

Boris Baluyev

LENIN

and the

BOURGEOIS

PRESS



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AND THE BOURGEOIS PRESS



Progress Publishers

Moscow

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Борис Балуев

ЛЕНИН ПОЛЕМИЗИРУЕТ С БУРЖУАЗНОЙ ПРЕССОЙ

На английском языке

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INTRODUCTION

The polemical writings of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin continue to set an unsurpassed standard of excellence for journalists and all representatives of the progressive press. They teach ideological consistency and develop the ability to link political issues of the moment to Marxist philosophical theory. They serve as an example of profound analysis of facts and real-life phenomena, of the perfect timing in the discussion of urgent topical questions, of perceptiveness and scientific precision in making conclusions and recommendations, and faultless political forecasting. They are a model of work packed with information from the most diverse fields: history, philosophy, natural science, literature, economics and technology. They are distinguished by graphic description and accuracy of political detail, by their vigour and the emotionally-charged language.

Pamphleteering is unthinkable without polemics, in so far as it is born in the campaign against forces that hamper historical development.

Lenin's pamphleteering is a model of polemical passion. Each article is a blow to the forces which, in one way or another, stood opposed to the struggle by the working class against tsarism and the bourgeoisie, opposed to the triumph of a socialist revolution and the building of a new life.

Lenin believed that no Marxist publication could overlook polemics, inasmuch as "one cannot develop new views other than through polemics".¹ This precept and its practical embodiment in Lenin's journalism are of particular value to researchers and practitioners engaged in communist journalism.

¹ V. I. Lenin, "A Talk on 'Cadet-Eating'", *Collected Works*, Vol. 18, p. 297. (Unless otherwise stated, all quotations are taken from the English edition of Lenin's *Collected Works* in 45 volumes, prepared by Progress Publishers, Moscow.)

We live today at a time of acute ideological struggle between the worlds of socialism and capitalism, of unceasing, daily skirmishing between the communist and bourgeois press on vital issues of the moment, the destiny of human development; it is here that the Leninist school of journalistic polemic acquires invaluable significance. It is a school in which employees of the press as well as other mass media can learn a great deal. It can be of great assistance to journalists of communist and workers' parties in capitalist countries as they conduct an unequal but courageous battle in their press against bourgeois press propaganda, which possesses all the advantages of modern technology and a whole army of well-taught and skilful manipulators of public opinion and fabricators of falsehood.

Lenin invariably viewed journalism as the mission of contemporary history. Different organs of the press and different journalists would write differently, but in every case their writings would display class and partisan positions. This is what interested Lenin above all. The way different press organs treated the same facts enabled Lenin to show the class, partisan stance of a journalist or press organ as a whole, and not infrequently also enabled him to define the stance of an entire class or party whose mouthpiece the particular periodical was.

We should note at once that pre-revolutionary newspapers and magazines in Russia did not normally declare themselves organs of particular political parties. This was done both for censorship reasons and for the sake of freedom of political manoeuvre and manipulation. In his polemical attacks against bourgeois and petty-bourgeois press organs, Lenin sought to define and underline their precise class, partisan position; he did this largely through analysing their assessments of various facts, events and phenomena of the time. Naturally, he also took into account the political orientation of the staff and authors of the publications.

Such an approach enabled Lenin to determine the position, condition, intentions, and tactical and strategic line of conduct of hostile political forces—of classes, parties and groups. This made it possible to follow their evolution. At the same time, he was able to evaluate and identify the line of conduct of a particular press organ.

Lenin not only made evident his attitude towards individual hostile organs of the press, but also gave an assessment

of the bourgeois press as a whole, exposing its intrinsic nature, the likely pattern of its development and its characteristic features.

By pointing out certain inevitable demerits of that press, he helped his readers see, via specific facts, the social phenomenon as a whole. He thereby also created a methodological basis for criticising the bourgeois press in the pages of the communist press.

This book reveals Lenin's views on such important controversial and still relevant political issues as the feasibility or non-feasibility of a communist press representative working on a bourgeois or petty-bourgeois paper. Although Lenin's strictures on this question do not constitute a polemic with the bourgeois press, they do indirectly reflect a most important aspect of that polemic.

The author saw his main task as that of identifying the pamphleteering methods used by Lenin himself in his battle with the bourgeois press and its impact on the ordinary people. The focus is on the content of the polemics, on revealing the methods he used to strike at the very essence of judgments, commentaries and evaluations made by inimical organs of the press of *whatever political hue*. It was extremely important here to single out the distinguishing features of the polemical method adopted in each case. This is especially important if we are to speak of adopting Lenin's experience in fighting the bourgeois press. It must be remembered that the modern world of the capitalist press is by no means homogeneous. In every bourgeois state there are publications that reflect the positions of extreme Right-wing, moderate and liberal, pseudo-socialist, Right-wing revisionist and ultra-Left, Trotskyist parties and groups. In this connection, Lenin's experience as a polemicist is by no means without relevance, since he dealt ably with each of them, differentiating them according to their particular characteristics. Of particular interest are Lenin's post-revolutionary polemicals against bourgeois publications of other countries, including the White émigré press.

The author has therefore relied in his conclusions on Lenin's entire pamphleteering experience, in both the pre- and post-revolutionary periods.

Throughout his entire socio-political activity, Lenin was an avid reader of the bourgeois press. His interest in newspaper and magazine periodicals developed while he was still a young man at home with his family. The Ulyanov family library in the town of Samara (nowadays Kuibyshev) contained both the revolutionary-democratic *Otechestvenniye Zapiski* (*Fatherland Notes*) and bourgeois-liberal publications such as *Russkoye Bogatstvo* (*Russian Wealth*), *Vestnik Yevropy* (*European Herald*), *Russkaya Mysl* (*Russian Thought*), *Severny Vestnik* (*Northern Herald*) and *Russkiye Vedomosti* (*Russian Recorder*). In her reminiscences, Lenin's sister Maria Ulyanova testifies that even at that time he was an exceedingly punctilious and attentive reader of periodicals: “He kept all the papers he had read and marked issues that had something of interest to him.”¹ As the years went by the urge to systematise material he had read in the press became a habit. Moreover, a Marxist outlook enabled him to use a strictly scientific, class-partisan principle in systematising and characterising the newspapers and magazines themselves, as well as the material they published.

It must be noted, however, that Lenin's private circumstances often made it difficult for him to obtain Russian bourgeois periodicals. When he arrived in St Petersburg from Samara in 1893, his parlous financial state often prevented him from obtaining newspapers and magazines. The small law practice of the young barrister did not provide him with income sufficient to enable him to subscribe to papers.

While in exile in the Siberian village of Shushenskoye, Lenin experienced great difficulties because of the irregular arrival of newspapers and magazines. Even on the way to Shushenskoye he had a foreboding of these difficulties and

¹ *Reminiscences of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin*, in five volumes, Vol. 1, Politizdat, Moscow, 1968, p. 157 (in Russian).

on April 17, 1897 he wrote from Krasnoyarsk to his other sister, Anna, in Moscow about his desire to subscribe to certain periodicals. "Depending on available finances", he suggested two alternatives. The first was: *Russkiye Vedomosti*, *Russkoye Bogatstvo*, *Vestnik Finansov* (*Financial Herald*) (without any supplements) and *Archiv für soziale Gesetzgebung und Statistik* (*Social Legislation and Statistics Archives*). He at once explained: "That makes quite a lot, so they may be ordered only if there are big receipts."¹ The "receipts" he referred to was the money he was then expecting for his article "A Characterisation of Economic Romanticism. Sismondi and Our Native Sismondists". The first part was published in the April booklet of *Novoye Slovo* (*New Word*), the St Petersburg journal of the "legal Marxists".² In so far as these receipts might also be low, Lenin suggested a second option: in the event of money being short, "*Russkiye Vedomosti* will, perhaps, be enough" (*ibid.*). In a letter to Anna at the end of May that year Lenin reminded her of his request for periodicals. In a list of publications which, in his view, should be subscribed to he included yet another journal—the German *Soziale Praxis* (*Social Practice*).

It took a great deal of time to go through all the procedure for subscription for someone in exile, especially one who by the standards of the then existing postal service was so far away. Finally, in June 1897 he began to receive the bourgeois-liberal paper *Russkiye Vedomosti* in Shushenskoye. How important it was for him in exile can be judged from a phrase written on June 15, 1897 in a letter to Mark Yelizarov, the husband of his sister Anna: "I have begun receiving *Russkiye Vedomosti* and read it with a voracity that can be explained only as a reaction to the long absence of newspapers" (*ibid.*, p. 118). "Read it with a voracity" might be understood as particular interest in that paper. But to avoid any error on that count, Lenin explained that it was because he had not read any papers at all for a long time. At that time he certainly had a predilection for, if not a fundamental interest in, that particular bourgeois-liberal paper with its democratic nuances.

Later on in his period of exile, he added to the list of publications he requested from his relatives. He was, however,

¹ V. I. Lenin, "To His Mother and His Sister Anna", Vol. 37, p. 104.

² Bourgeois-liberal trend in Russia in the mid-1890s.

aggrieved that he only received the papers thirteen days after they came out. Lenin felt this delay with particular irritation, since he was no ordinary peruser of periodicals. He read them as a political Party activist, a thinker and publicist. For him it was particularly vital to get the newspapers and magazines on time, as this would enable him to follow the most recent events in the socio-political life of Russia and other countries without forfeiting the chance of reacting operatively to them in oral or printed form.

His choice of publications that he wished to receive regularly was certainly not haphazard. Overall, to the extent that this was possible for bourgeois newspapers and journals, they provided him with the fullest picture of the social life in Russia and abroad, and the alignment of class and Party forces. Looking into this distorted mirror, Lenin often drew his conclusions by assuming the opposite and located the most valuable information and admissions by reading between the lines. "They are highly interesting—from the negative aspect,"¹ he wrote.

To give one example, the journal *Russkoye Bogatstvo* drew his attention not only as one of the most radical bourgeois-democratic publications, but also as an organ attacking Marxism from a Narodnik (populist) viewpoint—i.e., the viewpoint of peasant democracy, which united the ideas of utopian socialism with calls for the destruction of the big landowner system. The Narodniks opposed serfdom as well as the bourgeois development of society, and their evolution was of particular interest to Lenin at that time. He saw the fight against Narodnik dogmas and illusions as a political task of prime importance.

The principle "highly interesting—from the negative aspect" explains Lenin's unwavering attention to the bourgeois press in the years that followed, when that press had stopped being his only source of information, and when under his guidance an illegal and a legal Marxist periodical press had come into existence in Russia. This attention was not always rewarded in full and even in part, but it was unflagging.

During the organisation and publication of the first all-Russia political Marxist newspaper *Iskra* (*The Spark*), Lenin was constantly concerned about receiving Russian papers

¹ V. I. Lenin, "To A. N. Potresov, September 2, 1898", Vol. 34, p. 25.

and journals regularly. This newspaper, founded by Lenin, was published illegally and became the ideological and organisational centre of Russian revolutionaries. The paper's editorial board was based first in Munich, then in London and Geneva, and it was far from easy for the editors to arrange to receive periodicals from Russia. Not only did they lack funds, but they also had difficulties keeping in touch with Russia owing to the illegal nature of their activity. Once again Lenin had to rely on his relatives.

He had to resort to exchanging Russian periodicals with other émigrés. For instance, he sent G. V. Plekhanov in Geneva a set of issues of *Promyshlenny Mir* (*Industrial World*) in the spring of 1901 with a request for him to send or bring the journal *Narodnoye Khozyaistvo* (*National Economy*).¹ He sent out a request from Munich to M. G. Vecheslov in Berlin, asking, "Would it also be possible to supply the *Iskra* editorial board with Russian journals after they have been read in Berlin?" And he added, "If it would, let us know what journals we could count on (we have some, but not enough)."² It is clear that Lenin considered the number of Russian periodicals available to the *Iskra* editorial board to be inadequate. It required unflinching efforts to collect them literally one by one.

The situation had scarcely altered when Lenin was editing the newspapers *Vperyod* (*Forward*) and *Proletary* (*Proletarian*) in the first part of 1905. Their editorial boards remained as ever "in the accursed wilderness" in Geneva and operated conspiratorially. In a letter to A. A. Bogdanov dated 10 January 1905, complaining that articles and notes on Russian themes were "badly needed", Lenin took the opportunity to ask Bogdanov to also arrange for notes to be sent "on articles in Russian newspapers and magazines ... as well as articles and brief comments on material appearing in Russian special publications (statistical, military, medical, prison, ecclesiastical, and other periodicals)".³ Once the revolution with its tempestuous succession of events had begun, Lenin needed to know the reactions of the bourgeois press. Now he did not ask for the newspapers themselves, for it would have taken too long to transport them to Geneva, to study them

¹ See V. I. Lenin, "To G. V. Plekhanov, April 21, 1901", Vol. 36, p. 78.

² V. I. Lenin, "To M. G. Vecheslov, April 25, 1901", Vol. 36, p. 80.

³ V. I. Lenin, "To A. A. Bogdanov, January 10, 1905", Vol. 8, p. 45.

and respond to them in a newspaper which did not come out daily and whose delivery to Russia was a complex and lengthy business. He now needed regular notes on newspaper themes, and he regarded this as "quite within the range of contribution by working-class and especially the student youth" (ibid., p. 44).

This time Lenin did not return to Russia until November 1905, when the first Russian revolution (1905-07) was gathering momentum. Initially he lived for a while in St Petersburg, but shortly thereafter he left for Finland, for Kuokkala where he enjoyed semi-legal status and where he was able to obtain Russian periodicals of varying viewpoints. Regular surveys of the Russian bourgeois press now appeared in the pages of legal Bolshevik newspapers edited by Lenin, such as *Novaya Zhizn* (*New Life*), *Volna* (*Wave*), *Vperyod* (*Forward*), *Ekho* (*Echo*), *Novy Luch* (*New Ray*), *Rabochaya Molva* (*Workers' Word*) and *Nashe Ekho* (*Our Echo*), in special sections variously entitled "The Russian Press", "Among the Newspapers and Magazines" and "Survey of the Press". Some of the surveys were written by Lenin. A rapid response to the bourgeois press and polemical shots across its bows became increasingly characteristic of all the other material which came from his pen during this period.

However, a new period of émigré life commenced with the advent of political reaction in December 1907. Lenin first took up residence in Geneva, then in Paris. Contact with Russia grew more difficult. His letters to Party comrades, friends and relatives once again contain complaints about the lack of Russian periodicals, frequent requests for a particular publication or thanks for receipt of a particular issue or set of issues of a certain newspaper or magazine.

It is clear from his letters that while in Geneva and Paris he received Russian papers very spasmodically. Even the émigré literature arrived irregularly. In September 1909 he wrote to a correspondent on the subject of Plekhanov's Paris-published *Dnevnik Sotsial-Demokrata* (*The Diary of a Social-Democrat*): "I earnestly ask you to arrange for the forwarding office to send it to me at once. Without it I cannot do an article I have been asked to write."¹ The last sentence is very typical. These inimical newspapers were a most important source of his pamphleteering.

¹ V. I. Lenin, "To A. I. Lyubimov, September 1909", Vol. 43, p. 219.

The situation somewhat improved with the start of a new revolutionary upsurge, particularly after Lenin had moved from Paris to Cracow in the summer of 1912. The sense of being close to the Russian border provided a great fillip, a sense of enormous joy. "Almost Russia!" he wrote in exhilaration to his mother in August 1912, explaining that the Russian frontier was eight versts distant. Of course, his move had been dictated not so much by longing for his homeland as by an urge to be close to socio-political events in Russia, to be able to react to them speedily, and to direct more effectively the struggle of the working class and its Party, the Bolshevik newspapers and journals, above all *Pravda* (*Truth*) founded in 1912. To do this it was absolutely essential to follow all the socio-political periodicals. In early July he reminded the *Pravda* editorial board about the list he had sent of papers to which he wished to subscribe: "The list was sent you with the previous letter and I can only repeat my request that you inform me by telegram: 'papers ordered'; otherwise there will be an *interruption* in the sending of articles."¹ It is clear that Lenin was once again quite categorical in his demand: no papers, no articles.

On the whole, however, the papers were arriving regularly. This is evident from Lenin's active contribution to *Pravda* as a publicist and from his correspondence, in which the request for newspapers occurred less frequently and referred only to certain missing issues of a particular paper. At any rate, he expressed his satisfaction with his new place of residence in a letter sent in August 1912: "...It's nearer to Petersburg, we get the papers from there on the third day, it's become far easier to write to the papers there, co-operation with them goes better."² This situation was more or less stable throughout the period of revolutionary upsurge. Approximately a year later he wrote to his sister Maria: "We have plenty of newspapers and can work"³.

As regards specific issues, he continued to ask for them. Thus, he writes to the *Pravda* editorial board in September 1912: "I am extremely surprised that today, when I had from you both *Pravda* and a packet of reactionary papers,

¹ V. I. Lenin, "To the Editorial Board of *Pravda*, July 1912", Vol. 43, p. 289.

² V. I. Lenin, "To Maxim Gorky, August 25, 1912", Vol. 35, p. 55.

³ V. I. Lenin, "To His Sister Maria, May 12-13, 1913", Vol. 37, p. 495.

I did not receive Thursday's *Nevsky Golos* [*Neva Voice*]."¹

In February 1913 we find him writing to *Pravda* again expressing his concern that the paper was no longer arriving together with the bourgeois papers *Rech* (*Speech*) and *Novoye Vremya* (*New Times*). He regarded it in principle unacceptable that distribution of the workers' paper should be late; it could well lose part of its subscribers. Lenin was interested in receiving *Pravda* along with all other papers not only as editor, but as publicist as well. He had to be able to see how the same events were viewed from different class viewpoints, to hear the voice of the working class on the facts and phenomena of everyday life discussed and dealt with by bourgeois press. When the situation was set right, he immediately communicated his immense relief to the editorial board: "Thank you very much for *twice* sending the newspapers *in time*, i. e., *simultaneously* with all the bourgeois papers."²

In early July 1914, as the revolutionary struggle within the country grew more intense and Europe stepped up preparations for war, the tsarist government switched to a resolute assault on the revolutionary workers, their Party and the Bolshevik press. On 8 July (21 July New Style) *Pravda* failed to appear, its editorial offices having been demolished and many of its staff put under arrest. Once again contact with Russia was imperilled and the flow of Russian newspapers and magazines almost dried up. In a letter to V. M. Kasparov, member of the Committee of the R.S.D.L.P. Organisation Abroad, Lenin wrote: "We have no newspapers."³ He asked him for those Russian papers (*Rech*, *Novoye Vremya* which had stopped arriving "*since the beginning of the July days*" (ibid.). The situation took a further turn for the worst with the start of the war.

Throughout the entire war until his return to Russia, Lenin was forced to follow events within Russia mainly through the bourgeois press of other countries. Russian periodicals arrived only spasmodically and with great delay. Maria Ulyanova notes that "it was especially bad in that respect during the imperialist war when at times Vladimir Ilyich had

¹ V. I. Lenin, "To the Editor of *Pravda*, September 8, 1912", Vol. 35, p. 56.

² V. I. Lenin, "To the Editorial Board of *Za Pravdu*, October 1913", Vol. 35, p. 114.

³ V. I. Lenin, "To V. M. Kasparov, July 1914", Vol. 43, p. 422.

no Russian papers at all”.¹ In letters to his relatives, friends and Party comrades Lenin again gave vent to the same old request, insistently asking for Russian periodicals. In August 1915, with pain in his heart, he informed one of his correspondents: “I can’t write about Russia...” The reason was still the same: “*I do not see any newspapers.*”² In a letter from Berne to his mother in Petrograd in October 1915, he noted that “there are not many newspapers, books or pamphlets in Russian, we see very few and thirst for them”.³ This “thirst” during wartime became chronic; similar remarks and requests were made throughout this period. In September 1916 he wrote in a letter from Zurich to Petrograd: “If you can, please sent Russian newspapers once a week after you have read them, because I have *none at all.*”⁴ A little later, that same November, he repeated his request in a letter to Maria: “If it is not too much trouble send me three or four times a month the Russian newspapers after you have read them... I have no Russian newspapers here.”⁵

The first news of the overthrow of tsarism in the February 1917 Revolution excited his interest in the Russian press, which had now become more accessible. D. S. Suliashvili, who returned from emigration together with Lenin, recalled: “As soon as the train got underway, Lenin took off his jacket and, pulling a whole pile of Russian papers from his pockets, spread himself out on the bunk and began to read.”⁶ One of Lenin’s close colleagues, V. D. Bonch-Bruyevich, testified that: “On the day following our arrival in Petrograd, Vladimir Ilyich’s first request was for copies of all the papers which had come out since the revolution” (ibid., p. 64). As always, he did not simply peruse this vast mass of published material, he worked his way through it, locating the essential, making notes in the margins, writing it out, comparing, analysing.

¹ *Reminiscences of V. I. Lenin*, Vol. 1, Gospolitizdat, Moscow, 1956, p. 248 (in Russian).

² V. I. Lenin, “To G. Y. Zinoviev, August 1915”, Vol. 43, p. 483.

³ V. I. Lenin, “To His Mother, October 7, 1915”, Vol. 37, p. 526.

⁴ V. I. Lenin, “To His Brother-in-Law, September 20, 1916”, Vol. 37, p. 530.

⁵ V. I. Lenin, “To His Sister Maria, November 26, 1916”, Vol. 37, p. 533.

⁶ *Lenin in October, Reminiscences*, Gospolitizdat, Moscow, 1957, p. 40 (in Russian).

In his last place of hiding, at Razliv, where he was taking refuge from the bourgeois Provisional Government, Lenin did not remain without fresh papers. "No matter how hard it was, Lenin was supplied, as far as possible, with virtually all the papers printed in Petrograd, and he read them avidly."¹ "Virtually all the papers printed in Petrograd..." It is worth dwelling on this phrase. As a matter of fact, over fifty daily newspapers were being published at this time in the capital.² The fact that he managed to read "virtually all" of them is clear from the references in his works of the time to some two dozen bourgeois, petty-bourgeois and opportunist newspapers. In many cases where there are no direct references, he was certainly citing specific material from those publications. In other cases, press information served him as a general guide to events and to the policies of various political parties and groups. It is certainly the case that "virtually all" or even all newspapers came under his scrutiny. Another witness to events of the time, the working man N. A. Yemelyanov, who hid Lenin in Razliv, was even more categorical: "Vladimir Ilyich received many newspapers: all that were then published."³

Lenin returned to Petrograd in early October to his last illegal residence, a flat belonging to M. V. Fofanova. According to the reminiscences of N. V. Telegin, on the very first day Lenin "instructed the owner of the apartment to get him all the newspapers that were then being published. If she could not obtain certain issues, Ilyich would again remind her of it and hand her a list of the missing numbers."⁴

Lenin's polemical articles against the bourgeois press show clearly just how attentively he read the Russian bourgeois newspapers and magazines. And not only the Russian.

He refers in his works to 330 periodicals in various European languages: German, English, French, Italian, Swedish, Polish and Bulgarian. Knowledge of several languages enabled Lenin to obviate translations and to gain a first-hand knowledge of the periodicals of Britain, the USA, France,

¹ N. V. Telegin, *The Last Hiding-Place of V. I. Lenin*, Lenizdat, Leningrad, 1958, p. 25 (in Russian).

² See L. K. Ilyinsky, *List of Periodical Publications for 1917*, Part 1, Petrograd, 1919 (in Russian).

³ *Reminiscences of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin*, in five volumes, Vol. 2, Politizdat, Moscow, 1969, p. 412 (in Russian).

⁴ N. V. Telegin, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Belgium, Austria, Sweden, Poland and Bulgaria. It enabled him not simply to be in touch with all international events, but also to observe the processes taking place in the world capitalist system as a whole as well as within each country, to draw conclusions on the progress of the world revolutionary process as a whole as well as within each country and region.

Quite a lot of evidence exists to testify to Lenin's enduring interest in European periodicals, whether bourgeois, petty-bourgeois or revisionist. This evidence comes mainly from his letters to relatives, friends and Party comrades requesting particular publications in a variety of languages. As already mentioned, while still in Siberian exile, Lenin enlisted the help of his relatives in subscribing to foreign periodicals. During his *Iskra* period, such periodicals were naturally easier to obtain, at least the newspapers and magazines of the country where the *Iskra* editors happened to be at any one time—whether Germany, Britain or Switzerland. But he also tried to obtain papers and journals from elsewhere, aided by his friends and colleagues.

His interest in European bourgeois periodicals stemmed from his anxiety about events in Russia. Information on “Russian affairs” was of interest particularly at times of uncertain contact with Russia—i.e., during the reactionary years 1907-10 and World War I. At such times, Lenin asked his correspondents to send him foreign papers according to the principle of “choose which has *most reports* from Russia”.¹ He asked them to “send us information from the papers to which we have no access” ... “the most important information (particularly about Russia)”.²

Lenin never treated newspaper information as if it were a special objective part of newspaper production. He always saw it as a reflection of the position of that political party or group which stood behind the periodical or reflecting the definite class interest of the publishers and advertisers. He therefore invariably compared information on Russia in the foreign press first with the foreign policy of the country in which the particular periodical was published and, second, with the position of those social strata which stood behind

¹ V. I. Lenin, “To V. M. Kasparov, after July 18, 1914”, Vol. 43, p. 422.

² V. I. Lenin, “To M. V. Kobetsky, August 2, 1914”, Vol. 36, p. 290.

the editorial board of the given publication. Consequently, in this case too, foreign bourgeois publications were above all "highly interesting—from the negative aspect". He used this press mainly as a source of additional information on Russian affairs, on the domestic and foreign policy of the ruling classes, on the mounting inter-capitalist contradictions, on the formation of hostile blocs and alliances within the imperialist countries. This information did not lie upon the surface of bourgeois publications, it had to be prised out of the text, it lay hidden between the lines both in facts and in positions that were frequently scrupulously camouflaged.

Thus, during the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05, on the very eve of the first Russian revolution, many European bourgeois papers were giving a fairly sober evaluation of the state of the tsarist government. They were writing that "it is losing credit as a result both of the military defeats and of the growing discontent within the country".¹ Lenin saw in many such writings not simply a summary of the facts, which in itself was also exceedingly important, but often also the indirectly expressed sympathy of the European big bourgeoisie with the autocratic government, particularly with the big Russian bourgeoisie over the mounting revolutionary situation within the country. With the aid of their newspapers, the bourgeoisie of Europe frequently offered sundry advice and good wishes to the Russian bourgeoisie. When the "solid" Belgian bourgeois paper *L'Indépendance Belge* carried an article on the fall of Port Arthur, in which it expressed anxiety and regret at tsarism's military defeat, Lenin noted that the paper "has done more than merely express in trenchant words the sentiments of the entire European bourgeoisie. Through the words of this newspaper speaks the true class instinct of the bourgeoisie of the old world, which is perturbed by the victories of the new bourgeois world and alarmed by the collapse of Russia's military power, which for a long time had been considered the bulwark of European reaction."²

In drawing information from one or another periodical, Lenin considered not only its affiliation to particular class forces but also all the nuances of the foreign policy orientation of those national bourgeois circles which determined

¹ V. I. Lenin, "The New Russian Loan", Vol. 8, p. 42.

² V. I. Lenin, "The Fall of Port Arthur", Vol. 8, p. 47.

the stance of that periodical. If it was the government that exercised such a decisive influence on the periodical, then the government's attitude towards the tsarist government was naturally taken into account.

Lenin's article "European Capital and the Autocracy" published in the Bolshevik paper *Vperyod* in 1905 is very noteworthy in this respect. Lenin analyses the position of *The Times*, which he describes as the "organ of the conservative English bourgeoisie".¹ All the same, even the conservative British bourgeoisie openly expressed in their publication a lack of confidence in the autocracy and, in company with the bulk of the European bourgeoisie, were banking on a shift of power to the Russian bourgeoisie. *The Times* made no bones about showing up, as Lenin emphasised, the "subtle mechanism" by which tsarist ministers were behaving in the country. The gold received as loans was being displayed by them subsequently to new lenders as evidence of Russia's wealth and ability to pay its debts. The paper drew the conclusion that Russia was, in effect, unable to guarantee payment of its debts. To the clumsy denials being made by the tsarist Finance Minister Kokovtsev and his invitation to come and check Russia's gold reserves, the newspaper responded by advising the Russian government to convene a representative assembly which would inquire into Russia's financial position. *The Times* posed an acid rhetorical question: was not the tsarist government afraid of summoning such an assembly precisely because it would insist on such a check? Lenin assessed this question as very typical and significant, all the more so "for being made, in reality, not by *The Times*, but by the entire *European bourgeoisie*—made, not as a polemical manoeuvre, but as an open expression of its distrust of the autocracy, of its unwillingness to lend it money, of its desire to deal with the lawful representatives of the Russian bourgeoisie" (ibid., p. 271). Lenin immediately saw the message between the lines and his analysis enabled him to conclude: "It is not an assertion, but a warning. It is not a sneer, but an *ultimatum*, the ultimatum of European capital to the Russian autocracy" (ibid.).

The French *Le Temps* Lenin described not simply as an influential organ of the conservative French bourgeoisie, but as the bitter foe of socialism about which the paper cannot

¹ V. I. Lenin, "European Capital and the Autocracy", Vol. 8, p. 269.

speaking “without trembling with rage” and against which it “is waging a most desperate campaign”.¹ Although, therefore, the paper is presenting the very same ultimatum as *The Times*, Lenin notices a certain distinction between them: “While Japan’s allies, the English, word this ultimatum in the form of sarcasm, Russia’s allies, the French, in their most conservative, most bourgeois paper, *Le Temps*, say the same thing, only a little more mildly—sugar-coating the pill, but virtually nonetheless refusing to lend any more, and advising the autocracy to make peace with Japan and with the Russian bourgeois liberals.”²

Using bourgeois newspapers and magazines as a source of information, Lenin acknowledged that some of them were very well informed. Thus, in talking of *The Times* he notes that it “is one of the most affluent and best-informed newspapers in the world”.³ We come across similar acknowledgements in Lenin’s newspaper articles in regard to certain other bourgeois press organs.

Lenin’s interest in particular bourgeois papers depended also on the state of political events in a given country and their importance for the international situation and Russia. In a letter to his mother in late December 1902, he wrote: “I have recently been reading the German newspapers more than usual; there have been some interesting happenings in Germany and sometimes I wanted to get the story straight from the source.”⁴ He is here referring to the participation of the German Social-Democrats led by August Bebel in the struggle that developed over the government’s customs bill. It was not this particular incident that was important, but rather the principle that Lenin followed in reading these periodicals: he always took more than a passing interest in papers of a country in which events had acquired particular significance.

After the success of the October 1917 armed insurrection, Lenin, although head of the Soviet Government and in charge of the Party’s multifaceted activity, nonetheless found time to read regularly not only Soviet periodicals but also

¹ V. I. Lenin, “A Replete Bourgeoisie and a Craving Bourgeoisie”, Vol. 9, p. 316.

² V. I. Lenin, “European Capital and the Autocracy”, Vol. 8, p. 272.

³ V. I. Lenin, “The Russian Tsar Seeks the Protection of the Turkish Sultan against His People”, Vol. 8, p. 569.

⁴ V. I. Lenin, “To His Mother, December 26, 1902”, Vol. 37, p. 354.

those bourgeois publications that were still being printed in Soviet Russia. He also displayed an interest in the Russian émigré bourgeois press and that of the major capitalist countries.

The British bourgeois *Daily Herald* features among the foreign communist and socialist publications included in the list of papers Lenin requested from his secretary Lydia Fotieva in July 1920. At this time he frequently instructed the first Soviet diplomatic representatives to send him cuttings from the most important and significant material published in the foreign press. When he took a rest break in May 1922, he asked to be sent certain White émigré publications, particularly the paper *Nakanune (On the Eve)* which came out in Berlin between 1922 and 1924, the magazine *Zarya (Dawn)* published in Berlin 1922-25, the journal *Sovremennye Zapiski (Contemporary Notes)* published in Paris 1920-24 and *Russkaya Mysl (Russian Thought)* which came out first in Sofia, then in Prague and Paris, 1921-24, and 1927.

All these publications were “highly interesting” first and foremost “from the negative aspect”.

The enemy, even though they had fled abroad, had not been destroyed once and for all. “That is why we must keep a close watch on them.”¹ Thus Lenin took a constant interest in what was published in the White émigré periodicals not merely out of curiosity, but for reasons which he then substantiated. “I request you to pay particular attention to the article in *Posledniye Novosti [Latest News]* (Paris), No. 309: ‘Milyukov and Avksentyev among the Americans’,” he wrote to the editors of *Pravda* and *Izvestia (News)* in May 1921.² He advised them to reprint the outspokenly hostile and slanderous outpourings of the bourgeois press for the widest possible public to read: “It is essential *systematically* to record *such* articles and paragraphs; there is a mass of them; they should be *summarised...*” (ibid.).

Such articles should thus be constantly within the purview of newspaper editors—such is Lenin’s advice. Why? Because in this way they will see in time the main task which at any

¹ V. I. Lenin, “Speech Delivered at the All-Russia Congress of Transport Workers, March 27, 1921”, Vol 32, p. 280.

² V. I. Lenin, “To the Editorial Boards of *Pravda* and *Izvestia*, May 9, 1921”, Vol. 35, p. 490.

given political moment is being advanced by anti-Soviet forces in their struggle against the socialist state. These articles revealed the enemy as he really is and not as he would like to be seen—i. e., more clever, calculating and cunning than he would appear to be, and consequently, more dangerous as well—and it was thus that he had to be perceived both by officials of the various departments and by the wide reading public, for “one has to know one’s enemy”. A realistic picture of the enemy had not simply to be given in the press, it had to be instilled in readers, instilled regularly, systematically, and not just spasmodically.

Lenin’s interest in the enemy press of the most varied political opinion therefore continued throughout his time as leader of the Party of the working class, leader of the first socialist state and as a Party journalist. This interest was more than just stable, it was invariably intensive, logically substantiated, discriminating, purposeful and applied. In Lenin’s works there are references to some six hundred enemy Russian and foreign press periodical publications. Some occur more frequently than others, some spasmodically, others only once. But in every case these references helped him elucidate the most important and salient features of the political situation and the alignment of class forces both in Russia and elsewhere and to check the accuracy of Party decisions. At the same time, these references, together with Lenin’s extensive or fairly brief comments and remarks, draw a picture of the bourgeois press and reveal the dominant laws at work within it.

This chapter heading is also the title of one of Lenin's articles. Having read through and analysed hundreds of publications by hostile political parties, groups and tendencies, Lenin, having perfect command of the method of scientific Marxist analysis, gave his evaluation of the bourgeois press as a whole.

Lenin was more than a practising journalist; he was also a theoretical journalist. His ideas on the themes “the Party and the press” and “socialism and the press” marked a considerable advance in the development of Marxist theory and lay at the basis of the theory and practice of communist journalism throughout the world. No less valuable are his thoughts on “capitalism and the press” to which he devoted several other works: “The Journal *Svoboda*” (1901), “Party Organisation and Party Literature” (1905), “Martov's and Cherevanin's Pronouncements in the Bourgeois Press” (1906), “Concerning *Vekhi*” (1909), “A Career” (1912), etc. Lenin often returned to characterising the bourgeois press even after October 1917. His valuable directions and cogitations on this count are contained in such works as “Original Version of the Article ‘The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government’” (1918), “The Character of Our Newspapers” (1918) and “A Letter to G. Myasnikov” (1921).

These works and his generalised ideas on the bourgeois press contained in many other articles and speeches were of prime importance in fighting the bourgeois press and its influence. They exposed the role played by the bourgeois press in the life of society and showed it to be a socio-political institution hampering historical progress.

Lenin's immense merit is that he deprived the bourgeois press of its aura of being a supernatural force; he resolutely showed up its class nature and utter dependence on the ruling class. Internal haggling between bourgeois newspapers and journals constitutes contention over individual aspects of

policy. Irrespective of political nuances, the entire bourgeois press within a capitalist state is a weapon for consolidating the power of the bourgeoisie. This is particularly glaringly apparent when that power or its hallowed right of private ownership is threatened. It closes ranks against such a threat. Lenin's conclusions dealt a blow both to the theories of bourgeois journalism, which tried to portray the bourgeois press as a special above-class force of a purely information-communication nature, and to the practice of the bourgeois press. These conclusions were the most vital link in his polemics with it. Lenin's theoretical ideas helped in each separate case to unmask the biased nature not only of bourgeois journalism, but also of the so-called objective information provided in the bourgeois press.

He demonstrated convincingly that the publication of a newspaper or magazine in capitalist society is a normal commercial undertaking requiring the investment of a great deal of capital for acquiring up-to-date typographical equipment and paper, and for maintaining staff. Only big entrepreneurs, the wealthy, those who have at their disposal large sums of money or shares can afford such outlay. The political trend of the publication will naturally be under their control, at any rate on such principally important issues for the bourgeoisie as power and the right of private ownership.

Before the socialist revolution, Russian bourgeois reality and Russian bourgeois journalism were splendid illustrations of Lenin's maxim. In September 1917, the Russian bourgeoisie still held political and economic power and, for that reason only, controlled the bulk of the press, a control out of all proportion to their influence and political authority, which was declining with every passing day. In his analysis of the mounting impact of the Bolsheviks on the people and the diminishing, but still substantial influence of the Mensheviks¹ and Socialist-Revolutionaries,² Lenin drew the con-

¹ In the election to the central Party organs at the Second Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party in 1903, the revolutionary Marxists united around Lenin received a majority of votes—hence the name Bolsheviks (from the Russian for “majority”—*bolshinstvo*), while the opportunists remained in the minority and became known as Mensheviks (from the Russian for “minority”—*meshinstvo*).

The Party came to be called the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party of Bolsheviks and then, after the October Revolution, was renamed the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) in 1918. It is today (since 1952) known as the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

² Socialist-Revolutionaries were members of a party expressing the in-

clusion that "these three parties command from three-quarters to four-fifths of the votes".¹ Did this situation correspond to the distribution of press organs? Lenin answered this question as follows: "the circulation of the newspapers they publish is certainly less than a quarter, or even less than one-fifth, that of the whole bourgeois press" (ibid.).

Lenin here explains that this preponderance was based on the financial power of the capitalists, who were generously subsidising bourgeois publications through advertising revenue. Even then, at the dawn of capitalist entrepreneurship in the world of the press, Lenin saw in the advertising mechanism the principal means by which representatives of big capital, seeming to stand outside publishing, could exercise a decisive influence on the press and the entire propaganda machine and dictate its terms of conduct. He showed that the advertising mechanism, the advertising business was drawing the bourgeois press irresistibly into the world of buying and selling, the world of spiritual and moral depravity associated with the laws of bourgeois commerce and its paramount principle "deceiving to sell". Revenue from advertising ensured quite a high level of payment to bourgeois journalists for writing words to order.

Lenin subjects the moral foundations of the bourgeois press to sharp criticism. Alexei Suvorin's newspaper *Novoye Vremya* (*New Times*) was in Lenin's view the personification of immoral bourgeois journalism. He returns time and again to this paper and on almost every occasion leads the reader to important general conclusions.

At the turn of the century, *Novoye Vremya* was one of the most successful of the bourgeois papers. Its circulation had topped 30-40,000 copies. Its "success" may be put down to its blatant trading in "principles" and "ideas" in order to be able to pay court to each new government whim, to its publication of trenchant and scandalous satirical pieces, and its "up to the minute", scantily checked and far from trustworthy news. The newspaper had, however, one principle from which it almost never deviated—loyalty to government

terests of rural and urban petty bourgeoisie. They opposed the tsarist autocracy and favoured a democratic republic. After the October 1917 Revolution they at first collaborated with Soviet power, but then became a counter-revolutionary party fighting against the socialist revolution.

¹ V. I. Lenin, "How to Guarantee the Success of the Constituent Assembly", Vol. 25, p. 376.

policy and to the autocracy. Its three best-known publicists Victor Burenin, M. O. Menshikov and Vasily Rozanov became notorious for their scandalous lack of principle, purblind retrograde views and the shady deals surrounding the satirical pieces which they often composed for purposes of blackmail and extortion. The paper certainly lived up to the nickname given it by the Russian satirist Saltykov-Shchedrin, "At Your Service, Sir". In his description of the paper, Lenin wrote in his article "A Career": "Suvorin's *Novoye Vremya* is a specimen of brisk trade, of how to sell stuff 'for consumption off or on the premises'. It deals in everything, from political convictions to pornographic advertisements."¹

This article was written on the occasion of the press baron Suvorin's death, and in it Lenin made wide generalisations about the typical path taken by the mass of "educated" and "intellectual" representatives of bourgeois society of whom, according to Lenin, "nine-tenths, or perhaps ninety-nine out of a hundred, practise the very same renegacy, *beginning* as radical students and *ending up* as holders of 'cushy jobs' in some office or other, in some swindle or other" (ibid., p. 274). This is how Lenin described the characteristic features of Suvorin's paper before going on to generalised assessments. He had no intention of singling out *Novoye Vremya* (*New Times*) from the chorus line of the bourgeois press and portraying it as a notorious exception. What is more, he coins a whole new political concept "newtimesing" which he sets alongside the concepts of "apostasy, renegacy and sycophancy" (ibid., p. 275). He wrote of Suvorin's "*Novoye Vremye* type of literature" as one which "merely possesses the ability to adapt its tone to the moods of the moment, to cringe before the powers-that-be and carry out their every order, and to flirt with an illusion of public opinion".²

At the beginning of 1914 a new scandal broke around *Novoye Vremya*. A certain N. V. Snessarev, who had been caught embezzling and had been fired from the paper, wrote an exposé which ran to as many as 135 pages and had the pretentious title of "The Mirage of *Novoye Vremya*. As Good as a Novel". It was to this "work" that Lenin responded when he wrote his unique satirical review "Capital-

¹ V. I. Lenin, "A Career", Vol. 18, p. 275.

