

Lenin, “What is to be Done?” and “On Democracy”

Some speak about “pure democracy” and “democracy” in general for the purpose of deceiving the people and concealing from them the bourgeois character of present-day democracy.

Let the bourgeoisie continue to keep the entire apparatus of state power in their hands, let a handful of exploiters continue to use the former, bourgeois, state machine! Elections held in such circumstances are praised by the bourgeoisie as being “free”, “equal”, “democratic” and “universal”. These words are designed to conceal the truth, to conceal the fact that the means of production and political power remain in the hands of the exploiters, and that therefore real freedom and real equality for the exploited – that is, for the vast majority of the population – are out of the question.

...Never forget that the state, even in the most democratic republic... is simply a machine for the suppression of one class by another... The dictatorship of the proletariat alone can emancipate humanity from the oppression of capital, from the lies, falsehood and hypocrisy of bourgeois democracy – democracy for the rich – and establish democracy for the poor...”

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, it may itself realize the necessity for combining in unions, for fighting against the employers and for striving to compel the government to pass necessary labor legislation, etc. The theory of socialism, however, grew out of the philosophic, historical and economic theories that were elaborated by the educated representatives of the propertied classes, the intellectuals... Marx and Engels themselves belonged to the bourgeois intelligentsia...

I assert:

1. that no movement can be durable without a stable organization of leaders to maintain continuity;
2. that the more widely the masses are spontaneously drawn into the struggle and form the basis of the movement and participate in it, the more necessary is it to have such an organization, and the more stable must it be (for it is much easier for demagogues to sidetrack the more backward sections of the masses);
3. that the organization must consist chiefly of persons engaged in revolutionary activities as a profession who have been professionally trained...

In commencing socialist transformations, we must clearly have in mind the aim towards which these transformations are, in the long run, directed; namely, the aim of creating a communist society... advancing further, to the realization of the principle: from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs.