be presented. To define the tactic, it is important to take into account our permanent strategic objectives, that is, to use the elections to boost mass mobilization, advance working class consciousness, and build the party. In addition, we need to define our goal for the election itself. In the election of 2022 there are many challenges, decisive being overcoming the barrier clause, which is fundamental for the legality of the party. But we have a central strategic objective: to prevent Bolsonaro's reelection. His reelection is a real possibility. It may not be the most likely, here is a topic under discussion. His possibility, however, is so evident, with his 30% support, despite the catastrophes experienced by the country, that any social-political grouping that does not take this possibility seriously can be treated as irresponsible.

That is why we will enter this debate with two central hypotheses, two possibilities of political orientation: 1) The defense of the PSOL's own candidacy in the first round and the anticipated declaration of support for whoever is against Bolsonaro in the second round, preferably any of the left or center left opposition forces. 2) The defense of the broadest unity of the entire left and center left opposition to Bolsonaro already in the first round. In these two hypotheses we want to qualify the debate.

The first hypothesis is to launch the PSOL's own candidacy and support the lesser evil in the second round. The hypothesis of

running its own candidacy allows the PSOL to present its program, show in its own words the reasons why Bolsonaro cannot govern, etcetera, besides helping in the election of deputies and allowing the party to overcome the barrier clause. To postulate oneself as an alternative is always a necessity. With our own TV and radio time, our figures can contribute with arguments to add to the fight against the extreme right from a critical perspective of the decaying bourgeois democratic regime and from a location independent of the positions that have accepted to manage the capitalist machine. One doesn't need to use many arguments that such a tactic facilitates to obtain the necessary votes to defend the party against their attempts to exclude it from legality via the barrier clause. This tactic also has better conditions for the party to dialogue with part of its own already conquered base and to seek to attract popular sectors that are dissatisfied with all, the mass base of the current null votes and abstentions

In the second hypothesis we defend the unity of those who, formally, in the scope of the National Congress declare themselves as opposition to the government. In this range we have the PT, PDT, PSB, PC do B, Rede, besides the parties that claim to be revolutionary and have no parliamentary representation, PSTU, PCB and UP. It is up to the PSOL to defend the unity of this camp in the electoral field. This is a tactical definition of an exceptional situation marked by the need to defeat the extreme right. But it is more than that. The battle to defeat the extreme right could be in the second round, in the likely case that Bolsonaro is in it. We are working with this hypothesis. Since the election has two rounds, in the second round we will join in electoral support with whoever is against Bolsonaro.

But there is a specificity. Besides the left and center left opposition to Bolsonaro, which brings together socialist parties with a class independence program, like the PSOL,

reformist workers' parties with a bourgeois program, like the PT, and bourgeois parties with reformist programs, like the PDT, there is a liberal bourgeois opposition (not declared in the National Congress, where they claim to be independent), but which does exist. The bourgeois liberal opposition, whose flagship in the country is Rede Globo, seeks to have a candidate and it will not be the name of the PT, be it Haddad or Lula, nor Ciro. Thus, in the first round there will be a dispute to see which force will go to the second round against Bolsonaro, whether the bourgeois opposition with its liberal program or the leftist/center-leftist opposition.

The PSOL's tactic of supporting the electoral unity of this second bloc would be a tactical variant of Lenin's line of helping the English Labour Party defeat the liberals. In this case to help this bloc go to the second round and be the one, not the liberals, to face Bolsonaro.

There is, of course, the chance that this bloc will not unite, as it did in 2018. But after Bolsonaro's experience, the non-unity of this bloc produces the high risk that none of the forces that make it up will go to the second round. To warn about this risk and have a clear policy to avoid it is what can justify an exceptional tactic that would be to give up its own candidacy. The PSOL cannot be responsible for the division of this bloc, nor can it give any appearance of doing so. There are millions of workers, young people and middle class sectors that will call for this unity against Bolsonaro.

If the forces that make up the left/center left camp do not find the way to form a sheet with the criterion of electoral competitiveness and with the minimum democratic program, then it is these forces, notably Ciro/Lula/Haddad who are choosing to present themselves in their own banner. This scenario of division seems to be what has been seen today, with the majority of the PT denying the composition with Ciro, affirming the name of Haddad, who lost to Bolsonaro in 2018, leaving in the air at least symbolically the great risk of the

repetition of the result, and with Ciro refusing to call the PT to compose, trying to form his field with PSB and REDE, centrally, when he did not signal to the DEM (this before the defeat of Baleia Rossi). In this case, faced with this option of the largest forces of this generic field, the path that the PSOL should take is that of its own candidacy, not accepting to be a pawn or transmission belt of any of the parties with more electoral weight. In this case the unity with any of the blocs in the first round would only be a guarantee of division and would dilute the PSOL and its critical potential. In politics there are sums that multiply forces and sums that subtract. The unity of all can be a multiplication and guarantees the left and center-left opposition in the second round. The addition of the PSOL with only one sector largely cancels out the strength of the PSOL and its most effective contribution to criticize Bolsonarism and at the same time build the party.

In theory, the PSOL could even present its name to head a broad unity slate of the left and center left. But I don't think it would be the right thing to do, not only because of the lesser electoral density of a PSOL name compared to a PT or PDT name, for example, in the specific case of Haddad or Ciro (or even Lula). The fundamental reason for the PSOL not to present its name as the flagship of this unity is that such a tactic of supporting a sheet of these parties in the first or second round cannot correspond to a common power bloc agreement. Calling for the vote cannot mean participating in an eventual government they conform. This is because it is necessary to be conscious that the program of both the PT and Ciro has a general nature of developmentalism, but is bourgeois by class nature. Both are programs in defense of capitalism. In this case, practical experience allows no room for deception.

These same sectors governed together for 13 years. That is why, by the way, the justification for supporting the PT in

2002 makes no sense today. The idea that the PT needs to govern in order for the masses to experience these directions is ridiculous. Such an experience has already been made. The decadence of the PT is explained by this. The enormous rejection of the PT is the same. The fact that the experience was not completed due to Dilma's impeachment, and that the regression produced by Bolsonaro's rise has caused millions to limit their political horizon to a return to the past, which is totally impossible, should not make the vanguard, that claims to be revolutionary, accept the return and the regression of 13 years on the political chessboard, as if the PT had not governed. The PSOL was not founded after our rupture with the PT and our left opposition to the Lula government, only to enter the PT government more than 15 years later. Of course, there may be sectors deluded that the PT has a leftist and anti-capitalist policy. These sectors are much smaller than in 2002. And those that exist, if they exist inside the PSOL, must be strongly fought politically.

This combat does not disregard that the PT has influence in working class organizations, nor much less the unity of action and the single front with the PT to confront the extreme right and Bolsonarism. We value this so much that we accept unity also on the electoral terrain. What we do not accept is the idea that the PT has returned to its past of representing the interests of the working class. After years of experiencing bourgeois state management, the PT has not drawn the conclusions of its course. Lula as the political head of the party continues to defend the strategy of occupying the spaces of the bourgeois state and seeking alliances with bourgeois parties whenever he can. His nature with ties to the working class does not reverse his class conversion on the programmatic terrain. And symbolically the PT can only arouse hope that the past is capable of rebirth. Let's just say that such hope has little capacity to generate any mass movement worthy of the name under this command. Neither in the elections, nor much less in the streets.

If incorporated into a government headed by Ciro it would be just as or more meaningless. Ciro openly claims bourgeois developmentalism. His advantage over the PT is that his discourse has more forcefulness in many points, especially in the economic agenda and in the symbolic offensive against Bolsonaro (especially compared to Haddad), and since he has not been president nor has his party had the presidency of the republic, he can awaken the hope that the idea of the new carries, which can no longer be the case with the PT. But we are not confused by the bourgeois nature of its program, and we affirm the PSOL's need to stick to a socialist strategy. That is why we can help him win Bolsonaro, but we would be a leftist opposition to his eventual government.