² V. I. Lenin, "Review of Home Affairs", Vol. 5, p. 290.

ism and the Press". However it was not the scandalous tit-bits that attracted Lenin in the tale of Snessarev. Lenin's attention was taken by Snessarev's description of "the ethics which have long established themselves in the capitalist countries of the West, and which are penetrating more and more into the bourgeois press in Russia".¹ He was referring to the *Novoye Vremya* editors' involvement in foreign concessions, to their profits from advertising these concessions, to the subsidies for dubious political campaigns, to blackmail with the aid of "exposés" cooked up for the press, to the infighting among journalists, to the fact that they dipped their hands into the newspaper till rather than living on their salaries. Using facts cited in Snessarev's book, Lenin described in pamphlet form the atmosphere that reigned in the bourgeois newspaper world of Russia. "Thieves, male prostitutes, venal writers, venal newspapers. Such is our 'big press'", is Lenin's view (*ibid.*).

In exposing the moral principles of the bourgeois newspaper world, Lenin was interested in a particular individual only to the extent that he embodied typical traits of that world.

In the autumn of 1912 the newspaper *Zemshchina* (an extremely reactionary bourgeois paper) published material on the scandal surrounding the bourgeois economist and publicist A. N. Guryev. Capitalising on his government contacts he had bought himself the right to become a shareholder in a Petersburg spinning mill on extremely advantageous terms. Guryev had parted with only a thousand rubles while two other partners had had to pay fifty thousand each. For this "favour" he had promised all manner of government support to the joint-stock company. However, after being elected to the society's board, Guryev forgot all about his promise and, as a fully-fledged member of the board, began to demand over a third of the profits, using blackmail and threats to undermine the financial position of the whole enterprise.

Lenin's attention was most caught by the business deal made between a bourgeois publicist and capitalists. It was to this deal and its cynical character that Lenin drew attention in *Pravda*. On the one hand, he emphasised with sarcasm that "the capitalist gentlemen 'valued' those government 'connections' fairly highly: 49,000 rubles exactly".² The deal

¹ V. I. Lenin, "Capitalism and the Press", Vol. 20, p. 165.

² V. I. Lenin, "Truly Russian Morals", Vol. 18, p. 376.

went through, remarks Lenin, on the “you have the goods, we have the money” principle. The sale involved a bourgeois publicist’s “connections in government quarters” and his promises to guarantee credit to the enterprise. Summing up, Lenin writes, “Sale and purchase. ‘Connections in government quarters’, so-and-so many thousands; a promise of subsidies, so-and-so much; contributions to the official *Rossiia*, so-and-so much. Collect your money, Mr. Guryev!” (ibid.). The sale-and-purchase principle insinuates itself not only into the world of civil servants and entrepreneurs, but into the newspaper world, whose representative Guryev was in this instance. By his comments in *Pravda* Lenin underlines that this phenomenon is no exception, it was run of the mill, the rule rather than the exception, “a characteristic affair. A typical affair. An everyday occurrence” (ibid., p. 377).

As an individual on whom *Zemshchina* had concentrated its attention, Guryev did not interest Lenin in the least. His interest lay in an affair typical of the capitalist epoch, in the run of the mill phenomenon of the fusion of capital with the state bureaucratic machine and the bourgeois newspaper world.

In his analysis and evaluation of the content of the bourgeois press as a whole, Lenin frequently pointed to the shallowness of these papers, the absence of any reference to the serious issues of the day in both papers and magazines. Bourgeois publicists bent over backwards to avoid painful issues. Such a publicist, said Lenin, possesses an amazing capacity to “pass over in complete silence the great ideological questions” but he “will tell you in detail all that is well known in the servants’ rooms”.¹

“Take a look at the liberal papers, such as *Rech* No. 11,” Lenin told his *Pravda* readers in January 1913. “You will find there a most detailed account of where the Ministers were educated and where they were employed. You will find shameless advertising and the desire to curry favour: Jonnart is said to be a friend of King Edward, and Baudin, the nephew of a Communeard!... *Rech* says nothing about the *crux* of the matter.”²

The real *crux* of the matter was that the mentioned

¹ V. I. Lenin, “Yet Another Anti-Democratic Campaign”, Vol. 18, p. 318.

² V. I. Lenin, “The Briand Cabinet”, Vol. 18, p. 491.

members of the new French cabinet, like all the other ministers, were simultaneously also big businessmen with sizeable incomes, and that their inclusion in the cabinet went to prove yet again the well-known Marxist axiom that bourgeois governments are only the henchmen of the capitalist class. The narrow-minded excitement of the newspaper over Jonnart was only because he had been a friend of the British King Edward; the evident admiration for Baudin followed, not very consistently, because he was the nephew of a communist. This well illustrated the narrow-mindedness and limited views of bourgeois journalists, their urge to pander to the foolish tastes of their readers, to replace discussion of urgent issues with tittle-tattle about politics and a specific category of "personality".

Subsequently, Lenin more than once pilloried and mocked the bourgeois press for its predilection for piquant titbits from the lives of crowned and uncrowned personalities—the henchmen of the capitalist class—for their engagements, weddings, peregrinations, junketings, hand-shakes, gossiping and rendez-vous. Each time he forcibly made the point that this was nothing more than a device by which the bourgeois press veered away from discussing painful issues affecting social life. In the early years of Soviet power, when he was shaping a new socialist press, Lenin fervently appealed to Soviet journalists to break with this tradition of the bourgeois press. With regret he noted in March 1918 that "the Soviet press has devoted excessive space and attention to the petty political issues, the personal questions of political leadership by which the capitalists of all countries have striven to divert the attention of the masses from the really important, profound and fundamental questions of ... life".¹ He felt that the problem had to be tackled in a radically new way.

In the Russian newspapers, both official and bourgeois, a great deal was written, often in detail, about the Romanov dynasty right up to 1917. Not only about state acts and edicts, diplomatic moves and receptions by the monarchs themselves, but also about the solemn receptions and banquets, the philanthropic actions, personal talks with and journeys to august relatives abroad and even about trips

¹ V. I. Lenin, "Original Version of the Article 'The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government'", Vol. 27, p. 203.

made by all the members of that multitudinous household. They published details of new appointments, honours, and the official ceremonies held on the occasion of secular and religious festivals both in the capitals and in the provincial centres. Just as attentively and scrupulously the papers described the everyday lives, social round of European politicians. Regarding the purpose of this flow of news, Lenin wrote the following: "The sensational reports cooked up daily by the big bourgeois newspapers, whose occupation it is to sell the 'latest' and the 'most exciting' news at a profit, are designed specifically to *distract* the attention of the crowd from the really important questions and the real background of 'high' politics."¹

Lenin often directed his journalistic fire at this aspect of the bourgeois press. He was aiming in part at the bourgeois press itself, its approach to reality, its methods of work; and in part at the ridiculous fads and fancies of the readers which the bourgeois press then played on. In the first case, his words were merciless and devastating in their pamphleteering style. In the second, he used irony, in which there was reproach, sympathy, the hope for a change in the bad taste of the reading public. Here is an example of Lenin's description of the readership: "The man in the street, swallowing everything he is told, listens to these fables, taking them at their face value, and blindly following the swindlers who try to divert 'public' attention with exactly the kind of thing that serves their interest" (*ibid.*). This summing up conveys a wish that such readers would not accept newspaper frauds on trust, and not take their fables and old wives' tales as the absolute truth.

More than once Lenin drew the attention of his readers to the fact that the bourgeois press often drummed up petty issues, and sometimes even pseudo-issues in lieu of a profound and serious analysis of the vital questions of the day. Publications of a liberal-Narodnik tendency were particularly prone to this. They gave the impression of handing out prescriptions for curing Russia's social and political ailments, and working out the best projects for its development. As a rule, these futile efforts boiled down to fruitless hare-brained schemes. Lenin formulated the roots of this disease

¹ V. I. Lenin, "The International Policy of the Bourgeoisie", Vol. 36, p. 228.

of the bourgeois press as follows: "Disdain for conditions as they really are and for economic evolution as it really is, unwillingness to analyse the real interests of the different classes of Russian society in their inter-relationships, the habit of laying down the law *from above* about the 'needs' and the 'destiny' of the fatherland, of boasting about the miserable survivals of medieval associations that exist in the Russian village communities and artels."¹

This was written in 1897. The article is called "About a Certain Newspaper Article" and referred to the publication in *Russkiye Vedomosti* of an article by the then well-known publicist N. V. Levitsky under the headline: "Certain Problems Affecting the Life of the People". Levitsky thought he was discussing problems whose solution was an "urgent necessity" and "pressing need". His tub-thumping at the start of the article, as Lenin remarks, leads "one to expect that it deals with some really important, urgent, vital problems of modern life" (*ibid.*, p. 316). But such expectations from a liberal-Narodnik publicist are in vain. In order to eliminate exploitation by kulaks, he proposed, for example, the introduction of cheap credit facilities for the peasants—a prescription frequently advanced in the liberal press. In so far as the author proudly proclaims at the start of the article that he is putting forward his "problems" on the basis of a first-hand study of people's lives, "living in the country", Lenin right away makes an ironical note on his first "problem": "'Living in the country', our practical man failed to see any of the more important problems raised by the desire to replace the 'kulak' by 'cheap and accessible credit'" (*ibid.*, p. 317). Lenin's article was published in the legal St Petersburg journal *Novoye Slovo* (*New Word*) and this therefore prevented him from talking more openly of the existence of problems which could only be resolved by revolutionary means. "What can be more comical than fighting 'kulaks, usurers, parasites and sharks' by perfecting the 'rules' of credit banks?" (*ibid.*). That is the question Lenin put before his readers. He did not simply show the futility of the programme of action proposed by the liberal publicist, but also affirmed the revolutionary method of resolving a really vital and pressing issue—that of agrarian reform.

Lenin reserves more of his sarcasm for Levitsky's second

¹ V. I. Lenin, "About a Certain Newspaper Article", Vol. 2, p. 321.

problem—that of the helpless position of a peasant family in the event of the death of its breadwinner and the need of “safeguarding and preserving the peasant working agricultural population by all possible means and methods”. Lenin remarks, “As you see, the further he goes the wider and more majestic become Mr. Levitsky’s ‘problems’!” (ibid., p. 318). The remaining three “problems” were even “wider and more majestic”. In following the profoundly-argued, lucid and extremely clever critique of Levitsky’s “programme”, and his claim to be setting out the major problems of “the life of the people”, the reader of Lenin’s article is bound to draw the correct conclusion. Lenin, in fact, formulates it from the very beginning: “Actually, however, the author’s proposals merely provide one more example, and an exceedingly striking one at that, of the truly Manilovian¹ fantasy to which the Narodnik journalists have accustomed the Russian public” (ibid., p. 316).

The ideas expressed by Lenin on what would seem to be an extremely specific subject—a single newspaper article—have immense importance from the viewpoint of method in criticising the evils of the bourgeois press. Disdain for real social and economic processes, the avoidance of any analysis of the interests of individual classes in present-day capitalist society, and supercilious-superficial judgements on the “needs” and “destinies” of the common people in their own and other countries are all features of the bourgeois press to this day, engendering shallow journalism and evasion of really essential social and economic problems.

While Lenin could not be entirely frank when dealing with really important social and economic problems in the legal press, he certainly was so in the illegal Bolshevik papers and journals, using all the astuteness, thoroughness and temperamental flair at his disposal. One example of this frank style is provided in his article “The Workers’ Party and the Peasantry” published in April 1901 in the third issue of *Iskra*. Revealing the full scale of the contradictions in peasant life, its most fundamental problems, he convincingly showed the only way to resolve these contradictions: “The small peasantry can free itself from the yoke of capital only by associating itself with the working-class movement, by helping

¹ Manilov was a figure in the Russian writer Nikolai Gogol’s *Dead Souls*; he was taken to represent someone with futile fantasies.

the workers in their struggle for the socialist system, for transforming the land, as well as the other means of production (factories, works, machines, etc.), into social property.”¹ Naturally, it was only in an illegal paper that he could at that time write about a socialist path of development with such clarity and precision.

Lenin relentlessly exposed the phrase-mongering habits of the bourgeois press. With their verbal clamour, biting sarcasm and florid prose, bourgeois papers usually masked their emptiness, their divorce from reality and the vagueness of the political programmes of the parties and groups in whose name they were published. As a campaigning journalist, Lenin always contrasted the loud noises made by bourgeois papers about “social evils”, their pompous pronouncements, with their woolly thinking on such measures as they actually recommended for getting rid of the social evils. “We greatly love to chatter about culture, about the development of productive forces, about improving the peasant farm, and so on, and we are past masters at it. Yet whenever it comes to removing the stone that lies in the way of ‘improving the lot’ of millions of impoverished, downtrodden, hungry, ragged peasants, our millionaires become tongue-tied.”² When he wrote this, Lenin had in mind the journal *Promyshlennost i torgovlya (Industry and Trade)*, “the organ of our industrial millionaires”. Particularly far apart were the verbal boldness, resolution and radicalism, on the one hand, and the practical cowardice, vacillation and limitations, on the other, of the bourgeois-liberal and petty-bourgeois publications.

Lenin constantly opposed, throughout his whole social and political activity, the empty phrases and phrase-mongering of the bourgeois press. It was from this standpoint that while still in exile in 1897, he drew attention to the newly-published book by Sergei Yuzhakov *Educational Problems. Journalistic Essays*. In reviewing the book, he showed that, despite the promise to dwell “chiefly, on problems of principle and other widely-proclaimed pronouncements, the author gives an example of Narodnik scatter-brained thinking, of a mediocre reformer of the education system within the bounds of the autocracy. Lenin was very critical of the tub-

¹ V. I. Lenin, “The Workers’ Party and the Peasantry”, Vol. 4, p. 422.

² V. I. Lenin, “Iron on Peasant Farms”, Vol. 19, p. 309.

thumping declarations of the Narodnik publicist; he affirmed that “all these phrases merely show Mr. Yuzhakov’s predilection for a broad sweep of thought, or rather, not so much of thought as of the pen”.¹ Only sweep of pen, not action nor even “thought”—that was all the Narodnik publicists were capable of at a time when life itself was completely refuting all their dogmas.

Lenin was particularly sarcastic when writing about the verbal orgy in the bourgeois press during election campaigns, seeing this as an inevitable process rather than a simple coincidence. “All elections in a bourgeois country are accompanied by rampant phrase-mongering and licentious promises,” he wrote in 1912 at the time of elections to the Fourth State Duma.² The main objective of the bourgeois press organs was invariably quite cynical—to throw sand in the eyes of the electorate, to instil in them a temporary belief in the promises of the party whose programme most suited the political interests of the publishers and editors of a given periodical. Lenin saw that the main task of the Party, its press, editors and publicists in such circumstances was “not to trust words but to go to the heart of the matter” (ibid.). With the whole force of his campaigning talent Lenin waded into the bourgeois publicists for their specious verbosity, exposing to public gaze precisely what they had scrupulously striven to conceal behind their strident phrases. “Put no faith in phrase-mongering, it is better to see *who stands to gain!*”³ Lenin appealed to readers of the phrase-mongering bourgeois press. The strident tone almost invariably concealed a definite class and political self-interest—that was Lenin’s argument in his polemic against the bourgeois press as he strove to show a wide readership this hidden part of the message.

“Empty phrases, lame excuses” was Lenin’s description of the above-mentioned article from the *Promyshlennost i Torgovlya* paper. Not simply phrase-mongering for the sake of phrase-mongering, but for the sake of evasion. Evasion of what? Of the most pressing issues of the moment. The article, devoted to the theme of how to increase in Russia the

¹ V. I. Lenin, “Gems of Narodnik Project-Mongering”, Vol. 2, p. 461.

² V. I. Lenin, “Workers’ Unity and the Elections”, Vol. 36, p. 191. The State Duma was an elected legislative body with restricted rights, set up by the autocracy under pressure from the 1905-07 revolution.

³ V. I. Lenin, “Who Stands to Gain?”, Vol. 19, p. 53.

per capita consumption of staple products – i. e., how to raise the standard of living – was printed with a single aim in mind: to lead the reader away from the notion of the need for radical, revolutionary change in Russia. Why was the fact of the matter drowned in a deluge of empty phrases? Because that was advantageous to the publishers, to the newspaper editors representing Russia's big bourgeoisie.

During the election campaign for the Fourth Duma in 1912, Lenin drew attention to a series of lengthy and boring articles by P. N. Milyukov, the Cadet¹ leader, in which the author pretended that he did not understand the difference between liberalism and democracy. Having reminded his readers briefly of the essential difference between the two, Lenin went on to express doubt on the sincerity of Milyukov's so-called lack of understanding of this simple fact of life; in so doing Lenin set a very specific task to Bolshevik publicists: "We must register in print how low the Cadets must have fallen if they try to deceive the public on questions which are so elementary and have been made perfectly clear by the history of the political parties in Russia."²

Lenin angrily attacked the phrase-mongering of the bourgeois press during the days of mourning for the death of Leo Tolstoy, when bourgeois publicists revelled in their empty eulogies of the great writer. Bourgeois newspapers and magazines, as if in concert, began to reiterate one and the same phrase: "Tolstoy is our great conscience." It was a phrase that did not bind them to anything; it did not force them to reveal and analyse the social themes and ideological tendencies of his great work; it enabled them to veer away from the question of Tolstoy's philosophy of life. "Is not this a hollow phrase which is repeated in a thousand variations both by *Novoye Vremya* and by all such newspapers? Is this not an evasion of the *concrete* problems of democracy and socialism which Tolstoy *posed*?"³ was Lenin's indignant reaction as he wrote for readers of the illegal central organ of the Party, the *Sotsial-Demokrat* newspaper. He noted that "the very way in which Tolstoy fearlessly, frankly and ruthlessly *poses* the sorest and most vexatious problems of our day is a *rebuff* to the commonplace phrases, trite quirks and evasive, 'civi-

¹ The Cadets, the Constitutional-Democratic Party, were the major party of the liberal-monarchist bourgeoisie in Russia.

² V. I. Lenin, "Mr. Milyukov's 'Position'", Vol. 18, p. 346.

³ V. I. Lenin, "L. N. Tolstoy", Vol. 16, p. 327.

lised' falsehoods of our liberal (and liberal-Narodnik) publicists" (ibid., p. 326). Lenin's articles on Tolstoy themselves also became a "rebuff to the commonplace phrases". They prevented the bourgeois press from overshadowing with these phrases the questions of principle which Tolstoy had posed and which followed from his works. Lenin retrieved precisely what the bourgeois press preferred to conceal, thus demonstrating its perverse, mandacious and empty phrasemongering.

The Menshevik press often speculated and concealed its opportunistic essence with a certain set of empty phrases. In the sixth, seventh and eighth issues of the legal Menshevik journal *Nasha Zarya* (*Our Dawn*) for 1911, Lenin noticed a particularly large number of "inordinately inflated, laboured, high-sounding" phrases in articles devoted to the election campaign for the Fourth Duma, on "the fighting mobilisation of the proletariat", on "the widespread and open mobilisation of the masses", on "political mass organisations of independent active workers", on "self-governing groups" and "class-conscious workers", etc., etc.¹ In an article published in *Sotsial-Demokrat* in October 1911, Lenin warned his readers that the aim of these phrases was to disguise the real essence of the Menshevik views of the liquidators on issues concerning the election campaign. "These phrases which, doubtlessly, arouse the enthusiasm of high-school boys and girls, are intended to stun the readers, to 'prudence a smoke-screen', so as to make it easier for the writers to smuggle in their contraband" (ibid.). Thus, to Lenin's mind, in the mouths of opportunist publicists these phrases were not a simple embellishment of style, not a simple set of expansive expressions, they were also a cover for the contraband of anti-Marxist views and ideas.

In this and in many other articles, Lenin mercilessly exposed to the broad public the essence of this contraband and its real aim. For example, in May 1913, he noted a phrase concerning a struggle "by every available means" in the leader of the Menshevik paper *Luch*. He saw the danger of this phrase not only in that it did "not commit anyone to anything"; that harmful purpose was "pretty clear".² Its

¹ V. I. Lenin, "From the Camp of the Stolypin 'Labour' Party", Vol. 17, p. 287.

² V. I. Lenin, "Concerning the Editorial in the Newspaper *Luch* No. 189", Vol. 41, p. 283.

hidden danger lay elsewhere. What the Menshevik publicists were trying to do was to smuggle in among the workers contraband arguments justifying the Menshevik-Cadet bloc.