The reason why we do not consider it correct to participate in reformist bourgeois governments, whether headed by the PT or by Ciro, is also the same that leads us not to have, on the electoral terrain, a criterion to prioritize the alliance with one sector or another in the national dispute. To ally with the PT against Ciro would be to strengthen Lula's leadership as the head of unity, giving the former president a place that is no longer his to have, using still to impose the names of his preference and that defend his apparatus, regardless of electoral competition. Supporting Ciro against the PT would be to embolden a politician who sought to amplify and make his name viable with bourgeois forces on the right and thus ends up weakening the search for unity in the first round (in addition to his swing in the second round of 2018). The hypothesis that they unite in the first round can indeed be defended by us. And with this defense we push for unity. By choosing a side we will be strengthening the division and, in case the division is confirmed, it will not make sense for the PSOL to fail to also present its own name and establish the commitment of mutual support in the second round. These are our tactical options.

A Few More Notes on Lenin's Electoral Politics

To know Lenin's electoral politics, his principles and tactics, requires a serious study of his work. We have already seen some of his elaborations. Let's develop this experience a little further before the 1917 revolution.

The north of his policy was the defense of the interests of the proletariat, the need to increase its capacity for struggle and consciousness. In this sense, his principle was the defense of the class independence of the proletariat, which became concrete in the postulation of social democracy, the name of the party of the proletariat that united different tendencies, especially the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks.

Lenin argued that the Bolsheviks represented the revolutionary wing within the party, while the Mensheviks were the opportunist wing. His definition was that the defense of alliances with the bourgeoisie was the main characteristic of opportunism. For this sector the rule was alliance, while for the Bolsheviks the rule was independent postulation, alliance being exceptional, in specific circumstances. Lenin's position in favor of independent candidacies was a response to the need for the party of the proletariat to postulate itself. Such a line extended to his policy of building the communist parties of the Third International, when the division between the opportunist wing and the revolutionary wing of the workers' movement had already taken place, after 1914.

By studying Lenin we will be able to throw light on the experience of the Brazilian left, particularly in the last 40 years, and better understand the reasons for the bankruptcy of the PT. At the same time it will be shown that the idea that differences of principle always led to Lenin's defense of party ruptures is a myth. And also that it is a myth that Lenin under no circumstances admitted electoral support to bourgeois parties. Finally, it is equally mistaken to believe that Lenin, after the split between revolutionaries and reformists, did not advocate support for the reformists at times. But here it must be stated clearly: Lenin had

principles and rules in the politics of electoral alliances. From these he discussed tactics and even established exceptions. To believe that Lenin simply analyzed the concrete situation and that the politics of electoral alliances had no principles and rules is a reading that has no support in Lenin and expresses an empirical and opportunistic theoretical position.

The period we are going to analyze is marked in Russia by the insurrection of 1905 and then by the dictatorial political regime that emerged in 1907, after the counterrevolutionary coup. One of Lenin's trademarks was always to analyze the class nature of the parties. In general terms, he enumerated the main political forces as follows

Experience of classifying the parties

"Let's start by listing the more or less important political parties (or, perhaps, types of parties), going from those of the 'right' to those of the 'left'. 1) Russian People's Union, monarchists, etc. 2) Party of Legal Order. 3) Octobrists. 4) Peaceful Renovators. 5) Party of Democratic Reforms. 6) Constitutional Democrats. 7) Freethinkers, radicals, those of Bez Zaglavia, etc. 8) Popular Socialists of Labor. 9) Revolutionary Socialists. 10) Maximalists. 11) Social-Democrats: Mensheviks and Bolsheviks. We do not count the anarchists, as it would be too risky to call them a political party (as, perhaps, would the maximalists).

In this heterogeneous set of parties, five fundamental types of our political parties are clearly distinguished: 1) the Black Centurions; 2) the Octobrists; 3) the Constitutional Democrats; 4) the Trudovists 5) the Social Democrats. The correctness of this classification becomes evident when the class nature of each party is analyzed. " (p.22, volume 14)

And Lenin also defines, besides the class nature, the political characteristics of the main bourgeois parties,

separating between liberals and the extreme right, showing their differences and points of unity.

“The constitutional democrat is the typical bourgeois intellectual and sometimes even the liberal landowner. His fundamental desire is to conclude an agreement with the monarchy and end the revolution. Totally inept to fight, the constitutional democrat is the typical businessman. His ideal is to envision bourgeois exploitation in regulated, civilized, parliamentary forms.” (p. 25-26 idem)

“The typical Octobrist is not a bourgeois intellectual, but a big bourgeois. He is not the ideologue of bourgeois society, but its true master. Directly interested in capitalist exploitation, he despises all theory, despises intellectuality, and, unlike the constitutional democrats, rejects all pretense of “democracy.” The Octobrist is the bourgeois businessman. He also aspires, like the constitutional democrat, to reach an agreement with the monarchy, but his idea of such an arrangement does not consist of a particular political system or parliamentarianism, but of the agreement of a few people or leaders with the palace clique for the purpose of making the obtuse, venal, and Asian-style Russian officials submit directly to the ruling bourgeoisie. The Octobrist is a constitutional democrat who applies his bourgeois theories to the business sphere. The Constitutional Democrat is an Octobrist who, in his spare time, when not looting the workers and peasants, dreams of an ideal bourgeois society. The Octobrist will still learn some parliamentary etiquette and political hypocrisy along with flirting with democracy. The Constitutional Democrat will still learn a bit of bourgeois corporate cunning, and then the two will merge, merge indubitably and infallibly, regardless of whether they achieve it precisely at the present time and precisely through the present “peaceful renovators.” (p.26 volume 14)

“The Centurioblackists constitute the last type of our

political parties. They do not want the 'Constitution of October 17, like Mr. Guchkov, but the formal maintenance and restoration of autocracy. All the garbage, ignorance and venality that thrive under the omnipotence of the adored monarch respond to their interests. They are united by the hard struggle for the privileges of the clique, for the possibility to continue robbing, oppressing and gagging all of Russia. The defense at all costs of the present Tsarist government often unites them with the Octobrists, so it is difficult to say, with respect to certain members of the Party of Legal Order, where the Black Centuria ends and the Octobrist begins." (p. 27 volume 14)

It is not difficult to see that Lenin defined all three of these parties as not only bourgeois but as acting against the revolution. The Constitutionalist Democrats were the liberal bourgeois party, trying to occupy the political center, the Octobrists the right-wing bourgeoisie, and the Black Centurions those who more directly advocated physical attacks on the workers' movement and the liquidation of any democratic freedoms. They were the Russian expression of the fascist forces and conformed to the extreme right.

Social democracy and electoral agreements

For purposes of illustration it is worth saying that we are going to deal with the elections of parliament. The Russia of Lenin's time had no elections for the executive. The regime was dynastic. The monarchical powers were perpetuated until February 1917, when the democratic revolution swept away the monarchy and in less than a year, the bourgeois democratic republic – the most democratic seen so far, according to Lenin – gave way to a proletarian republic and the Soviet regime.

For his electoral policy, Lenin relied on the official party resolutions, namely:

Lenin advocated a set of resolutions that are worth knowing.

They were those of the 6th (PRAGUE) CONFERENCE OF ALL POSDR
RUSSIA – p 150

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1) In the curia operaria it will present its own candidates everywhere and will not admit any agreement with other parties or groups (liquidators).

2) Given the great importance from the point of view of agitation, the fact that the Social Democrats have candidates, it is necessary to try in the second assembly of urban voters and, if possible in the peasant community, for the party to have its own candidates.

3) In the second round of elections (see Art. 106 of the Electoral Regulations), during the election of delegates at the second urban voters' assembly it is permissible to conclude agreements with the bourgeois democrats against the liberals, and then also with the liberals against all the government parties. One form of agreement may be to draw up joint lists from one or more cities, in proportion to the number of votes obtained in the first round of elections.

4) In the five cities (Petesburg, Moscow, Riga, Odessa and Kiev) where elections are direct, with a second round, in the first round one presents one's own Social-Democratic candidates for the second group of urban voters. In the case of a second round, when there is not the slightest danger from the black centurions, only then are agreements with democratic groups against liberals admissible.

5) No electoral agreement can be connected with the presentation of a common platform, nor should it impose any political compromise on the Social Democratic candidates, nor should it prevent the Social Democrats from resolutely criticizing the counter-revolutionary character of the Liberals, as well as the tube and inconsistency of the Bourgeois Democrats.

6) In the second stage of the elections (in the rural district delegates' assemblies, in the provincial voters' assemblies, etc.) whenever it is important to make the list of the black centurions and octubrists or the government list in general fail, agreements for the distribution of seats will be concluded, first, with the bourgeois democrats (Trudovicks, popular socialists, etc.) and then with the liberals (constitutional democrats, progressives without party, etc.)