The strident revolutionary phrase was the hallmark of Socialist-Revolutionary journalism. That is why Lenin paid special attention to this aspect of the main S.R. paper *Dyelo Naroda* (*The People's Cause*) in an article he published in *Pravda* in the summer of 1917. He noted, in particular, that the paper was "phrase-mongering 'à la Jacobin'". That stern tone, those spectacular revolutionary exclamations: 'we know enough'... 'faith in the victory of our Revolution' (with a capital letter, of course), 'upon this or that step ... of the Russian revolutionary democracy ... depend the destinies ... of the *entire* Uprising [with a capital letter, of course] which the working people have so happily and so victoriously begun'".¹ In this summing up of the Socialist-Revolutionary style, Lenin brings together the most characteristic attributes of the S.R. publicist work. In itself the revolutionary phrase unsupported by deed is not only ludicrous, it is harmful. Its harm was aggravated in this particular case since the Socialist-Revolutionaries were not simply refusing to back up their words, but were actually contradicting them. Therefore, having held up to ridicule the revolutionary windbag style of the S.R. paper, Lenin then goes on to a direct exposé of its rhetoric: "For the people who write this are virtually helping to crush the revolution and impede the uprising of the working people by supporting the *Russian* government of the imperialists" (ibid.). The phrases are strident and fearful in their "revolutionary fervour" but are simply a cover for counter-revolutionary reality. The S.R. publicists and their main press organ were so steeped in the pseudo-revolutionary phrase that Lenin sarcastically emphasised it in his form of address: "Gentlemen, heroes of the phrase, knights of revolutionary bombast!" (ibid., p. 548).

Lenin formulated a concept that is exceedingly valuable as regards method not only for journalistic theory, but also for propaganda theory in general. He came to the conclusion that a "phrase" that is not filled with specific class content essentially has no limits to its application – it freely circulates in bourgeois or petty-bourgeois publications of any political tendency or hue, freely wanders from one press organ to

¹ V. I. Lenin, "The Harm of Phrase-Mongering", Vol. 24, p. 547.

another, irrespective of its partisan affiliation. This conclusion was prompted by the writings of the S.R. publicist Alexei Peshekhonov whose deliberations on "popular socialism" were summed up and dismissed by Lenin as follows: "Any unprincipled feuilleton-writer for a glib bourgeois sheet could subscribe to Mr. A.V.P.'s article in defence of 'popular' socialism without risking anything, without committing himself in any way, and *without professing anything*. For 'popular' socialism is a meaningless phrase serving to *evade* the question of *which* class or social stratum is fighting for socialism throughout the world."¹

Lenin experienced a sense of burning hatred for political phrase-mongering and tirelessly campaigned to keep the infection from spreading to the pages of the proletarian, Party and, later, Soviet press. "There is nothing so inimical to the spirit of Social-Democracy and so harmful as phrase-mongering," he wrote in 1910.² These words are reminiscent of many of Lenin's instructions and pieces of advice, including his well-known demand addressed to the Soviet press in 1918: "Less political ballyhoo."³ He regarded the absence of bombast in behaviour and manner of speaking and writing to be a great attribute of any Party official and publicist. It is hardly surprising, then, that in referring to Ivan Babushkin, the best worker correspondent of *Iskra*, he singled out his chief merit—"avoidance of phrase-mongering".⁴

We come across the theme of the mendacity of the bourgeois press fairly frequently in Lenin's works devoted to the theme of "capitalism and the press". He enumerated four different aspects of this mendacity. First, the bourgeois press was false because it was obliged to defend the cause of the exploiting minority, to safeguard the interests of the ruling classes to the detriment of the interests of the overwhelming majority of the working population; it had to advertise the decadent social system. It was therefore false in the widest meaning of the word, false before history. Secondly, organs of the bourgeois press were deceitful in their concrete political programmes, which were drawn up without taking

¹ V. I. Lenin, "On Narodism", Vol. 18, pp. 526-27.

² V. I. Lenin, "An Open Letter to All Pro-Party Social-Democrats", Vol. 16, p. 334.

³ V. I. Lenin, "The Character of Our Newspapers", Vol. 28, p. 98.

⁴ V. I. Lenin, "Ivan Vasilyevich Babushkin", Vol. 16, p. 361.

account of the class relationships within the country, without allowing for profound and irreconcilable social antagonistic contradictions, or for the historical perspectives of social development. They therefore reacted to the most complex, essential, profound and antagonistic social contradictions and problems by giving vent to a sort of foolish hypocrisy or hypocritical foolishness!¹ Thirdly, the bourgeois press was often false in its reporting of specific events and facts of life. The deliberate lie, slander or insinuation was used in fighting political foes. The unintended lie, simple carelessness as regards the accuracy of information was widespread, for the reason that it was the only way to engender sensation, and without sensation the publishers could not make their super-profits. Finally, there was yet another variety of the "specific lie" that was widely practised: silence on facts and events that it was not in their interest to mention.

Russian bourgeois newspapers and magazines perpetrated the biggest falsehood daily. What comprised the essence of contradictions in Russia and the era as a whole virtually never penetrated their pages. Information on the arduous position of the workers, on their fight for their rights, on the pauper status of the millions of half-starving Russian peasants, on the uncontrolled tyranny of the authorities, on the extortion practised by state officials was almost never printed in the bourgeois press or appeared only in an interpretation unflattering for the ordinary people. What did find its way into print on this theme appeared through a desire not to lose subscribers among the democratic sections of the public rather than through sympathy with the ordinary people. This sort of information, furthermore, was often lost amidst semi-official information about the prosperity of Russia, about social harmony and devotion to the monarch. Having in mind a general picture of the bourgeois press, Lenin noted with ire: "Once in a while they 'discover', in every big city and any rural backwoods, appalling, abominable squalor, want and neglect unworthy of human beings. They 'discover' them, inform the public through the 'big' newspapers, comment on the fact for a day or two, and then forget it. The sated do not understand the hungry."² That was the principle underlying the mendacity of the bourgeois press on mat-

¹ See V. I. Lenin, "Iron on Peasant Farms", Vol. 19, p. 309.

² V. I. Lenin, "A Discovery", Vol. 18, p. 545.

ters of import: silence on the most taxing and dangerous social ailments and avoidance of burning socio-political and economic problems.

Lenin exposed this major lie virtually in every article in which he discussed important socio-political problems. Therefore, the whole of his campaigning journalism on internal political problems was, in fact, a refutation of the main deception perpetrated by the bourgeois press. Sometimes, however, he referred directly to this shameless deceit and mercilessly held it up to ridicule. "Is the Condition of the Peasants Improving or Worsening?" was the title of an article published in 1913 in *Torgovo-Promyshlennaya Gazeta* (*Commercial and Industrial Gazette*). As was to be expected, this article endeavoured to show that the peasants' situation was not deteriorating; on the contrary, their condition was "steadily progressing year by year". Lenin wrote an article published in *Pravda* under the same heading and using the same facts the bourgeois journalist used in his article. But, having purged them of bourgeois reactionary speculations, he showed clearly that they testified to just the opposite.

The correspondent of *Torgovo-Promyshlennaya Gazeta* had based his conclusions on statistics from a public opinion survey in the Moscow Zemstvo¹ over a six-year period, from 1907 to 1912. In the questionnaire, answers were divided into three groups, indicating that the economic well-being was 1. rising, 2. diminishing, 3. remaining stable. The correspondent had based his conclusions on the fact that the number of responses that fitted into the first category for 1910, 1911 and 1912 was greater than the number that fell into the second category. Lenin therefore asked: "Why does he take the three years with good harvests for his *general* conclusions and ignore the three years with bad harvests?"² He suggests carrying out "the simple calculation of profit and loss that is obligatory for everyone except swindlers... To do this we must add up the figures for the six years and divide by six

¹ The Zemstvo was an agency of local self-government set up in several provinces of European Russia according to the reform of 1864. The formation of zemstvos was an attempt by tsarism to adapt the autocratic system to the requirements of capitalist development. Landowners were dominant in these agencies, while representatives of the bourgeoisie also had a hand in them: householders, factory-owners, merchants, the clergy and kulaks.

² V. I. Lenin, "Is the Condition of the Peasants Improving or Worsening?", Vol. 19, p. 97.

(amazingly clever, Mr. Official Journalist, isn't it?)" (ibid.). What is the outcome? Out of 100 answers over all the six years, there are 20 in the first group, 38 in the second, and 42 in the third. There can only be one conclusion, as Lenin says: "...*the peasants are growing poorer and being ruined*", because in six years "the number of *unfavourable* answers is, on the average, *almost twice as great* as the number of *favourable* answers!" (ibid.). Applied to the twenty million peasant families, that would have meant that "in six years, 4,000,000 peasant families have improved their condition, 7,600,000 have grown poorer and 8,400,000 families have remained at the former (i. e., impoverished) level!" (ibid., pp. 97-98). It is thus that Lenin clearly shows that the figures adduced by the bourgeois journalist testify to just the opposite of what he actually purported to show. "This is typical proof of the shameless lying of official writers and official newspapers", is Lenin's summing up (ibid., p. 96).

The flow of lies and slander in the bourgeois press normally increased when the class struggle intensified, and the bourgeoisie faced a critical situation. For example, between February and October 1917, when the bourgeois press of all tendencies and hues sensed the threat of a growing socialist revolution within the country, it banded together in a "chorus of slanderers" and united "lying alliance" against Lenin and the Bolshevik Party leading the struggle of workers for socialism. Lenin more than once drew the attention of the Party and the common people to this aspect of the bourgeois press, which was trying "to *shout down* the truth, to prevent it from being heard, to drown it in a torrent of invective and shouts".¹ The bourgeois press attempted to "shout down" the voice of the Bolshevik press by sheer weight of numbers in terms of circulation and the multitude of their chorus. Their problem was, however, that they had to shout down the voice of historical truth. And this turned out to be impossible, even with an absolute numerical superiority.

The bourgeois press expressed its impotence in ideological dispute with Lenin and the Bolshevik press generally in a "below-the-belt" campaign of lies and slander. It was then common practice to indulge in gossip, blow up compromising details from the personal life of a particular member of

¹ V. I. Lenin, "A Partnership of Lies", Vol. 24, p. 118.

the Bolshevik Party, to traduce and misrepresent his verbal statements, a newspaper article or a book. This Lenin described as “the world of the capitalists, *Rech*, *Russkaya Volya*, *Novoye Vremya*, dark hints, vile insinuations against the socialists”.¹ This statement is typical not only in that it again and again exposes the dirty methods to which the bourgeois hacks stoop, but also in that it shows the indissoluble link between the world of the bourgeois press and the entire world of capitalism and its laws.

There is undoubted interest in the direct and indirect recommendations which Lenin made to his colleagues and Party publicists over the slanderous attacks on them by the bourgeois press. They are naturally not all identical and depend on specific circumstances and the historical situation.

In many cases he simply suggested ignoring the insinuations made by bourgeois newspapers. After all, to get drawn into a dispute at such a low level meant losing out in the eyes of the readership. Slanderous assaults by the bourgeois press often blatantly followed a successful speech by a particular Party official to the public—in the press, at a meeting, conference or congress. In such circumstances Lenin thought it thoroughly justified to answer the malicious outbursts of the bourgeois press with a contemptuous silence.

Bolsheviks, in fact, took the unbridled malicious outbursts that were directed against them by the whole bourgeois and almost the entire petty-bourgeois press in the period immediately prior to the October 1917 Revolution as recognition of their special services to the labour and entire democratic movement, “for the fierce hatred of the bourgeoisie is often the best proof of faithful and honest service to the cause of the proletariat by the slandered, baited and persecuted.”²

But, of course, it was not always possible to keep a proud silence. Sometimes attacks on a Party official took on the nature of systematic persecution and organised campaign. In such cases, inasmuch as an oft-repeated falsehood could take a hold among the mass of not very politically sophisticated readers, there was a need for some sort of explanation to the wide reading public.

Besides lies and slander, the bourgeois press also resorted to the method of scaring the public with the “Leftist danger”

¹ V. I. Lenin, “Two Worlds”, Vol. 24, p. 30.

² V. I. Lenin, “Political Blackmail”, Vol. 25, p. 258.

which was falsely equated with anarchy, disorder, violence and disruption. More than once Lenin gave vent to his rage and sarcasm at this mendacious, hypocritical and malicious "polemical" device of the bourgeois press. "Scare them as much as you can! This is the slogan of the whole bourgeois press. Scare them with all your might! Lie, slander, but frighten them!"¹

Once again Lenin was able to perceive one of the typical and essential features of the bourgeois press. It exists to this day; as soon as the internal political situation worsens in any capitalist country, it begins to play up the bogey of a communist danger, the threat of anarchy, extremism and violence. It also let loose the scare of civil war, for, as Lenin remarked, "of all the methods of intimidation, that of scaring with civil war is perhaps the most widespread" (ibid.).

Lenin never suggested attempting to cure the capitalist press of any ailment, to cleanse it of its "deficiencies" or morally improve it. In order to put an end to these evils, including the chronic habit of lying, one had to put an end to capitalism and the whole bourgeois press.

In all his works devoted to the theme of "capitalism and the press", Lenin saw the bourgeois press as an organic component of the superstructure of capitalist society with all the consequences that this entailed. For example, he linked the issue of freedom of the press with that of bourgeois freedom generally, the bourgeois attitudes to slogans of freedom of conscience, assembly and speech in the process of historical development (from sincere proclamations when fighting feudalism to blatant opportunism and utter violation when fighting socialism). What freedom of the press for the working people can there be in present-day capitalist countries, when the printing and publishing, the paper mills and warehouses, the advertising business and so on are all in the hands of the capitalists? Lenin put this question every time he touched upon the theme of "capitalism and the press". He did not go into a great deal of detail since the answer was fairly obvious. There could be no prevaricating: one cannot talk of any freedom of the press for working people in such conditions, one can only talk of freedom of the press for the propertied classes. "All over the world, wherever there are capitalists, freedom of the press means freedom to

¹ V. I. Lenin, "The Russian Revolution and Civil War", Vol. 26, p. 28.

buy up newspapers, to *buy* writers, to *bribe*, buy and fake 'public opinion' for the *benefit of the bourgeoisie*."¹

The myth of the bourgeois press as an expression of public opinion was created by bourgeois theoreticians of journalism so as to mask its class nature. Bourgeois sociologists saw the category of "public opinion" as existing independently of class contradictions within capitalist society. They always presented it as an arithmetical mean of popular will. It was precisely the bourgeois press, in their view, which expressed that arithmetical mean. They never cared to observe that, before expressing "public opinion", the bourgeoisie spends vast quantities of money moulding it with the aid of that very press, and nowadays with the help of television and radio as well. Bearing this circumstance in mind, Lenin almost invariably put this concept in inverted commas or added "so-called public opinion".

In treating the press as a superstructural category, Lenin arrived at a very important conclusion: the press does more than express the interests of the ruling class, it actively defends them and is a weapon used to safeguard those interests. What is more, it is always both a partisan and a class force. No bourgeois paper or journal can stand aside from partisan differentiation of the big, medium and petty bourgeoisie. Lenin regarded attempts by editorial boards to advertise their publications as exclusively non-partisan or being above partisan strife as either political blindness or a deliberate ploy or device calculated to gain a wider readership and to deceive the working people. He always mocked publishers' claims being non-partisan.

In the spring of 1906, on the crest of the second wave of the first Russian revolution, a "non-partisan" newspaper called *Tovarishch* (*Comrade*) appeared in St Petersburg. However, the paper's class as well as partisan sympathies and antipathies showed themselves immediately. It became a mouthpiece for the liberal bourgeoisie, the Left wing of the Cadet Party, even though it was stressing its "socialist" character. Lenin poked fun at the illusory claims of the *Tovarishch* editors that they were maintaining a non-partisan position, and exposed the liberal-bourgeois mode of thinking of

¹ V. I. Lenin, "A Letter to G. Myasnikov, August 5, 1921", Vol 32, p. 505.

its publishers from the very first issues; later, during the years of the Stolypin reaction, he cast the paper in the "company of the educated betrayers of the Russian revolution".¹ *Tovarishch* obviously did not succeed as "non-partisan" newspaper. The definition of non-partisanship turned out to be too arbitrary and not a single periodical was able to adhere to it.

As a counter to naive or malevolent attempts to bring out non-partisan press organs Lenin issued the well-known slogan: "Down with non-partisan writers! Down with literary supermen!"² He thereby emphasised yet again the impossibility of a non-partisan press existing in class society: the non-partisan journalist is just as absurd a phenomenon as superman. Lenin used this slogan to summon the proletarian press, as counterbalance to the bourgeois press, openly to proclaim its partisanship.

Lenin's historic service was to substantiate the need to do away with the bourgeois press during the socialist revolution. This conclusion emanated from the entire set of views Lenin held on the bourgeois press as both a part of the capitalist superstructure and as a weapon of class and partisan struggle. The socialist revolution presupposed the elimination of capitalism as a system, and the press occupied no mean place within that system of economic and political coercion. On the eve of the October 1917 insurrection, in September 1917, therefore, Lenin set the working class and its Party the following task: "It is necessary to suppress the bourgeois counter-revolutionary papers (*Rech*, *Russkoye Slovo*, etc.), to confiscate their printing presses, to declare private advertisements in the papers a state monopoly."³

Lenin's ideas on the nature of the bourgeois press and the inevitability of its complete destruction during the socialist revolution found an amazingly exact confirmation after October 1917. From the first day of the socialist revolution the bourgeois press was a bitter enemy of the new system. All pretence at "objectivity", "impartiality", "non-partisanship" and "classlessness" went out the window. The bourgeois and petty-bourgeois press of the most diverse political

¹ V. I. Lenin, "Philistinism in Revolutionary Circles", Vol. 11, p. 248.

² V. I. Lenin, "Party Organisation and Party Literature", Vol. 10, p. 45.

³ V. I. Lenin, "The Tasks of the Revolution", Vol. 26, p. 66.

tendencies and hues all closed ranks against Soviet power as propagandists, agitators and organisers of counter-revolution. They used more than the pages of bourgeois periodicals to fight against the revolutionary people; some of their staff took a direct hand in conspiracy. A special cash fund was set up at the Menshevik-liquidator paper *Dyen* (*Day*) to fight the revolution. The capitalist Ryabushinsky alone contributed five million rubles to the fund.

Some counter-revolutionary papers were closed down the day after the October armed insurrection by order of the Revolutionary Military Committee attached to the Petrograd Soviet. So *Novoye Vremya*, *Russkaya Volya* and *Birzhevye Vedomosti* (*Stock Exchange News*) went out of existence. Yet many continued to come out under different names. The bourgeoisie did not want to lose control of their tried and tested weapon. In the harsh circumstances of counter-revolutionary rebellions and approaching civil war, the bourgeois press became a formidable hostile force. It slandered the Soviet Government, put about panic rumours, defamed the first attempts to build a new life and called for sabotage and open opposition to Soviet power. The paper *Dyen*, which was closed down on 26 October 1917, continued to appear for several months under other names: *Poldyen* (*Midday*), *Polnoch* (*Midnight*), *Gryadushchy Dyen* (*The Coming Day*), *Novy Dyen* (*New Day*), *Noch* (*Night*) and *Drug Naroda* (*Friend of the People*). Names of the paper might change, but its content remained the same. From day to day it pursued a campaign of invective, lies and slander against the Soviet Government and its various representatives. Editor and journalist Potresov did all he could to defame Soviet Government leaders in his articles.

Other bourgeois papers, fearing openly to conduct counter-revolutionary propaganda, spread panic and provocative rumours. By their false information the bourgeois papers tried to spread among the population the belief that the Soviet Republic was unstable. Thus, at the beginning of January 1918, the newspaper *Utro Rossii* (*Russia's Morning*) put about the false news of a battle near Kharkov as a result of which two "Bolshevik regiments" had gone over to the bourgeois-nationalist government of the Ukraine—the Rada. In an article on 11 January 1918, the newspaper *Trud* (*Labour*) gave the news of an allegedly deliberate refusal by the 193rd Infantry Regiment to take part in a "Bolshevik

Demonstration" dedicated to the honour of those who had died on 9 January 1905 ("Bloody Sunday").¹

Bourgeois papers, as well as the Menshevik and Socialist-Revolutionary press, gave exaggeratedly gloomy pictures of the economic situation in the country, tried to denigrate and slander the first official decrees. The paper *Utro Rossii*, for example, ran a special section "Bolsheviks in Power" which in every issue was filled with malicious libel and was put alongside the "Incidents, Robberies and Murders" column. The bourgeois paper *Vechernyaya Zhizn* (*Evening Life*) brought out an issue with the fantastic news that in Saratov the Soviet power had issued a decree on the "nationalisation" of women. In March the paper *Trud* printed a "telegram from Tver" on alleged disorders in the city, on the dispersal of the food committee and on the flight of the inhabitants. Such "canards" flew straight from the pages of one bourgeois paper to another.

The bourgeois counter-revolutionary press vigorously incited the public to civil war. Back in January 1918, *Utro Rossii* had published material under the headline "Civil War", and on 11 January the paper had informed its readers about a "victory" on the Don River and the defeat and arrest of Bolsheviks in Novocherkassk.

By the summer of 1918 the counter-revolutionary appeals in the pages of the remaining bourgeois and petty-bourgeois publications were even more blatant. On 14 June 1918, the Samara *Vechernyaya Zarya* (*The Afterglow*) mentioned en passant that the Menshevik Lensky had spoken as an official representative at a "non-party" workers' conference and had said that "a volunteer army is at present being formed in Samara to oppose the Germans and the Bolsheviks... We appeal to you to give the most powerful support to this enterprise." The next issue of the paper printed the official stance of the Menshevik centre: "We call upon the workers and whole democratic public of Samara and the province to join the ranks of the volunteer army." If that was not enough, the bourgeois press began then to incite the imperialist powers to intervene so as to put down the world's first socialist state. The newspaper *Zhizn* (*Life*), for example,

¹ On 9 January 1905, by order of the tsar, the troops fired on a peaceful demonstration of St Petersburg workers who marched to the Winter Palace to present a petition to the tsar.

chided the "Allies" in June 1918 with their "passivity" and "irresolution".

That is why the works and speeches of Lenin in this period contained directions to demolish the bourgeois press.

On 27 October (9 November New Style), the Council of People's Commissars adopted Lenin's proposed decree on the press. Despite the bitter opposition of the Left-wing Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks, it was ratified at a session of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee (the supreme body of Soviet state power) on 4 (17) November 1917 and a resolution was adopted by 34 votes to 24 with one abstention which gave unreserved backing to the Council's policy on the press. The decree prescribed the closure of press organs which were guilty of the following: "1. appealing for open resistance or insubordination to the Workers' and Peasants' Government; 2. spreading discord through slanderous distortion of the facts; 3. calling for actions of an obviously criminal - i. e., criminally punishable nature." The decree was a clear warning to the bourgeois press not to overstep the bounds of revolutionary legality. It retained the right for the bourgeois press to exist as long as it abided by a number of elementary conditions: not to call for open resistance to the new revolutionary authority, not to spread obviously slanderous and panic information. However, as the above-mentioned facts go to show, the logic of the class struggle, to which the press actions were always subordinate, proved stronger for the publishers and editors of the bourgeois papers than the normal desire to survive. The bourgeois and petty-bourgeois press began actively to infringe the prescriptions of Lenin's decree.

Ten days later, on 7 (20) November, once again Lenin showed persistence and initiative in achieving the adoption of the "Decree on Introducing a State Monopoly on Advertising" which he had carefully edited. This put into effect Lenin's long-held idea of depriving the bourgeois press of its main source of income, thereby blocking the channel through which the bourgeoisie were generously nurturing their ideological service with the aid of payments for advertisements, were financing its technical base, expenditure on paper and salaries for hacks ready for any twists and turns of thought. Henceforth, it was only possible to publish advertisements in the Soviet government press and newspapers of the local Soviets.

In view of the fact that implementation of both the first and the second decree encountered fierce resistance from the whole of the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois press and went through only with great difficulty, it was necessary to set up a body affirming revolutionary legality in the area of printing. On 28 January (10 February) 1918, therefore, Lenin signed the decree on the creation of a revolutionary press tribunal to deal with "crimes and wrongdoings against the people committed through the use of the press".

The revolutionary press tribunal consisted of three people selected by the Soviet of Workers', Peasants' and Soldiers' Deputies. Any person enjoying political rights also had the right to act as prosecutor or defendant in a case brought against a particular publication. Among the punitive measures imposed by the tribunal were public, administrative and penal: a public expression of censure, the compulsory publication of a retraction, cash fines, confiscation of the printing facilities, deprivation of all or certain political rights for the guilty party, expulsion from a certain locality or from the country, and imprisonment. The extensive participation of workers' representatives in the work of the tribunals, the democratic procedure of the courts, and the detailed accounts in the press of the judicial hearings—all had a great deal of importance in mobilising public opinion against the counter-revolutionary activity of the bourgeois press.

Having forfeited their basic source of income—advertising revenue, the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois papers were prepared to accept any handout from the few wealthy who were still holding out here and there, so as to prolong their existence. In June 1918, *Pravda* exposed the semi-Menshevik *Novaya Zhizn* (*New Life*) for taking 500,000 rubles from the banker Grubbe through the Siberian Bank. The editors of *Novaya Zhizn* made the feeble protest that they had accepted the money "as a purely commercial, credit operation that did not bind the paper morally or politically". But they did not have a leg to stand on when the link was so obvious. Nonetheless, the "credit operation" of *Novaya Zhizn* was an exception: the banks had passed into popular control and bankers preferred to cross the frontier into exile.

Despite frenzied resistance, the bourgeois press, deprived of its flagrantly "unproductive" and dubious sources of income, and feeling the impact of administrative sanctions, began to shrink—both in number of publications, and in size

and circulation. This process was further accelerated by measures of an ideological nature, such as the energetic and effective counter-propaganda of the Party and government press. Many newspapers at the centre and in the localities began to carry regular releases on the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois press, displaying their anti-popular tendencies to the broad readership. As a result of all these measures adopted on the initiative and under the guidance of Lenin, the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois press had by the end of 1918 been utterly and completely suppressed throughout the territory where Soviet power prevailed.

In a speech at the session of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee justifying the decree on the press, Lenin forcibly stressed an idea which had become an expression of the law of any socialist revolution: one cannot advance to socialism without eliminating the bourgeois press. "To tolerate the existence of these papers is to cease being a socialist. Those who say: 'Open the bourgeois newspapers', fail to understand that we are moving at full speed to socialism."¹ Lenin's argument to this thesis may be reduced to the following three propositions.

First, because of its class nature the bourgeois press cannot remain neutral, especially at a time of exacerbated struggle. Being a powerful ideological weapon in the hands of the bourgeoisie, it actually becomes their military weapon at a time when the capitalists are losing power. Therefore, in putting an end to bourgeois power, it is naturally necessary to eliminate also that weapon with whose aid that power is defended, advanced and affirmed. This weapon is not a bomb, a shell or a bullet, but it does possess powerful, destructive qualities, in so far as it is a weapon of lies and slander, a poisonous substance acting on the whole fabric of society. "We cannot provide the bourgeoisie with the opportunity to slander us... If we are to advance to socialism we cannot allow Kaledin's bombs to be reinforced by the bombs of falsehood" (*ibid.*).

Second, elimination of the bourgeois press was dictated also by the economic laws of the transition from capitalism to socialism. Any bourgeois periodical was not simply an ideological product, it was also an enterprise of a capitalist

¹ V. I. Lenin, "Meeting of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee, November 4 (17), 1917", Vol. 26, p. 286.

type. It was based on private ownership of the means of production and the exploitation of hired labour. Lenin suggested setting up a commission for probing the ties between the banks and the bourgeois newspapers. His view was that the commission would show the public at large that the press and publishing enterprises generally, like all the other capitalist undertakings, would have to be expropriated and nationalised in the process of socialist revolution.

Third, it is precisely the nationalisation of publishing enterprises that is a necessary condition for implementing the genuine freedom of the press. As long as only the bourgeoisie possesses the "freedom to buy rolls of newsprint and hire crowds of penpushers" there can be no genuine freedom of the press for the working people: "We must escape from the freedom of a press dependent on capital" (ibid.).

When the civil war ended, G. I. Myasnikov, an opponent of Communist Party policy, called for a review of attitudes towards the bourgeois press. He proposed that "freedom of the press from the monarchists to the anarchists, inclusively", be proclaimed throughout the country. In his celebrated "A Letter to G. Myasnikov", Lenin gave a clear and exhaustive answer to the question of what this would mean in a situation in which the bourgeoisie all over the world was "many times stronger than we are". The enemies of Soviet power—the Russian counter-revolutionary émigrés and their wealthy foreign backers—would immediately invest their millions in that "enterprise" in order to launch anti-Soviet propaganda within the country. "Freedom of the press in the R.S.F.S.R., which is surrounded by the bourgeois enemies of the whole world, means freedom of *political organisation* for the bourgeoisie and its most loyal servants, the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries."¹ Such papers would do more than launch counter-revolutionary propaganda and agitation, they would also become the centres of political consolidation of the enemies of Soviet power. Could the young Soviet state, whose energies had been strained to breaking point first by world war and then by civil war, voluntarily take such a step? Lenin said no: "We have no wish to commit suicide, and therefore, we will not do this" (ibid.).

The closing down of bourgeois papers and journals in revolutionary Russia after October 1917 is still seen by bour-

¹ V. I. Lenin, "A Letter to G. Myasnikov", Vol. 32, p. 505.

geois ideologists as one of the most "anti-democratic acts" in the history of the Soviet state. An anti-democratic act from the viewpoint of which class? To this legitimate question the bourgeois "Sovietologists" have no wish to reply. Lenin never tired of reiterating that there was no such thing as absolute democracy: there was bourgeois democracy and there was socialist democracy. From the viewpoint of bourgeois democracy this was undoubtedly an "anti-democratic act". From the standpoint of socialist democracy this was simply an utterly democratic act, it was a historically law-governed inevitability. The building of socialism, as the experience of many countries in the world has already shown, is simply impossible without such a measure.

Lenin's criticism of the economic, political and moral foundations of the bourgeois press remains the paramount component part of any struggle against it and its doleful influence on the common people. He convincingly demonstrated that the bourgeois press was part and parcel of the capitalist system, a pernicious and poisonous weapon used in its defence, particularly during periods when social contradictions grow worse. An invariable condition for successful revolutionary action against the capitalist system in any country is the elimination of the bourgeois press.

Thus, Lenin's ideas on the issue "capitalism and the press" served and still serve as a theoretical and practical justification for the inevitable destruction of the bourgeois press in the process of socialist revolution.

The above was the name of an article Lenin published in *Pravda* in 1917. The words referred to in the title were intended by Lenin to describe the methods to which the bourgeois press resorted in its campaign against the Marxist press and Bolshevik periodicals. Lenin's exposure of the methods and forms of polemics practised by the bourgeois press was a major and integral part of his attack on it.

Lenin's observations on the subject occur in several of his polemical articles. Assembled together, they provide an additional portrayal of the bourgeois press from a perspective that has very great significance for the battle against bourgeois ideology today.

Lenin mercilessly exposed the methods of the bourgeois press campaign as a manifestation of its essence. In so far as most of his polemical skirmishes with the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois press occurred at a time when the Bolshevik press was enjoying a legal existence, Lenin's articles were normally addressed to a wide reading public, mainly class-conscious workers who read Bolshevik newspapers. It was precisely these people who had to be shown time and again by concrete example that the bourgeois press had no “clean” ideological weapon in its struggle against Marxist press, that it invariably employed a “dirty” weapon.

To a certain extent these dirty tricks were readily apparent in the “infighting” between the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois press, although such “internecine” polemical clashes were not of paramount importance.

Very often this type of “shadow-boxing” was merely intended to attract new customers and subscribers. The superficially noisy furores, with their personal sniping, gossip and insinuation, were essentially of no consequence to anyone or anything, involved no posing of serious political questions. On the contrary, they shifted them into the background. And, of course, they contained no radical proposals.

Insofar as such arguments were conducted basically between political parties and groups that rubbed shoulders with each other, they only presented different shades and interpretations of a particular aspect of the same political programmes. They were of interest to those types of readers for whom they were intended only by dint of their vociferous and scandalous tittle-tattle. Such "polemics" had no effect on the practical activity of parties and groups. Lenin had this to say in December 1910 on the crux of such arguments: "When Martov and other *Golos* [*Voice*] people pretend to 'argue' in *Golos* against the liquidators in Russia, declaring that their acts are 'frivolous' (!), and 'exhorting' them to wait a little longer (Martov on Levitsky in No. 23), and *at the same time work* hand in glove with them, and, together with them, form a separate *faction* abroad for the purpose of fighting the Party and lending support to its enemies, such as Mr. Potresov, we can see in this but one of many manifestations of political hypocrisy. No politically-minded person will say that Mr. Milyukov is seriously fighting the *Vekhi* writers when he 'argues' with them, declares them to be 'frivolous', and at the same time *works* hand in glove with them politically. Everyone will see that this only proves Mr. Milyukov's hypocrisy, and by no means disproves his political solidarity with *Vekhi*. No politically-minded person will say that Mr. Stolypin and his government are seriously fighting the Black Hundreds¹ when he 'argues' with them (in *Rossiia*), accuses them of 'frivolity', but at the same time *works* hand in glove with them. Everyone will see that Mr. Stolypin and the tsar's government thereby prove nothing but their hypocrisy, that this by no means disproves the fact of their political solidarity with the Purishkeviches."²

Lenin here runs through the whole gamut of political parties and groups, both Left and Right, operating in Russian public life. His conclusion is pitiless. The verbal scrapping in the press between parties and groups that stand slightly to the left or right of one another is nothing more than hypocrisy.

Particularly trifling were the tiffs in the press between the various tendencies of one and the same political party, such

¹ Monarchist gangs formed by the tsarist government to fight the revolutionary movement.

² V. I. Lenin, "The State of Affairs in the Party", Vol. 17, pp. 24-25.

as the Right- and Left-wing Cadets. Lenin pointed this out more than once, noting that “the disputes among the Cadets have been most trifling”.¹

On the other hand, when it came to the Marxist press, the bourgeois, petty-bourgeois and opportunist press of all shades took up the cudgels in earnest, ferociously and uncompromisingly. It was this polemic that gave Lenin food for thought in regard to the mode of argumentation that prevailed in the bourgeois press.

The first thing that must be singled out from Lenin’s observations on this issue is the way the bourgeois press steered clear of concrete facts, ignored them altogether. In 1913, the well-known figure of Russian bourgeois liberalism and editor of *Russkiye Vedomosti*, Pyotr Struve, who had at one time been a “legal Marxist”, published a substantial piece of work entitled *The Economy and Prices* in which he came out with the routine “dismissal” of Marxism. Struve’s method of polemic with Marxism was not original; it had been widely used by the bourgeois press: “A couple of pseudo-scientific terms, a hint at thought motives, and a reference to a short magazine article in *Zhizn* in 1900—that is all he can boast of.”² Lenin called his article devoted to Struve’s opus “Socialism Demolished Again”, having in mind the dozens and hundreds of similar vainglorious attempts by bourgeois periodicals, brochures and books. The whole of such polemical undertakings lacked the same ingredient—any association of evidence with reality, a genuinely scientific approach.

Lenin also constantly pilloried the bourgeois press for its habit of deviating in an argument from the crux of the issue, from its paramount aspect. *Rech* “dodges the issue, thus betraying a fundamental weakness and a guilty conscience”, he once noted about the shilly-shallying of the main Cadet newspaper.³ In a dispute with the Marxist press on really major issues that the latter had singled out for debate, issues such as the agrarian question, the difference between democracy and liberalism, antagonistic contradictions between labour and capital, the imperialist nature of the foreign

¹ V. I. Lenin, “What Is Worrying the Liberals”, Vol. 20, p. 136.

² V. I. Lenin, “Socialism Demolished Again”, Vol. 20, p. 192.

³ V. I. Lenin, “The Cadets and the Agrarian Question”, Vol. 18, p. 280.

policy of tsarism and the bourgeois Provisional Government, the bourgeois press organs dodged the real issue, since they feared losing out for lack of argument. Thus "fundamental weakness" produced manifestations of "a guilty conscience"; it was forced to bob and weave, avoid the real issue and pass over it in silence, relying on irrelevant detail.

The bourgeois-liberal Cadet press in particular was wont to resort to this trick of dodging the issue when it had to face questions it could not answer. And Lenin frequently drew his readers' attention to this tactic.

In 1907, Lenin published several articles in Bolshevik legal and illegal newspapers attacking attempts by *Rech* to play down the counter-revolutionary essence of the Cadet agrarian programme. He convincingly demonstrated the paper's lack of interest in any radical solution of the agrarian problem. It had tried to camouflage those parts of its Party's agrarian programme that were most vulnerable to criticism from a consistently democratic standpoint. The Cadets were opposing the Social-Democrats' project to expropriate land from the landowners without compensation. The Trudoviks'¹ demands for egalitarian land tenure went too far and were impossible to implement as far as the Cadets were concerned. They did not agree with the election of local committees (for implementing the agrarian reform) by universal, direct, equal and secret voting. Instead, they proposed committees elected on the basis of "equal representation" of peasants, landowners and government officials, with the government being in control. That would mean that "the landlords and officials will constitute the majority in the local land committees..."; and that in turn would mean ruinous redemption land prices for the peasants, which really meant that "the Constitutional-Democrat agrarian policy is essentially a *landlord* policy".² Lenin pointed out that *Rech* was avoiding discussion of these matters of principle in the Cadet agrarian programme through fruitless bickering over the level of increase in peasant land allotments. Yet here were a few Cadet publicists trying to prove the incredible—that land in Russia was insufficient for division among all the peasants.

¹ Petty-bourgeois political organisation in Russia.

² V. I. Lenin, "The Agrarian Question and the Forces of the Revolution", Vol. 12, p. 336.

Lenin emphasised that this dodging of the real issue stemmed from the class selfishness of the Cadets, who represented capitalist Russia in politics. In reply to Lenin's attacks and those of other Bolshevik publicists, the *Rech* editorial board proclaimed in hurt tones that the issue of the class bias of Cadets in their approach to the agrarian question would only be seriously discussed at political meetings. Brushing aside these finicky objections from the major Cadet press organ, Lenin in his article "The Agrarian Question and the Forces of Revolution" referred to a specific document—the well-known directory *Members in the Second State Duma*. It showed that, of the 79 Cadet deputies, 20 were landlords, while others were marshals of the nobility, rural superintendents and chairmen of Zemstvo boards. No amount of reporting, finicky, ironic or factual, in the Cadet *Rech* could refute this argument. It simply did not answer. *Rech* continually aspired to the role of "people's paper", just as the Cadet Party aspired to the role of being a party of "people's freedom". It was a blatantly speculative and fraudulent piece of playacting. In a number of articles Lenin showed quite clearly that the interests of the Cadets were diametrically opposed to those of the common people, that liberalism and democracy were by no means one and the same thing. And every time this playacting by the Cadet press became more and more obvious under pressure from the questions put to it by the Bolshevik publicists, the old tricks were used and a smokescreen of secondary issues went up.

Unable to give any scientific rebuff to the views of Marxist publicists, the bourgeois press tried to compromise the people who held those views. On one such occasion Lenin wrote that "what the author and the newspaper that published his article are aiming at is to pack people's heads with gossip, squabbles and personalities, and thus avoid the necessity of explaining their point of view".¹ The bourgeois feature-writers compensated for the feebleness of their position, programme or lack of either with a stream of information of very low quality.

All manner of opportunists such as the Mensheviks were particularly prone to abuse the press by these methods. On

¹ V. I. Lenin, "For the Attention of *Luch* and *Pravda* Readers", Vol. 19, p. 77.

the subject of one outburst from the Menshevik paper *Luch* in 1913 Lenin wrote, "This enormous article, spread over two issues of the paper, is packed with gossip and allusions to personalities. The working-class reader is informed of the 'touchiness' and 'charming witticisms' of one Marxist, the 'superman' pretensions of a second and the 'cynicism' of a third. All disputes are attributed to 'the settling of personal accounts', to 'discontent over matters of seniority' and to the 'struggle for power' in the Party. And an underhand rumour, worthy of the official press, is slipped in to suggest that certain 'master-hands at revolution' are to blame for it all because they are afraid of losing their influence if the broad masses of the workers enter into the dispute" (ibid.). In similar vein the liquidators waged a campaign against Lenin's press in the legal periodicals, vigorously exploiting the silly foibles of their philistine readers as well as trying to exert an influence on readers from among the workers.

Ruthlessly exposing the so-called socialist and democratic press for such methods, Lenin addressed himself directly to the broad mass of workers with an appeal to help take the argument with the Mensheviks out of the dead-end into which the liquidators' press had endeavoured to direct it. He appealed to broad proletarian public opinion. Showing, for example, that the argument "has been ... losing any business-like and ideological character and assuming more and more the character of 'a squabble'" as far as the Menshevik papers were concerned, Lenin wrote: "It is *all the more* necessary, therefore, to *turn* these polemics *back* into the channels of a serious examination of controversial questions. Every class-conscious worker will probably agree with us about this."¹

He gave his readers to understand, and sometimes even directly told representatives of the petty-bourgeois and opportunist press, that he would never consent to holding an argument on such a level. On the subject of an article written by Martov in the liquidators' paper *Russkaya Zhizn*, and concocted from the above-mentioned recipes, Lenin bluntly explained to his readers: "If he wants to challenge us to fight in *this* plane—in the plane of personal attacks and suspicions—he is making a big mistake. We are not going to follow him. We have a great deal too many *essential* differences

¹ V. I. Lenin, "Working-Class Unity", Vol. 19, p. 519.

over which we shall have to conduct a *principled* struggle in the group, in the press and in the Party, to allow ourselves to be pushed into the dirt road of petty scores and squabbles.”¹ Invariably Lenin chose the mainstream issues of politics in his polemics.