Here there are clear issues: 1) it is necessary to prioritize the party's own lists; 2) the party can make agreements favoring agreements with reformists but also accepting agreements with liberals against the government, and it must always be attentive to the need to prevent the victory of the Black Centurians and to a lesser extent the Octobrists. In any case, the mere reading of the resolution does not fully clarify the criteria used by Lenin. It is a prerequisite to know a little more about the Russian electoral system.

In Russia, elections to parliament were indirect in many cities. They were elected by social sector, the so-called curias (workers' curia, peasants' curia, first urban curia, second urban curia, landlords' curia). The curia was the denomination of the various categories of voters, determined by stratum and property censuses. From these elections came the compromisers, that is, the members of the electoral college who chose the representatives of the Duma. In five cities, Petersburg, Moscow, Odessa, Kiev and Riga, generally the largest cities, elections were direct. In direct elections there was a two-round system for parliamentary elections. But in these two rounds the chance to contest was open to all parties to contest again. So in practice there were two elections, the first of which was a kind of primary.

Lenin himself explained that many confused Russian and European legislation and defended the same German tactics for

Russia. But this was not the case.

“According to the law of June 3, 1907, in Russia there is no second round of elections in the German manner, there is generally no “second round” in the exact sense of the word, but only supplementary or new elections. In Germany, the second round is held to elect one of the two candidates who got the most votes in the primary elections.

Pages 251 and 252 – Nothing similar happens in Russia. According to our law, in the second round of elections, any number of any candidates can be presented. Strictly speaking, it is not a second round, but a new or supplementary election. Therefore, the references to the German example are erroneous.

P. 252 – The same is provided for in the law of June 3, 1907 on the second round of elections in the case of direct elections, in Petersburg, Moscow, Odessa, Kiev and Riga. Only instead of the expression “relative majority of votes,” Article 140 speaks of “the greatest number of votes.” Finally, in the elections of members of the Duma by provincial electoral assemblies, a second round of elections is also provided for if the candidates do not obtain “more than half of the votes cast,” that is, an absolute majority, with the particularity that “those who obtain a relative majority of votes shall be considered elected.” (art. 130)

Pages 252 and 253 – Thus, our electoral law contains nothing that resembles the second round of elections in Germany. There is nothing more wrong than to refer to the example and conduct of German workers. In the special edition of the Regulations for the State Dune elections, published by the Ministry of the Interior, St. Petersburg 1912, point 14 of art. 106 states, “In the second round, people who did not participate in the first round may also appear.” Apparently, we are not only talking about new voters, but also about new candidates. The law allows candidates to appear in the second round of elections who did not appear in the first round.”

Here we can already anticipate our conclusion that the axis of Lenin's politics was the presentation of the Social-Democratic party's own slate, trying to postulate the party as an alternative to power, rejecting the agreements with the liberal bourgeoisie and admitting them only in cases of clear possibility of victory of the extreme right. Even in this case, Lenin insisted on studying the real relation of forces and attacked the Mensheviks for overestimating the strength of the Black Centurions to carry out their strategy of unity with the liberals, specifically with constitutional democracy. Despite this serious disagreement with the Bolsheviks, he did not advocate breaking away from the party over this issue. His position was in favor of attracting peasant and middle class sectors, defending in some cases electoral alliances with the left wing of these sectors. He was adamant in denying any alliance only in the so-called curias laboratorias, which was the system of voting only in the factories. There he maintained that the party had the obligation to always present itself with its own face. This general position of principles did not annul the need for concrete analysis of the concrete situation.

Separate quotes

Volume 13

Report on the unification congress of the POSDR

"When the constitutional regime has been consolidated and the constitutional struggle for some time has become the main form of class struggle and of political struggle in general, unmasking constitutionalist illusions is not the special task of social democracy, it is not a task of the moment. Why? Because at such moments, things are done in constitutional states exactly as they are settled by parliaments. Constitutionalism is a misleading faith in the constitution. Constitutionalism arises when it seems that there is a Constitution, but in reality there is not:

that is: when the affairs of state are not settled in the way that parliaments decide. When real political life is different from its reflection in parliamentary struggle; then, and only then, the struggle against constitutional illusions becomes the immediate task of the revolutionary vanguard class: the proletariat. The liberal bourgeoisie, fearful of extra-parliamentary struggle, propagates constitutionalist illusions also in cases where parliaments are null and void. Anarchists vehemently deny participation in parliaments under any circumstances. Social Democrats are in favor of using parliamentary struggle, in favor of participating in it, but they ruthlessly denounce parliamentary cretinism, that is, the faith that parliamentary struggle is the only or the main form of political struggle in any respect " (p.38-39 tome 13)