Whenever they found the going particularly difficult in their arguments with the Marxist press, the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois feature-writers resorted to invective of the most blatant and almost virulent nature. Lenin wrote on the subject: “*Rech* is quite beside itself with rage. In their opening remarks against us the Cadets handle us with kid gloves... But towards the end these Cadets swear like ... like troopers.”² What had evoked the ire of the Cadet journalist? It was, in fact, Lenin’s article “The Unsound Arguments of the ‘Non-Party’ Boycotters” published in the legal Bolshevik paper *Ekho* (*Echo*) in July 1906, in which he had taken bourgeois politicians to task for their hypocritical denial that the Witte State Duma had played the role of an agent of the counter-revolutionary deal between the autocracy and the liberal-monarchist bourgeoisie. A Cadet writer had called Lenin’s thoughts on the Duma and Bolshevik tactics towards it “clownish, or impenetrable stupidity”. The same article did not please the Socialist-Revolutionary paper *Mysl* (*Thought*) which took exception to Lenin’s interpretation of the concept “bourgeois democrats”. It also took up the cudgels against Lenin and it also chose its weapons none too correctly. In its argument, Lenin remarked, the paper *Mysl* “angrily evades the main issue”.

Lenin quite often ironically described as “angry” the polemics of the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois press against him. Occasionally he even heads his articles with that or similar adjectives—“Angry Embarrassment”, “An Irate Reply” or “Wrathful Impotence”. The last is probably the most accurate description of the state of Lenin’s ideological opponents. It was this “wrathful impotence” that brought them to use such words as “filthy swab” and “slandering cowards” instead of calmly arguing their point of view. This forced Lenin to remind them that Engels had once described that

¹ V. I. Lenin, “Reply to L. Martov”, Vol. 41, p. 196.

² V. I. Lenin, “Among Newspapers and Periodicals”, Vol. 11, p. 94. In autocratic Russia a city policeman was known as a “trooper”.

sort of argument in Heine's words: "Each word is like a chamber-pot, and not an empty one at that."¹

In their campaign against the Marxist press the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois papers also extensively employed the device of misrepresenting the ideas of a Bolshevnik publicist and taking them out of context. In the article "The Nature and Significance of Our Polemics Against the Liberals" published in the paper *Nevskaya Zvezda* (*Neva Star*) in June 1912, Lenin exposed *Rech* for doing just that; it had tried to convince its readers that the Bolshevniks were fighting the "opposition" far more energetically than they were the Right-wing danger. As Lenin forcibly revealed in response to these blatant distortions of Bolshevnik ideas by the Cadet paper, "the liberals cannot point to a single question, not one, in which the democrats do not bend *all* their energies *mostly* to fight the Rights!!" He boldly invited his readers to judge for themselves the genuine, and not the perverted, significance of appeals by the Bolshevnik press. He told his readers: "Let anyone of you who wishes to check this statement make a test. Let him take any, say, three successive issues of any Marxist newspaper. Let him take three political questions as test cases and compare the *documentary* data showing against whom the fight of the Marxists on the questions selected is mostly 'directed' in those newspaper issues."²

The bourgeois and petty-bourgeois press would often misrepresent not just individual articles, but the position of the Bolshevnik press as a whole when it suited their argument. In May 1914, Lenin exposed publicly the Narodnik paper *Mysl Truda* (*Labour Thoughts*) for its attempt to portray *Pravda's* position on the St Petersburg insurance elections as "factional coercion" (in the elections the *Pravda* Bolshevniks opposed an alliance with the petty-bourgeois parties and gained an impressive victory). "Factional coercion! What presumption on the part of this Narodnik paper to make such a demagogic statement!" wrote Lenin indignantly.³ He invited his readers to judge for themselves the real basis for such an accusation against the Bolshevnik newspaper and its

¹ V. I. Lenin, "Wrathful Impotence", Vol. 9, p. 156.

² V. I. Lenin, "The Nature and Significance of Our Polemics Against the Liberals", Vol. 18, p. 124.

³ V. I. Lenin, "The Narodniks and 'Factional Coercion'", Vol. 20, p. 286.

supporters; and he showed beyond all doubt that by its "howls" against "factional coercion", the paper was trying to stir up the workers so that it could use this devious ploy for its own selfish interests.

In an article published in *Pravda* in April 1917 Lenin dwelt on yet another example of utter falsification and distortion by the bourgeois press of the position of the Bolshevik newspaper. *Rech*, *Russkaya Volya* and other bourgeois papers had at that time accused *Pravda* of advocating coercion. But Lenin showed in his article that it was the bourgeois press headed by the Jew-baiting *Russkaya Volya*, and not *Pravda*, which was campaigning for violence. *Pravda*, on the contrary, was saying that the core of its work lay in explaining to the workers their tasks; the bourgeois press was "resorting to lies, slander, baiting and threats" of pogroms to prevent "a calm demonstration of the truth".¹

In regard to the misrepresentation of individual statements by Bolshevik officials and publicists, Lenin had cause to deal fairly frequently with them, using the method of rejecting them by reproducing the actual reference, as he did, for example, in the note "Strange Misquotations" published in 1917. It should be stressed that Lenin never let slip an opportunity to deal with this stream of insinuation, using every incident to expose the enemy press and to agitate for revolution.

By "the foul means of argument used by the bourgeois press" Lenin also had in mind the way it relished and exaggerated news of disagreements in the ranks of the Marxist Party, its errors and blunders. Lenin used his article "For Lack of a Clean Principled Weapon They Snatch at a Dirty One" to describe the attempt to present the Bolshevik Party alone as the erring political party, as "clearly dishonest, clearly unscrupulous".²

Lenin's attitude to the problem of whether or not to give publicity to mistakes made by the Marxist Party and its press is of great interest in view of the "excessive" attention they attracted in the bourgeois press. His stand was unequivocal at all stages of his life. From the very beginning of Party activity, when it was still illegal, Lenin set out his attitude to this problem in no uncertain manner in his "Letter

¹ V. I. Lenin, "A Shameless Lie of the Capitalists", Vol. 24, p. 111.

² V. I. Lenin, "For Lack of a Clean Principled Weapon They Snatch at a Dirty One", Vol. 24, p. 539.

to *Iskra*": "*More light!*—let the Party know *everything*, let it have *all, absolutely all the material* required for a judgement of all and sundry differences, reversions to revisionism, departures from discipline, etc."¹ Lenin assessed this wide publicity as an invariable condition for promoting independent judgement by "the whole body of Party workers", judgement which would be of the greatest value to the Party and for which it therefore had to display "more confidence". In the same letter he referred to differences and other difficulties in Party activity, saying that "what is more, do not conceal them not only from the Party, but, as far as possible, from the outside public either" (*ibid.*). Lenin immediately considered it necessary to qualify this "as far as possible" by underlining that it referred to the conspiratorial conditions of Party work. In his letter Lenin treated wide publicity as "the most trusty and only reliable means" of either avoiding a split, or keeping any damage from an existing split to the minimum.

Lenin regarded any hushing up of errors and disagreements as a manifestation of weakness in a political party. He always emphasised that the Bolshevik Party was strong enough, even in the most difficult years of its struggle, to allow itself to speak openly about its mistakes and blunders, "to openly criticise itself, and unequivocally call mistakes and weaknesses by their proper names".²

He always came down just as hard on those who wondered whether this would weaken discipline within the Party or undermine its unity. His position was that a decision was most correct, sensible and far-sighted *only when the independent views of all Party members were taken broadly into consideration*. Unity, after all, is required in implementing an adopted decision. He was in favour of "*unity of action, freedom of discussion and criticism*. Only such discipline is worthy of the democratic party of the advanced class".³ A decision taken on the basis of the opinion of the maximum number of Party members would assuredly guarantee, in Lenin's view, the greatest degree of concerted action in carrying it out. He therefore frequently stressed the need to

¹ V. I. Lenin, "Letter to *Iskra*", Vol. 7, p. 116.

² V. I. Lenin, "What Has Been Revealed by the Trial of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Duma Group", Vol. 21, p. 172.

³ V. I. Lenin, "Party Discipline and the Fight Against the Pro-Cadet Social-Democrats", Vol. 11, p. 320.

conduct even a survey of all Party members, a sort of referendum, when dealing with paramount issues of policy "which are directly connected with some definite action by the *masses themselves*".¹

Lenin thought is absolutely essential to have a public analysis of mistakes so as to build a sound basis for further work without repeating those mistakes and for adopting decisions not "for a minute or a day", but for a much longer period. "By analysing the errors of yesterday, we learn to avoid errors today and tomorrow," he wrote.² What is more, it was not simply desirable, but extremely essential to "draw the *masses* into the discussion of this question" (ibid., p. 58).

It goes without saying that Lenin knew of the possible costs of letting the bourgeois press learn of disagreements within Party ranks, difficulties over tackling certain problems and, finally, simply the existence of bones of contention. He was well aware that the ideological foes of Marxism would "gloat and grimace over our disputes" in their press, would "try to pick isolated passages" out of the Marxist press which deal "with the failings and shortcomings of our Party", and would "use them for their own ends". Nonetheless, this did not prevent him from tirelessly urging his comrades "not to be perturbed by these pinpricks and to continue, in spite of them, their work of self-criticism and ruthless exposure of their own shortcomings".³ Only by so doing, he believed, would those shortcomings inevitably turn to triumphs.

In this respect a very instructive episode took place in 1913. In the vote in the Fourth State Duma on a proposal for a seven-hour working day for post and telegraph employees, the Social-Democrat group abstained on the grounds that the proposal had come from Cadet deputies. The *Pravda* editors not only failed to take its deputies to task for their mistake, they even began to defend them in a running argument on the issue with the legal Menshevik paper *Luch*.

In a letter to the *Pravda* editors on this incident, Lenin strongly objected to the paper's position, stressing that "*in persisting in their mistake, the editors, for a long time to*

¹ V. I. Lenin, "The Social-Democrats and the Duma Elections", Vol. 11, p. 435.

² V. I. Lenin, "From a Publicist's Diary", Vol. 26, p. 52.

³ V. I. Lenin, "One Step Forward, Two Steps Back", Vol. 7, p. 208.

come, if not for always, are 'leaving a thorn', marring their reputation and position both in Russia and in Europe".¹ He was perfectly aware that the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois press would try to profit from any revision by *Pravda* of its position. That did not worry him in the least: "Let the liars from *Luch* dance a cancan for *once* over this rectification—only *false* shame can prevent it being made" (ibid.). Lenin was here likening the enemy newspaper's triumph to a dance which any serious reader would consider as being in rather bad taste; so the loss of face would not be very great. At the same time, the enemy press would only be able to dance the cancan once on the issue, as Lenin stressed in the text of his letter. Far greater would the loss be if the rectification were not to be published and the enemy press "were *forever* able to point to this error" (ibid.). Inasmuch as, Lenin remarks aphoristically, the rectified mistake disappears while the unrectified error remains a running sore, "one must have the courage to have it operated on at once" (ibid.). Lenin's words expressed a total rejection of "false shame" and moral cowardice on the part of the Party press in assessing its errors.

We therefore see Lenin relentlessly exposing as a foul means of argument the malicious glee of the bourgeois press at mistakes committed by the working-class press. And yet this did not for one moment cause him to doubt the need for critical recognition and analysis of these errors in the press. As far as the bourgeois press editors were concerned, let them "display their wrath and their buffoonery" on the issue—that was Lenin's firm and unshakeable position.² After all, said Lenin, "The fighting party of the advanced class need not fear mistakes. What it should fear is persistence in a mistake, refusal to admit and correct a mistake out of a false sense of shame."³

Lenin always took a calm and ironic attitude to all forms of speculation by the bourgeois press on Bolshevik press revelation of inner Party differences. He spoke of them as "malicious chuckling", asking the question "But who are the judges?"⁴ He wrote that "nasty types make it their business

¹ V. I. Lenin, "To the Editorial Board of *Pravda*, June 16, 1913", Vol. 43, p. 351.

² V. I. Lenin, "British Socialist Party Conference", Vol. 19, p. 94.

³ V. I. Lenin, "From a Publicist's Diary", Vol. 26, p. 58.

⁴ V. I. Lenin, "But Who Are the Judges?", Vol. 13, p. 153.

deliberately to pick on 'conflict' expressions".¹ He taught that one should never shirk in the face of "chuckling" from the nasty types, never turn criticism and self-criticism into clannish whispering but boldly bring disputes out into open political debate.

In exposing the nasty types one should completely ignore their writings, since one should never forget that "the bourgeois press is not concerned with the ideological content of the struggle inside the socialist movement. All it needs is sensation, and a spicy bit of scandal".² In the final count it frequently spends its time "gossiping and cackling" about such scandal.³

Not infrequently the bourgeois press would attack those aspects of Bolshevik Party policy which could not be defended in the legal press, namely, revolutionary aims and revolutionary means of struggle. This was not a new "device" for polemic by the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois press against the Bolshevik press. It had been used often enough by the reactionary press in the nineteenth century for assailing revolutionary-democratic journalists. There is no lack of examples in the history of Russian journalism of cases in which reactionary publicists have succeeded in drawing the "particular" attention of the authorities to a progressive periodical or publicist by this tactic, thus provoking repressions. The revolutionary democrats Vissarion Belinsky, Nikolai Chernyshevsky, Nikolai Dobrolyubov, Dmitry Pisarev and the satirist Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin often referred to the denunciatory nature of this "method" of argument and had exposed those who made frequent use of it. As editor and publicist Lenin also frequently suffered such assaults from the bourgeois press and its publicists. It was not easy to rebuff them, but he did so successfully in exactly the same way as the revolutionary-democratic publicists had usually done, resorting to implication and irony. When writing for a democratic readership he mocked the bourgeois press for the provocative way in which it challenged the Bolsheviks to duel in the legal press where, owing to the censor,

¹ V. I. Lenin, "How P. B. Axelrod Exposes the Liquidators", Vol. 18, p. 181.

² V. I. Lenin, "British Socialist Party Conference", Vol. 19, p. 93.

³ V. I. Lenin, "When You Hear the Judgement of a Fool...", Vol. 11, p. 456.

they were “not in a position to develop” their “point of view constructively”.¹

Bourgeois publicists were particularly fond of attacking Bolshevik Party slogans. Thus, during the first Russian revolution of 1905-07, the pages of the bourgeois-liberal periodicals were full of slanderous distortions and criticism of the Bolshevik slogan of armed uprising and a Provisional Revolutionary Government. Their reasoning was simple—there would be no exposé in response as the censor would not let it through. In 1906, Lenin drew attention to an article by the bourgeois publicist Alexei Peshekhonov in the journal *Russkoye Bogatstvo* (*Russian Wealth*) No. 8, entitled “Our Platform: Its Outlines and Dimensions”. In particular, he noted that Peshekhonov was using the legal journal to subject the ideas of an armed uprising and a Provisional Revolutionary Government to scathing criticism, distorting and vulgarising publicly the ideas of those who were defending these concepts in the illegal press.²

Lenin was particularly indignant that this devious trick was fairly often used by opportunist Menshevik publicists against the Bolshevik press. He noted, for example, that in their newspaper *Zhivoye Dyelo* (*Living Cause*), the Mensheviks included material on the Prague Party Conference in which they openly questioned the delegates as to who sent them and, under the protection of the censorship, attacked “what cannot be defended in the legal press”.³ Lenin was obliged to remind the Menshevik publicists that such a form of argument was showing “disregard for the elementary rules of literary decency”, that it was enough to evoke not only protest from Conference participants, “but also to disgust any fair-minded political leader” (*ibid.*).

However, it was only possible to speak so openly and directly to Menshevik journalists in the illegal press organ, in this case in the central Party organ *Sotsial-Demokrat*. Lenin naturally could not register a protest against the provocative fighting methods in the Bolshevik legal paper *Zvezda* (*The Star*) which came out simultaneously with the legal *Zhivoye Dyelo*. In the legal press he had to express himself rather circumspectly on the fact that a “certain arena” was not suffi-

¹ V. I. Lenin, “A Talk on ‘Cadet-Eating’”, Vol. 18, p. 298.

² See V. I. Lenin, “Philistinism in Revolutionary Circles”, Vol. 11, p. 248.

³ V. I. Lenin, “The Liquidators Against the Party”, Vol. 18, p. 22.

cient for open debate on certain themes, that Marxists were unable to draw practical conclusions in that arena or set forth their positive programme for “reasons beyond our control”, that their views sometimes had to be expressed only “in the form of a criticism of the Cadets”,¹ and that to overestimate this arena is to be a liquidator. The implication was, however, sufficiently transparent to be correctly understood by like-minded readers yet sufficiently opaque to pass the censor.

In February 1913, for example, the Menshevik paper *Luch* came out against the holding of mass strikes, reasoning that they would hamper the creation of an “open” workers’ party and the implementing of the “freedom of coalition” slogan. *Luch* thereby was at odds with *Pravda*, which both accurately described the mass strike struggle and also agitated for it, conducting propaganda and actually acting as its headquarters. Lenin could not, of course, make any sort of resolute protest against such polemicising in the legal paper. By this form of polemic *Luch* was provoking *Pravda* to provide explanations which could not pass the censor in their entirety. Therefore, at the outset of the article, modestly entitled “A Word About Strikes” and published in *Pravda*, Lenin was forced to resort to the old Aesopian allegorical method. Informing his readers that in several articles *Luch* had opposed mass strikes, Lenin, before replying to the Menshevik paper, warned his readers: “It is obvious that we cannot reply to *Luch* here in the way it deserves,” being forced to make only a few theoretical comments “on the nature of the arguments of *Luch*”.²

In the newspaper *Sotsial-Demokrat* Lenin’s reaction to the same material from *Luch* against strikes was quite different. In the article “The Development of Revolutionary Strikes and Street Demonstrations” published in the paper in January 1913, he gave vent fully to his indignation at the Menshevik paper’s position. In *Pravda*, however, he could only say that “*Luch* leaves out of account precisely the national, democratic significance of the economic and non-economic strikes in the Russia of 1912” (ibid.), and that it had no understanding of the role of the proletariat as the leader of the liberation struggle. On the other hand, in *Sotsial-Demokrat*

¹ V. I. Lenin, “A Talk on ‘Cadet-Eating’”, Vol 18, pp. 297-98.

² V. I. Lenin, “A Word About Strikes”, Vol. 18, p. 541.

he told the *Luch* publicists directly that “only liberals and counter-revolutionaries are free to describe as ‘playing at strikes’ one of the world’s greatest movements, which brought into action almost a million proletarians!”¹ As always, Lenin wishes to communicate his political emotions to the advanced workers and to get them to think and work together. “Let the workers judge the worth of the liquidators’ smoothspoken talk about their ‘unity’ with the Party when it happens that, at the time of the rise and development of revolutionary strikes and demonstrations, the liquidators launch a struggle against them, using the legal press to revile illegal appeals!!” (ibid.).

Lenin frequently had to deal with another demagogic ploy of the petty-bourgeois and opportunist press—that of printing their objections and polemical attacks on the Bolsheviks under the byline “a worker”. No one more than Lenin devoted so much effort and time to the revolutionary enlightenment of the Russian proletariat, to studying the workers’ interests and requirements, to attracting workers as correspondents to the Bolshevik press organs. He therefore always took a heightened interest in polemical articles against the Bolsheviks and their press that were being published in the name of workers on the pages of the petty-bourgeois and opportunist press.

Where they were not obviously arranged articles, he subjected them to detailed, serious and careful critical scrutiny. In August 1905, a pamphlet entitled *Workers on the Split in the Party* was printed in Geneva on Lenin’s initiative and with a preface written by him. In his preface Lenin made special mention of a letter from “A Worker, One of Many”, since it had appeared in the Menshevik newspaper with editorial comment and had contained several errors as well as correct notions. There was no doubt that this letter was genuine. Lenin defended the author from Menshevik criticism of some of his correct premises, while at the same time appealing to him to attempt to overcome the split “not by means of complaints and accusations, not by forming new, third parties or groups, circles, etc.”,² but by setting about

¹ V. I. Lenin, “The Development of Revolutionary Strikes and Street Demonstrations”, Vol. 18, p. 475.

² V. I. Lenin, “Preface to the Pamphlet *Workers on the Split in the Party*”, Vol. 9, p. 168.

creating the most sensible conditions for unity. Patiently explaining to the worker where he had gone wrong, Lenin then brought down the full force of his polemical skill on the editorial board which, hiding behind a "worker" byline, had tried to defend some of their own opportunist precepts.

Sometimes, however, the "worker's" signature itself appeared suspect: some hardened political journalist was engaging in deception. Lenin evidently had his suspicions when he wrote the article "A Discreditable Role!" for *Pravda* in 1913. This suspicion is apparent in the slightly ironic tone in which he comments on the byline to a *Luch* article—"Worker Herman". He writes that "*Luch* has sent the worker Herman against me. The worker Herman is a man of determination and possesses a ready tongue".¹ Lenin would certainly not have used such a tone about a real worker, even if he had been an ideological opponent. Distrust of authenticity in the signature may be sensed, for example, in the lines, "Was this a creditable role, that you, who signed yourself 'worker', played in the hands of the *Luch* editors?" (ibid., p. 102). We see here both mistrust of the byline (not "worker", only "you, who signed yourself 'worker'") and contempt for the methods practised by the editors in their argument ("in the hands of the *Luch* editors" sounds roughly the same as "in the hands of rogues and scoundrels").

Lenin's thoughts and deliberations on the polemical methods used by the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois press against the Bolshevik press are of permanent importance. The arsenal of weapons used today by the television and radio as well as the press of the capitalist world in their campaign against the press, TV and broadcasting of the socialist world, in their campaign against the communist press of the bourgeois countries, has scarcely altered. Only a certain re-orientation in choice of means has occurred: an increasing preference for "purely" informative material, so-called "objective" information. But campaigns through "news information" are conducted according to the same prescriptions. They dodge the real issue in the dispute, they hush up the obvious successes of the socialist countries and the communist parties in the bourgeois states; and in their polemics with the communist press in their own countries they avoid all mention of serious social problems. Principled argument

¹ V. I. Lenin, "A Discreditable Role!", Vol. 19, p. 101.

gives way to spicy titbits of a personal nature, abuse prevails through lack of convincing argument, and they misrepresent the ideas, viewpoints and commentaries of the communist press. They play up the differences (and sometimes only hearsay differences) between communist parties or within the ranks of a particular party, and resort to other dirty and speculative methods all of which still remain in the arsenal of the bourgeois media of mass information and propaganda. "Information" only helps to lend these polemically-designed materials the illusion of objectivity and to enable them more artfully to manipulate public opinion.

That is why certain of Lenin's recommendations to communist journalists on this form of polemic are as relevant as ever. The more impudent and unscrupulous the bourgeois press is in its choice and use of unscrupulous polemical tricks, the more essential it is to keep one's head, to think "upon the historical interrelation of events" and the political meaning of their development.¹ And the more vital it is to ruthlessly "fight every lie" about the party of the working class.²

¹ V. I. Lenin, "Three Crises", Vol. 25, p. 171.

² V. I. Lenin, "A Few Words on Results and Facts", Vol. 19, p. 65.

That was how Lenin put his position on collaborating in a bourgeois or petty-bourgeois periodical of an anti-Marxist or simply non-Marxist nature. His defence of this position lies wholly in the mainstream of Lenin's polemic against the bourgeois press.

The ideological incompatibility of Marxist and bourgeois ideology is the prime and paramount condition which Lenin adduces to justify his position. The words cited in the heading of this chapter continue as follows: "than consent to collaborate in an organ or body that preaches such things."¹ His major reason for refusing to collaborate in such an organ is its ideological stance, which is either inimical to Marxism or simply non-Marxist, advocating views incompatible with Marxism.

He kept a close watch on the ideological orientation and partisan consistency of the publications he edited just as strictly as he did in selecting those press organs in which his articles were published. Such scrupulous and selective fastidiousness remained with him throughout his entire journalistic activity.

In 1899 he received an invitation from the editors of *Rabochaya Gazeta* (*Workers' Gazette*), which had been recognised by the First Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party as the Party's central newspaper but had never come out owing to the arrest immediately after the Congress of the Central Committee members and the demolition of its printing works by the police. Lenin accepted the invitation from the editorial group, who intended to restart publication, but with a number of extremely important and principled provisos. One was "agreement between the editors and the collaborator on fundamental views concerning theoretical

¹ V. I. Lenin, "A Letter to A. M. Gorky, February 25, 1908", Vol. 13, p. 450.

questions, concerning immediate practical tasks, and concerning the desired character of the newspaper (or series of pamphlets)".¹ In the same "Letter to the Editorial Group" sent while he was in exile in Siberia, Lenin also set out his views on the publication of that paper and its objectives. Here he added, "I should very much like to know the extent of our solidarity on this question" (ibid., p. 208).

At this time a press that openly and consistently expressed the Marxist Party spirit did not exist; *Iskra*, founded by Lenin, was the first such publication. Thus Lenin had to search for a platform among those publications which were closest to Marxism.

Despite the difficulties of publishing Bolshevik papers, Lenin never again, once *Iskra* got underway, entered into negotiations on collaborating with editors of papers and magazines unconnected organisationally or ideologically with Bolshevism. Nor did he allow any compromises of this nature for the publications he edited or for those who worked on them. Even the printing in the Party printing works of a paper that did not hold a Marxist position provoked a vigorous protest. When the *Iskra* agent Goldman, who was in charge of its printing works in Kishinev, arranged for the opportunist newspaper *Vperyod* to be printed at the same works, Lenin at first even refused to believe it saying it was "incredible news" about an "unprecedented depravity", it was as if one "should go over secretly to another undertaking".² He made an even sharper protest when he found out in the spring of 1913 that seven Menshevik deputies to the Fourth Duma wanted to force a "majority of votes" on the group of six Bolshevik deputies to make them collaborate on the Menshevik *Luch* and were insisting on a merger between *Luch* and *Pravda*. Expressing his categorical opposition to the proposal, Lenin stressed that it was out of the question as long as *Luch* was agitating for the creation of "an open workers' party", campaigning against a revolutionary Marxist underground and against political strikes, etc. In such a situation, any unification with *Luch* would be a "betrayal of the proletarian cause" and "suicide" by the Bolshevik deputies and *Pravda*.

¹ V. I. Lenin, "Letter to the Editorial Group", Vol. 4, p. 207.

² V. I. Lenin, "To Inna Smidovich, December 18, 1901", Vol. 34, p. 92.

One of the foremost Bolsheviks working on *Pravda* at that time, Nikolai Poletayev, was also cooperating with *Luch*. However, on Lenin's insistence he left the staff of the liquidator newspaper. In a letter to Lenin he nevertheless voiced his disagreement with the decision and criticised it. Praising Poletayev's contribution to *Pravda*, Lenin delicately pointed out in his reply that Poletayev's criticism was on that occasion unwarranted.

It is interesting that the proposal from the Menshevik *Novaya Rabochaya Gazeta* (*New Workers' Gazette*) editors to divide equally the cash donations from workers among the Bolshevik, Menshevik and Narodnik press was turned down by Lenin both because of its elementary lack of fairness (the Bolshevik press received considerably more of the workers' donations and furthermore, joint collections made up the bulk of the money) and for political, ideological reasons. "To preach the equal division of collections means preaching non-partisanship and confusing (or equating) newspapers that hold the proletarian class point of view with those of the petty bourgeoisie, the Narodnik newspapers."¹ He was sure that Menshevik writers could find no argument to counter this elementary truth.

It was with distress that he read in November 1910 an announcement in the Cadet *Rech* about the publication of the journal *Sovremennik* (*Contemporary*) with the "closest and exclusive participation" of the celebrated bourgeois-liberal journalist Alexander Amfiteatrov and with the permanent collaboration of the proletarian writer Alexei Maximovich Gorky. Such an association seemed to Lenin to compromise the great writer and to be fatal for his reputation. In a letter to Gorky from Paris to Capri he expressed his perplexity very carefully, tactfully and in a friendly vein: "What is this? How does it happen?"² And he persisted in his efforts to persuade Gorky not to take such a step, pointing out that the magazine could turn out to be one in which an unprincipled bourgeois hack could well set the tone. In concluding his letter he did not conceal the fact that he was saddened by the news that Gorky was intending to collaborate on the magazine.

¹ V. I. Lenin, "Notes of a Publicist", Vol. 19, pp. 382-83.

² V. I. Lenin, "To Maxim Gorky, November 22, 1910", Vol. 34, p. 434.

Gorky eventually came to accept the truth of Lenin's comments.

Yet another instance of Lenin's stormy protest at a contribution by Bolshevik Party members to the so-called socialist press has been recorded. This time his angry protest was occasioned by the publication of an article by Kamenev and Zinoviev in the semi-Menshevik paper *Novaya Zhizn* (*New Life*) on the eve of the October 1917 armed uprising; the authors were voicing their disagreement with the uprising and divulging its dates. "When the full text of Kamenev's and Zinoviev's statement in the non-Party paper *Novaya Zhizn* was transmitted to me by telephone, I refused to believe it," said Lenin, giving his initial reaction.¹ He regarded their action as unprecedented strike-breaking. While expressing his anger at this news and demanding that the strike-breakers be expelled immediately from the Party, he did not omit to remark on a detail he evidently considered to be no less important, namely, that the statement had been published in a non-Party paper. He made it abundantly clear that his ire was caused not only by their divulging the dates of the uprising, but by the fact that two Party members had made their statement in a non-Party newspaper.

The main factor motivating Lenin in his refusal to collaborate in a non-Party, so-called socialist but non-Marxist press, was his desire to safeguard the purity of Marxist teaching and the ideological independence of Marxist political thought. A person who today proclaims himself a *Pravda* man, and tomorrow delivers material to a Menshevik newspaper displays "political spinelessness" in Lenin's estimation.² In many other cases his protest on the subject was more bitter. He saw in this a manifestation of non-partisanship. And non-partisanship, Lenin underlined, is always a slogan of the bourgeoisie, which it uses to put into practice its own partisanship. He never tired of stressing in such cases that all the petty-bourgeois, opportunist, revisionist publications were weapons for implementing bourgeois ideology, for exerting bourgeois influence over the working class. And any attempt to erase the line between the Marxist and the petty-bourgeois "socialist" press aroused in him a desire to speak

¹ V. I. Lenin, "Letter to Bolshevik Party Members", Vol. 26, p. 216.

² V. I. Lenin, "On Political Spinelessness", Vol. 41, p. 266.

out and write about "how necessary it still is to wage a long and persistent struggle for the *most elementary* definition of principles".¹ He felt it his invariable and unqualified duty, the duty of every true Marxist, to preserve the ideological and political independence of the proletarian party. This explains Lenin's inflexibility towards the publication in the Party press of articles that went against the Party line, and towards any invitation to people who had drifted away from Marxism to join the press staff. Many will recall his sharply adverse reaction to the attempt to persuade the philosopher and economist A. A. Bogdanov to contribute to *Pravda* between 1912 and 1914. Bogdanov had, in fact, attached himself to the Bolsheviks and then moved away from Bolshevism. In response to the protest of thirteen "Left Bolsheviks" against the refusal to allow Bogdanov to contribute to *Pravda*, Lenin published an article in *Pravda* in which he once more explained that it was not a matter of personal relationships, that "the question of A. Bogdanov's contributions to a workers' newspaper is bound up with a much more important question of principle, namely, the relation between Marxist philosophy and Bogdanov's theories".² In the pages of a workers' periodical designed to promote the ABC of Marxism, Lenin stressed, there should not be material from a person whose literary activity "amounts to attempts to instil into the consciousness of the proletariat the touched-up idealistic conceptions of the bourgeois philosophers" (ibid.). The chief principle that should guide the editors of a Marxist paper in dealing with the question of a writer's contribution to the paper was what that writer was bringing to the people by his teaching.

In all the above-quoted cases we see the negative attitude of Lenin towards contributions to petty-bourgeois opportunist publications which often called themselves Marxist, socialist and workers' newspapers, as well as towards publicists who considered themselves Marxists, yet in reality had never been so, but were trying to revise Marxism.

Naturally enough, his policy regarding collaboration between Marxist Party journalists and the bourgeois-liberal press was even more clear-cut. He and the Bolshevik Party

¹ V. I. Lenin, "The Left Narodniks on the Controversies Among the Marxists", Vol. 19, p. 485.

² V. I. Lenin, "Concerning A. Bogdanov", Vol. 20, p. 122.

were confronted with the issue in all its acuteness in the autumn of 1906, when the Mensheviks launched a campaign to summon a "labour congress" for the purpose of setting up an "open workers' party". They began to put about the idea of a bloc with the Cadets, a coalition of "all Left forces" both in their own press and in the bourgeois-liberal press, particularly in the Cadet paper *Tovarishch* (*Comrade*). Furthermore, they used the columns of bourgeois-liberal publications to attack Bolshevik tactics in the first Russian revolution and to libel Lenin and the Party, knowing that the Bolsheviks could not answer them fully in their own legal press, which was constantly being harassed. In a word, they ignored, as always, the rule that at all times governs an "in any way decent and honest" political press, namely, "not to use a particular platform to attack things that cannot be defended from that same platform".¹ They used "only those platforms which assure them a monopoly in any discussion on the point at issue" (*ibid.*, pp. 164-65).

In giving the question on participation in the bourgeois press principled importance, Lenin devoted to it several articles, a separate pamphlet and a report at the St Petersburg Conference of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party. Then, in November 1907 he had a special resolution passed on the issue at the Fourth Conference of the RSDLP.

In a pamphlet published in October 1906 by the Bolshevik publishers *Proletarskoye Dyelo* (*Proletarian Cause*) Lenin criticised Martov and Cherevanin for spreading false information about the Bolsheviks and, at the same time, raised at a theoretical level the question of contributing to the bourgeois press. He gives a categorical "no" to the question of whether a Marxist Party member should be permitted to contribute to bourgeois papers. "Theoretical considerations, political etiquette and the practice of the European Social-Democrats are all against it."²

Let us take a closer look at each of these arguments.

The theoretical considerations were first and foremost the diametrically-opposed and incompatible nature of the class interests upheld by the Marxist workers' press on the one hand, and the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois press on the

¹ V. I. Lenin, "Polemical Notes", Vol. 17, p. 164.

² V. I. Lenin, "Martov's and Cherevanin's Pronouncements in the Bourgeois Press", Vol. 11, p. 262.

other. There was also the need to maintain the full ideological and political autonomy of the party of the working class and its press. By contributing to bourgeois papers the Mensheviks not only yielded more ground to bourgeois ideology, they also nudged readers from among the workers in that direction. At the very least they pushed them towards a non-partisan attitude which, in Lenin's opinion, was invariably a cover for bourgeois partisanship, or directly and openly brought them to it. These were the theoretical considerations that Lenin had in mind when he flatly turned down an invitation to have a hand in dubious publications. "I do not agree to diluting Marxism, nor to a free tribune in publications I know nothing of," he wrote in response to P. S. Yushkevich's invitation to collaborate during the reactionary years in literary-philosophical collections which, as it turned out, became "essays" against Marxist philosophy rather than on Marxist philosophy.¹ "Since I do not in the main agree with the programme of your journal as you have set it forth, I must decline to be a contributor," he replied firmly to the invitation to contribute to *Sovremennik* in the spring of 1914.² He categorised that journal as a publication identifying itself with "a most unprincipled alliance of bourgeois intellectuals against the workers".³

Lenin regarded any contribution to a bourgeois-democratic or bourgeois-liberal publication by a person claiming to be a Marxist as direct assistance to spreading bourgeois ideology amongst the working class.

The name of a Marxist writer should not embellish the covers of magazines and the pages of periodicals belonging to bourgeois-liberal and bourgeois-democratic parties, for in many cases that means serving the particular publication, and serving the party that stands behind it. "One cannot serve two gods. One cannot belong to two parties."⁴ He immediately felt it necessary to reiterate that any diluting of Party interests was of benefit only to the bourgeoisie. A worker wandering in the political darkness finds it harder

¹ V. I. Lenin, "To P. Yushkevich, November 10, 1908", Vol. 34, p. 396.

² V. I. Lenin, "To V. B. Stankevich, March 24, 1914", Vol. 36, p. 276.

³ V. I. Lenin, "The Bourgeois Intelligentsia's Methods of Struggle Against the Workers", Vol. 20, p. 463.

⁴ V. I. Lenin, "The Liberal Unions and Social-Democracy", Vol. 9, p. 281.

to sense his way, to select the correct position that most fully and consistently expresses his interests. Therefore, Lenin resolutely maintained: "The interests of the proletariat demand a definite and clear demarcation of the parties" (ibid.).

Lenin linked collaboration by a Marxist in the bourgeois press with apostasy both as regards the ideological and the organisational principles of the Party. Pointing to this aspect of the question Lenin noted indignantly: "Write for any newspapers you please, enter into any literary or political blocs with anyone you please, propose your *own* slogans in your own name, completely ignoring any Party organisation! Complete freedom for intellectualist individualism, while the mass of non-party workers remains an amorphous mass."¹ Such collaboration was without doubt one more step in the direction of the same old organisational opportunism and anarchic individualism.

However, in 1906 despite all these theoretical considerations, the Menshevik writers Plekhanov, Martov, Dan and Cherevanin (Lipkin) began to contribute regularly, without a twinge of conscience, to bourgeois-liberal publications. As political reaction took a hold in the country, this trend intensified even more among Menshevik writers.

Lenin pointed to the political improprieties, stemming from Mensheviks' contributions to the bourgeois press. In several articles written between 1912 and 1914 he pilloried Menshevik writers for their attacks on the decisions of the Prague Party Conference; they made the attacks not only in their own legal press, but also in the "non-party" press, and most frequently the bourgeois-liberal or bourgeois-democratic press.

The political unseemliness of these contributions to the bourgeois press lay in the fact that, in Lenin's opinion, they enabled bourgeois publicists to gloat over differences within the RSDLP.

Lenin brought to light one more facet of political chicanery connected with writing in the bourgeois press. That was the two-faced, hypocritical attitude inevitably engendered by the double political life the collaborators had to lead. With a certain sarcasm, he wrote the following on this issue: "The Menshevik literary bigwigs dwell in two abodes.

¹ V. I. Lenin, "Plekhanov and Vasilyev", Vol. 11, p. 421.

In the respectable quarter they talk to fine gentlemen about blocs with the Cadets and incidentally retail anecdotes about the revolutionary Social-Democrats. In the grimy quarter, in some workers' newspaper or Social-Democratic periodical, or a leaflet, they offer the workers a 'non-party labour congress' and enlighten them on the absurdity and folly of fighting for a constituent assembly."¹ This copious and graphic evaluation contains an exposure not only of the two-faced attitude of Menshevik publicists (saying one thing to the Cadets, another to the workers) and their haughtiness (the respectable quarter is for collaborating with the Cadets, the grimy quarter for hobnobbing with the workers), but also their moral unscrupulousness (using columns in the legal bourgeois press for slandering the Bolsheviks) and their opportunism (fighting to summon a "non-party labour congress").

Finally, Lenin's arguments also rested upon the historical experience and the practice of the European Social-Democrats on the issue. Lenin's respect and reverence for the editorial and publicist experience of the Russian revolutionary democrats, who always based themselves on their ideological convictions when choosing a journalistic tribune, was well known. The journalistic practice of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels was of a similar nature. They had always avoided contributing to a non-Marxist paper when they had their own journal or newspaper. When in the 1880s and 1890s the Social-Democratic press acquired a fairly wide readership, Engels displayed particular partisan punctiliousness in this respect. Explaining in a letter that he had no time to contribute as much as he would like even to that press, he added: "Even less could I permit myself to collaborate in journals which, no matter how sincere and worthy might be tendencies that one meets in them, are nonetheless far away from my direct predilection."²

In his battle against the mass collaboration of Menshevik publicists in the bourgeois press, Lenin cited, however, a more recent example—the experience of the German Social-Democrats. He referred to the debate of this issue at

¹ V. I. Lenin, "Martov's and Cherevanin's Pronouncements in the Bourgeois Press", Vol. 11, p. 263.

² Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, "Engels an Georg von Gizycky", *Werke*, Bd. 39, Dietz Verlag, Berlin, 1968, S. 210.

the Dresden Congress of the German Social-Democratic Party in 1903. Although it censured revisionism and the views of Eduard Bernstein, Paul Göhre, Eduard David and Wolfgang Heine, the Congress did not expel the revisionists from the Party. The delegates could not reach agreement in their debate on the case of Göhre, a Reichstag deputy who not only actively contributed to the bourgeois press himself, but also demanded full freedom in this respect for all members of the Party. Some of the delegates sided with Göhre, others insisted not only that such activity be condemned, but that a resolution be adopted banning Party members from unconditional collaboration with the bourgeois press.

The Congress voted by a majority in favour of permitting Social-Democrats to contribute to a press that was not hostile to Social-Democracy, but pointed out in its resolution that "in practice this was tantamount to a complete ban, since in present-day developed capitalist society there were no bourgeois newspapers that were not hostile to Social-Democracy".¹ Reporting on this experience of the German Social-Democratic Party to the Conference of the St Petersburg RSDLP organisation in the autumn of 1907, Lenin advocated the absolute inadmissibility of "*political* participation in the bourgeois press, especially the supposedly non-party press" (ibid.). It is probably not fortuitous that the word "political" is italicised in the brief newspaper account of Lenin's speech on the issue. What he meant was that regular contributions to bourgeois publications were bound to be compromising and involve concessions to the bourgeois editors by the author.

Lenin's view, as expressed in this report, that it is particularly dangerous to collaborate in a supposedly "non-party" press is of exceptional importance. This kind of press, through its "hypocritical and disguised fight" against the Marxist Party, would cause the Party much more harm than the blatantly inimical bourgeois press. As an example Lenin once again cited the paper *Tovarishch*, which had energetically used various Menshevik journalists in the battle against Bolshevism. Lenin stressed that a bourgeois paper hostile to Marxism used writers who called themselves Marxists in the

¹ V. I. Lenin, "Conference of the St. Petersburg Organisation of the R.S.D.L.P.", Vol. 13, p. 140.

battle against the Marxist Party and the revolutionary wing of Social-Democracy. He perceived in this a manifestation of a definite trend linked to the class and inevitably partisan nature of any socio-political press organ.