Volume 14

Social democracy and electoral agreements

"Suppose the black centurions get 26% of the vote, the Trudoviques 25%, the constitutional democrats the same, and the social democrats 24%. The black centurion will be elected, if a bloc is not formed between social democrats, trudoviques and constitutional democrats. This is an objection that should be taken seriously and should be considered carefully. But for this, it is necessary to examine in detail what the present electoral system is, that is, the present electoral system in Russia." (p. 84-85)

"In Russia, elections to the State Duma are not direct, but in several stages. In this type of election, vote dispersal is only dangerous in the first stage. Only when the primary voters go to the polls do we ignore how the votes will be divided; only in the agitation among the masses do we act 'manually'. In the final stages, during the delegate elections, the general battle is already given; it remains to distribute the seats through specific agreements between the parties, who "know" the exact number of their candidates and

their votes.

The first stage of the electoral process is the election of delegates in the cities, the election of representatives – every ten families – in the villages, and the election of delegates to the workers' curia.

In the cities, we speak for a large mass of voters in each electoral unit (constituency, etc.). There is no doubt here of the danger of dispersion of votes. It is undeniable that somewhere in the cities one can elect delegates from the black centurions exclusively because there is no left bloc, or exclusively because the Social Democrats, for example, have siphoned off part of the votes of the Constitutional Democrats. It should be remembered that Guchkov got about 900 votes in Moscow, and the Constitutional Democrats 501 votes, so Guchkov would have triumphed. And there is no doubt that the ordinary population will take this simple mechanism into account, will fear that the votes will be scattered, and just for that reason alone will feel inclined to vote for the more moderate opposition candidate. This will result in what the English call a triangular election, when small urban sectors fear to vote for a socialist candidate, so as not to subtract votes from the liberal one, thus helping the conservative victory.

How to protect yourself against this danger? In only one way: to reach an agreement in the first stage, that is, a common list of delegates, in which the number of candidates from each party is determined by agreement between the parties, before the fight. All parties between whom this agreement is sealed then invite the electorate to vote for this common list." (p. 85-86)

"Only 35 of the 524 seats in the Duma correspond to all the cities of Russia (6 for St. Petersburg, 4 for Moscow, 2 for Warsaw, and another 2 for Tashkent;" (p.87)

“Is it reasonable, then, under such conditions to give up the struggle for our own candidates, for class candidates, letting ourselves be carried away by an exaggerated fear of the Black Centuries? Does not such a policy sin, even from a narrow and practical point of view, from a lack of discernment, not to speak of a lack of firmness of principle? ” (p.87)

“In the delegate assemblies we may be guided by the precise results of the primary electoral struggles, in which everything was decided beforehand. Here, if it is possible and necessary to conclude ... not blocks, of course, not permanent and narrow agreements, but particular agreements on the distribution of seats. Here, and even more so in the delegates' assemblies for the election of deputies to the Duma, together with the Trudoviks we will have to defeat the Constitutional Democrats and, together with the SRs, the Enesists, etc. ” (p.91-92)

“Thus, analysis of the current electoral system shows that blocs in the early stages of elections are particularly inconvenient in the cities and unnecessary” (p. 92)

“District delegate assemblies and provincial delegate assemblies are of decisive political importance. Here, that is, in the final stages, particular agreements are necessary and possible without violating party principles: the struggle with the masses is over and it is not necessary to advocate a non-partisan policy directly or directly before them.” (p.92)

“To achieve victory for a particular candidate, it is necessary to muster in the delegate assembly at least 51 votes out of 100. From this follows the following general rule for the tactics of the Social Democratic delegates: strive to attract a sufficient number of the most sympathetic or especially worthy bourgeois democrats to support the Social Democrats, to defeat the others along with them, and thus ensure that, as a result, the Social Democrats and, in part, the best bourgeois democrat compromisers triumph.

Let's illustrate this rule with simple examples. Suppose that 49 percent of the delegates are Black Centurionists; 40, Constitutional Democrats; and 11, Social Democrats. To ensure that all candidates win a common list of deputies for the Duma, a particular agreement is needed between the Social Democrats and the Constitutional Democrats based, of course, on a proportional distribution of seats according to the number of delegates (i.e., in this case, the Social Democrats would get one-fifth of the seats in the entire province, say, two out of ten, and the Constitutional Democrats, the remaining four-fifths, i.e., eight out of ten). If there are 49 constitutional democrats, 40 trudoviks and 11 social democrats, we should try to reach an agreement with the trudoviks to defeat the constitutional democrats and win one fifth of the seats and four fifths for the trudoviks. In this case, we would have an excellent opportunity to see how consistent and firm the democratic convictions of the Trudoviks are: whether they are willing to completely ignore the Constitutional Democrats and defeat them by joining the compromisers of the Workers Party or whether, on the contrary, they choose to save for this or that Constitutional Democrat or perhaps even prefer to form a bloc with the Constitutional Democrats rather than with the Social Democrats. " (p.93-94)

The Blocks With Constitucional Democrats

"The core of the discussion is: on what level should the socialist proletariat conclude agreements with the bourgeoisie, which are generally inevitable in the course of the bourgeois revolution. Among the Bolsheviks, there may be differences on questions of detail: whether agreements are necessary during elections with this or that party of the revolutionary bourgeoisie. But the crucial point of the discussion between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks is not that, far from it. The crucial point of the discussion remains the same: whether in the bourgeois revolution the socialist proletariat should stand behind the liberal monarchical bourgeoisie or at

the head of the revolutionary democratic bourgeoisie. " (p. 119)

"The Mensheviks deceive the people by talking about the democracy of the constitutional democrats.

Secondly, the Bolsheviks only admit agreements with the bourgeois republicans as an 'exception.' The Mensheviks do not demand that blocs with the constitutional democrats be the only exception.

Third, the Bolsheviks unconditionally forbid agreements in the workers' curia ('with no other party'). " (p.120-121)

The fight against social democrats of constitutional democratic tendency and party discipline

"Admitting the blocs with the Constitutional Democrats conclusively defines the Mensheviks as the opportunist wing of the workers' party." (p.130)

"Does the fact that the Social Democrats admit the blocs with the Constitutional Democrats demand the total severance of organic relations, that is, a split? We think not, and so do all the Bolsheviks. " (p. 131)

Volume 21

RUSSIA'S SECOND ROUND OF ELECTIONS AND THE TASKS OF THE WORKING CLASS

In issue 1-2 of *Nasha Zariá*, Dan wrote that our tactics in the second round of elections are identical to those in Western Europe.

Trotsky recently wrote a special article on the second round of elections based on this same error.

os and in the first urban curia, the role of the Labor Democrats in particular is too insignificant to mention.

Page 256 – in this (curia) one cannot even speak of the danger of the Black Securias. This clear, too, that the main task of the labor democrats here is precisely the struggle against the liberals; today, given the general turn to the left in the country, recognized by liberals, octubrists and Purishkevich, this struggle must come to the fore. Needless to say that in the first round the workers' candidates must wage an absolutely independent struggle, on purely workers' lists. And in the second stage, the second round of elections, in most cases it is a struggle of the democrats against the liberals.

Page 256 – To wage this struggle, the Marxists must unite in the second round with all the democrats (that is, also with the bourgeois democrats, the populists, the trudoviks, etc.) against the liberals.

Page 257 – against the liberals, that is, against the Constitutionalist Democratic Party. Since the second urban curia is the main one in which there will be a second round, the workers' main line will be precisely: with the Democrats against the right and against the liberals.

P. 257 – They make a political mistake, by falling into a workers' politics of the liberals, by limiting themselves to general phrases about supporting the opposition against the right.

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“Agreement with the liberals against the right is admissible in a second round and second stage election. For bourgeois monarchical liberalism, despite all its ambiguities, is far from the same as feudal reaction. Not to use this difference would be a very bad policy for the workers. ” (p.395)