The resolution on this issue passed at the Fourth RSDLP Conference in November 1907 was the culmination of Lenin's fight against collaboration by writers and publicists from the Right wing of the RSDLP with the bourgeois press. It decisively condemned Menshevik publicists for writing in the bourgeois press, in so far as the nature of this participation would cause serious damage to the Party.

The Conference spelled out all the conditions under which participation by a Marxist journalist in a bourgeois or petty-bourgeois periodical was absolutely impermissible. As a general rule it was to be condemned, but an exception could be made under certain circumstances which were also qualified and regulated in the resolution. This provided for a flexible, non-dogmatic application of Lenin's principles.

In what circumstances did the resolution qualify as "inadmissible" participation in the bourgeois press?

First, when the pages of the bourgeois press were used to conduct a direct or indirect struggle against the Party and its governing institutions.

Secondly, when collaboration by a representative of the Marxist Party with a bourgeois newspaper was restricted as to choice of subject and its treatment in the interests of the paper's editors, especially when this concerned political subjects or issues.

Thirdly, when collaboration took the form of membership of the editorial board of a bourgeois paper or unsigned articles which, according to the unwritten code of journalism, were always seen as editorial articles expressing the opinion of the entire editorial board.

Outside the framework of "absolute inadmissibility", a contribution by a member of the Marxist Party to the bourgeois press was considered feasible as long as it could have some sort of practical political significance and could influence the readership, and only when such collaboration was under the mandatory control of the Party.

The last proposition was of enormous importance for the Bolshevik Party, which came under attack from the most ferocious political reaction between 1907 and 1910. Collaboration with a bourgeois-democratic or bourgeois-liberal paper

became the only source of existence for those writers and journalists who were members of the Party and who had a semi-legal status in Russia as all the legal Bolshevik press organs had been closed down by the authorities. Lenin had envisaged this situation and spoke at the time of the possibility of remunerated collaboration with a bourgeois paper, but, naturally, only as long as the journalist observed certain terms. In fact, the Fourth Conference resolution had carefully stipulated these terms, formulating and giving them the power of Party law. Any publicist infringing these terms would therefore put himself outside the Party.

Gradually a situation took shape about which Lenin had written as early as 1906, when he expressed his ardent wish "that the party of the revolutionary proletariat shall tolerate no blocs or agreements in this field either, but maintain its independence; that journalist members of the workers' party should be organised and controlled, not only in name but *in deed*; in other words, should be party men in the strict sense of the term".¹

During the years of reaction that followed the defeat of the 1905-07 revolution, some Bolshevik journalists who had been deprived of their newspaper platform were forced, as an exception (through ideological considerations, on Party instructions or in search of a living), to "come out" in the columns of bourgeois-democratic and bourgeois-liberal publications. Their journalistic practice, however, was wholly subject to the resolution of the Fourth RSDLP Conference "On Contributing to the Bourgeois Press".

In December 1907 the eminent Bolshevik and Leninist publicist Vatslav Vorovsky started contributing to the bourgeois-liberal paper *Odesskoye Obozreniye* (*Odessa Review*). At the same time he was editing the illegal Bolshevik paper *Odessky Rabochy* (*Odessa Worker*) on Party instructions. Vorovsky's collaboration with the *Odesskoye Obozreniye* continued until September 1909 and could not in any way be compared to the participation of Menshevik writers in the bourgeois press. It was wholly in keeping with the Bolshevik resolution. Vorovsky's articles, his three hundred engaging satirical features and his book and theatre reviews were excellent exposés of the reactionary regime. He did not conduct any

¹ V. I. Lenin, "Martov's and Cherevanin's Pronouncements in the Bourgeois Press", Vol. 11, p. 262.

inner-Party campaign on the pages of the paper, yet all his appearances in print were steeped in the spirit of Bolshevism. Through his contribution to *Odesskoye Obozreniye*, this talented Bolshevik journalist, working with support from lesser known Marxist writers, changed the face of the paper. It became extremely popular among the workers of Odessa as well as among democratic intellectuals. Its circulation rose several times over and reached 10,000 copies. Finally the paper became a threat to the autocracy, and the bureaucrats who kept an eye on it began to demand Vorovsky's removal. When at last he was obliged to quit, along with a group of Marxist fellow-journalists, in 1909, the paper lost its clearly-expressed democratic tendency and once again turned into a typical mediocre liberal organ.

At the end of the reaction period and during the years of a new revolutionary upsurge Sergei Kirov, an eminent Bolshevik, followed more or less the same course when writing for the Caucasian newspaper *Terek*. There were also cases of lesser-known Bolshevik journalists contributing to bourgeois-democratic and bourgeois-liberal papers. But all of them adhered to the spirit of the resolution adopted by the Fourth RSDLP Conference in 1907.

Lenin attached great importance to this resolution. He regarded a break with journalists who infringed this resolution as an important condition for strengthening the ranks of the Party during the years of reaction. "It is difficult to draw a line between Social-Democrats who are ready to answer to the Party for their legal writings and non-Party literary hacks; but it is possible, and it provides a real line of activity for those who want to work with the Party."¹

The revolutionary Marxist tradition, theoretically substantiated and developed by Lenin, became an integral part of journalistic practice for the communist press in Russia and elsewhere. Journalists on communist newspapers in capitalist countries are today guided by it in their day-to-day work. It is seen everywhere not only as a guarantee of the ideological independence of the Marxist press and the partisanship of its journalists, but also as a measure helping them to conduct a consistent struggle against the bourgeois press and its influence over the people.

¹ V. I. Lenin, "A Caricature of Bolshevism", Vol. 15, p. 388.

"A SOCIALIST PAPER
MUST CARRY ON POLEMICS"

The communist press in Russia grew and gained experience in the course of its struggle with the bourgeois press. Most of articles in the columns of Bolshevik periodicals are of a polemical nature and are aimed at bourgeois newspaper propaganda. There is good reason for this: the bourgeois press was addressing not only the bourgeois public. Through their press the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties were trying to bring the mass of the working people under their influence—that is, they frequently addressed themselves to the very same reading public as the Bolshevik press.

Naturally, communicating with this readership was more difficult for the bourgeois press than it was for the Bolsheviks. Bourgeois papers and magazines constantly had to mask their anti-popular essence, the selfish political interests of the ruling classes whose will they were expressing. On the other hand, they had on their side considerable experience in brainwashing and falsifying "public opinion" in favour of those classes.

The liberal press, aspiring to obtain some power for the Russian bourgeoisie, was attempting to provide more information on "the life of the people" but only within certain limits. It always reacted with fear and trepidation to any social protest. In such situations it was quick to join forces with the whole Right-wing reactionary press and tried to instil fear of the authorities into its readership with terse reports on the harsh sentences meted out to "insurrectionists and anarchists" and the execution of those found guilty of activity hostile to the state. Like the rest of the official press, it bred among the lower classes servility before the aristocracy, the titled, high-ranking and even simply the well-to-do not only with reports of their invaluable service to their country, but by constantly referring to their superior upbringing and culture, their high intellectual capacity and talent. The virtues of the peasant and worker more often than not

included merely diligence, enthusiasm, industriousness, obedience and devotion to the monarch and the realm.

In propagating these ideological stereotypes the government and ruling classes of tsarist Russia had at their disposal the vast majority of the existing periodicals. Even in times of revolutionary upsurge, when the Bolshevik legal press enjoyed the best conditions for its existence, the sheer volume of bourgeois publications was always much greater than that of the Bolsheviks'. In 1905, for example, the sum total of legal Bolshevik publications, despite hard-won democratic liberties, never rose even to ten. What is more, these only came out for a short time, at different times, and were often simply replacing one another. Together with short-lived and irregular illegal periodicals, they amounted to no more than about thirty even in 1905, the year of revolution. And yet the total number of papers and journals in Russia stood at approximately 1,350. In titles alone the non-Marxist press exceeded the Marxist press almost 45 times! And if one bears in mind that the entire government, bourgeois-monarchist and bourgeois-liberal press, and even, in part, the bourgeois-democratic press, was never subject to any repression from the authorities and therefore came out without interruption, and possessed a whole army of experienced journalists, then one can see that this preponderance was even more impressive. The numerical superiority in circulation and titles of papers and magazines that stood opposed to the Marxist press created enormous difficulties for the latter in waging its polemical campaign against the press of all the other political groupings. This explains the wide circulation of ideological stereotypes hostile to the Marxist press. These inculcated into the popular consciousness obedience, patience and humility before state institutions and bourgeois-monarchist law and order, servility and inordinate respect for private property in all its forms.

However, despite the numerical preponderance enjoyed by the opponent, Lenin appealed from the first to all those who worked in the Marxist press to wage a pitiless fight against the hostile press of all tendencies; he himself headed the struggle, constantly guided and inspired it.

Lenin saw an earnest of success in the enormous advantage and all-pervasive might of the written word which bore the revolutionary truth to the people. It was this that explained the extensive popularity of the illegal and legal Bol-

shevik newspapers, journals and proclamations. Every copy circulated from hand to hand, was read by dozens and sometimes even hundreds of people. That is why the relative influence of the Bolshevik and bourgeois press could not be measured in terms of circulation. In referring to the mounting popularity of the Bolshevik printed word, Lenin wrote: "How much broader and deeper are now the sections of the people willing to read the illegal underground press, and to learn from it 'how to live and how to die', to use the expression of a worker who sent a letter to *Iskra* (No. 7)." ¹

Lenin frequently stressed the need for the Bolshevik press to conduct an unremitting campaign against the bourgeois press and its pernicious influence over ordinary people. Polemics excited the reader's interest, drew attention to important facts, events and problems of social and political life, further increasing the readership of Bolshevik publications. Their popularity could be put down to more than their revolutionary content, consistent democracy and reflection of the most pressing needs of the common people, to more than the scientific nature of their assessment of the prospects for historical development; it lay also in their polemical stance as regards the bourgeois press. Therefore, every attempt to stifle polemic in the columns of any Bolshevik paper brought a sharp protest from Lenin. "A socialist paper *must* carry on polemics", was his reply reiterated, in various forms, whenever anyone raised the question of whether polemics damaged the solidity of a newspaper or journal or ran counter to its *raison d'être*.² Bolshevik publicists, headed by Lenin, were more than once accused of "Cadet-eating" for their uncompromising campaign against the bourgeois-liberal, and particularly the Cadet, press. He invariably brushed that accusation aside with the contention that a workers' Marxist paper simply could not exist without polemics with the enemy press. And he wrote an article entitled "A Talk on 'Cadet-Eating'", specially designed for the working-class reader. First of all, he set out the question of his opponents: "It is said: why cannot we develop our views *constructively*? Why engage in excessive *polemics*?" ³ This was

¹ V. I. Lenin, "What Is to Be Done?", Vol. 5, p. 431.

² V. I. Lenin, "To the Editor of *Nevskaya Zvezda*, July 24, 1912", Vol. 35, p. 42.

³ V. I. Lenin, "A Talk on 'Cadet-Eating'", Vol. 18, p. 297.

the type of attack being made on the polemical tone of the Bolshevik press. Those who opposed "excessive" polemics maintained that it would be better to develop one's views "constructively"—that is, without offending anybody, without entering into the polemical fray.

In response to these questions, Lenin adduced two arguments in defence of polemic in the columns of the Marxist periodicals. First, he underlines, "one cannot develop new views other than through polemics" (ibid.). Secondly, he once again stresses the limited legality of the arena in which the Marxist press was obliged to operate in autocratic, bourgeois-landowning Russia or, for that matter, in any bourgeois country. In such an arena the Bolshevik papers "cannot present their practical conclusions in a 'constructive' form for 'reasons beyond our control'" (ibid.). Lenin therefore describes this as an arena "of *purely theoretical* Marxist propaganda". This was only "an indication of the direction of the work but not yet the work itself", he explains (ibid.).

It did not require great perception to realise why it was impossible for Marxists in their legal press, subject to strict censorship, to present clearly and openly information on the work of Party organisations which had an illegal status. Such information could only pass the censor and reach those to whom it was addressed in veiled form, as a polemic with the Cadet press, with the political precepts of the Cadet leaders and journalists.

Lenin's view of polemics as an important and necessary component of a paper or journal was naturally influenced by the traditions of Russian revolutionary-democratic journalism and the European Marxist Social-Democratic press. Lenin knew and learned from the experience of such Russian revolutionary democrats as Belinsky, Chernyshevsky, Dobrolyubov, Herzen, Pisarev and Saltykov-Shchedrin. The Ulyanov family kept many banned copies of *Sovremennik*, *Otechestvenniye Zapiski* and *Russkoye Slovo* with articles by Russian revolutionary-democratic publicists. They offered a clear example of a principled and uncompromising polemic with the liberal press, a polemic which was conducted as often as not in Aesopian language due to the very same "circumstances beyond our control". The reader had to draw his own conclusions from criticism, irony and sarcasm directed at the liberal journalists.

It is also known that Lenin often referred to the *Neue*

Rheinische Zeitung which was edited in Cologne by Marx and Engels in 1848 and 1849. Lenin's works contain more than twenty references to specific issues of that newspaper. In studying its content, Lenin naturally drew attention to the polemical tone of the bulk of material published in it, to the regular exposures of the reactionary and liberal German press of the time.

The letter of protest which Lenin sent to the editors of *Pravda* in 1912, when they began to evade polemics with the opportunists on the pretext that disputes in the columns of the paper undermined the seriousness of its tone and the principled nature of its policy, reveals an excellent knowledge of the editorial and journalistic experience of Marx and Engels. Lenin wrote: "Does that look like Marxism? After all, didn't Marx know how to combine war, the most passionate, whole-hearted and merciless war, with complete loyalty to principle?"¹ As far as Lenin was concerned, the question of whether it was possible to combine ideological principle with polemical fervour simply did not exist. The important thing was not to slip into lack of principle in polemic, but to adopt the polemical pattern set by the bourgeois press.

"A nasty job" was how Lenin assessed polemic with the bourgeois and opportunist press.² Yet he always regarded the "job" (and it was a job—constant, systematic hard work, and not cavalry charges or lightning raids) as exceedingly necessary. This was particularly so if the bourgeois press were to land the first blow on important matters of principle. Not to respond to the assault, to the calumny and provocative challenging insinuation would mean "losing out", in Lenin's view. It would mean losing out in the eyes of thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands of readers—above all in the eyes of the advanced workers, of all democratic sections of society. The loss would be far greater than the inconvenience of the "nasty" work, rummaging about in the dustbin of bourgeois newspaper lies. He therefore never tired of emphasising, "but, after all, we are not fine gentlemen, but newspapermen, and it is impermissible for Social-Dem-

¹ V. I. Lenin, "To the Editor of *Pravda*, October 1912", Vol. 36, p. 198.

² V. I. Lenin, "To A. V. Lunacharsky, August 15-19, 1905", Vol. 34, p. 329.

ocratic publicists to allow 'foulness and poison' to go unbranded" (ibid.).

Lenin's call for a polemic and his justification of the need for it is extremely important; but so are the principles for conducting polemics which he elaborated for the Marxist press.

In noting the petty and unprincipled character of the polemic conducted by the bourgeois press, Lenin often expressed the wish to see a newspaper polemic in the Marxist workers' press which was principled and devoid of personal sniping, petty squabbles and scrapping. He contrasted "controversies" that "degenerate into recrimination, intrigues and squabbling" with those "which help the reader to obtain a better understanding of political problems, to appreciate their importance more profoundly, and to solve them more confidently".¹

Therefore in his polemical skirmishes with the press hostile towards him Lenin dealt with such questions as: the role played by the estates and classes in the Russian liberation movement, the proletariat as the leader of the revolutionary struggle, the distinction between liberalism and democracy, revolution and counter-revolution, the forms and methods of fighting for socialism, the role and place of the proletarian party. These were the fundamental issues of the epoch and of Russia's socio-political life, and it was these issues that would determine its fate. Lenin regarded it as his duty as a publicist to wage a campaign on these issues with the bourgeois press in order that the people could more clearly comprehend the issues and find the right answer to them.

Polemic against the bourgeois press should be of a militant nature—such was the important principle Lenin proclaimed and also constantly practised it in all his work as a journalist and editor. His motto was not to wait for an attack, but to go into action oneself, not to defend but to attack.

Attack as a principle of polemic was clearly manifest in Lenin's dealings with the bourgeois press, which he challenged to answer his attacks. He was never afraid of throwing down the gauntlet or making a public invitation to

¹ V. I. Lenin, "Two Methods of Controversy and Struggle", Vol. 19, p. 492.

a polemical duel. What is more, he endeavoured as often as possible to practise what he preached. Thus, soon after his return to Russia in early April 1917, he got into an argument with the Cadet newspaper *Rech* over the concept "annexation"; Lenin publicly challenged the editors of the major Cadet paper from the columns of *Pravda*, calling on them to give "such a political definition of the concept 'renunciation of annexations in deed' as would apply not only to the Germans, but also to the English and other nations who have ever practised annexation".¹ Convinced that the Cadet newspaper could come up with no such definition owing to selfish considerations (the Cadets in the Provisional Government were defending the annexation policy), Lenin declared boldly and firmly, "We maintain that *Rech* will either decline to accept our challenge or it will be exposed by us before the whole nation" (ibid., p. 36). And so it was. *Rech* kept silent and Lenin was able once again to publicly castigate a bourgeois paper. In a speech delivered in the lecture hall of the Naval Cadet Corps on Vasilyevsky Island in Petrograd (St Petersburg was renamed Petrograd in August 1914) attended by over two thousand people, Lenin noted with some satisfaction that "*Rech* kept silent" and had not responded to his challenge.²

About the same time the editorial board of *Izvestia Petrogradskogo Soveta rabochikh i soldatskikh deputatov* (*The News of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies*), which was dominated by opportunists, objected to the sharp criticism of the bourgeois Provisional Government made in the columns of *Pravda*. Lenin made the following ironical comment on it: to criticise what he doesn't like is the sacred right of every publicist. Instead of infringing this right, they would do better to examine the essence of *Pravda's* criticism of the Provisional Government. "Would it not be better to analyse our arguments, or at least one of our resolutions, or at least one of our statements on the class struggle?"³ asked Lenin, directly challenging *Izvestia*. However, *Izvestia* declined an open polemical discussion on Lenin's proposal.

The tone of Lenin's polemic against the bourgeois

¹ V. I. Lenin, "Blancism", Vol. 24, p. 35.

² V. I. Lenin, "War and Revolution", Vol. 24, p. 405.

³ V. I. Lenin, "Ministerial Tone", Vol. 24, p. 382.

and opportunist press was similarly one of attack. He appealed to his journalistic comrades to “hound them with all our might”¹ and to fight the mean way that some papers have “of defending opportunism of the worst brand by means of sophisms”.²

Lenin’s challenge to open polemical battle was normally addressed to those political opponents who were attempting in their press articles to mask the class essence and selfishness of their position on the most important political issues. By summoning his opponent to “come out and fight”, he was inviting him to respond to questions which were particularly embarrassing, since the adversary ran the risk of being utterly and completely exposed before a wide democratic readership.

Given his own militant and aggressive style of polemicising Lenin quite naturally could not bear the slightest manifestation of cowardice in the ideological struggle, attempts to evade questions no matter how painful posed by the enemy press by keeping quiet. He was particularly opposed to any attempt to keep silent at a time when a bourgeois, petty-bourgeois or opportunist periodical attacked Marxism.

Of all the possible adverse consequences of the failure to respond, Lenin drew attention to one of the most serious— forfeiting influence over the paper’s readers, above all the workers. “*Keeping silent will not do. You can spoil everything and evoke protests from the workers on the left.*”³ For Lenin as *Pravda* editor there was nothing more dangerous than workers’ protest over the failure of the workers’ paper to reply to the attacks of the bourgeois and opportunist press. He was so incensed at the absence in *Pravda* in 1912 of any reply to the unprincipled attacks of the Menshevik press, the opportunist paper *Luch*, that he likened *Pravda*’s position to that of “a sleepy old maid” in a letter to the editors.⁴ And he kept up his stormy protest until *Pravda* changed its tactic, until the polemic in its columns began to take on an offensive, militant character. This was how a press based on a progressive and scientific ideology, expressing the interests of the revolutionary class and defend-

¹ V. I. Lenin, “To Inessa Armand, April 1914”, Vol. 43, p. 397.

² V. I. Lenin, “To Herman Gorter, May 5, 1915”, Vol. 43, p. 453.

³ V. I. Lenin, “A Reply to the Liquidators”, Vol. 18, p. 158.

⁴ V. I. Lenin, “To the Editor of *Pravda*, October 3, 1912”, Vol. 36, p. 198.

ing the communist ideals for the reconstruction of society, had to conduct itself. Lenin had an unshakeable faith in the historical validity of the cause for which the Marxist party and its press were fighting; hence his belief in the need for militancy in polemic with the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois press.

Speed of response was another of Lenin's invariable principles of polemic. He believed any tardiness in responding to important events to be generally incompatible with the business of reporting: "A newspaper must itself seek out, itself discover in good time and, at the appropriate moment, print certain material."¹ He strictly upheld this principle of "in good time" and "at the appropriate moment" in newspaper polemic.

Lateness meant losing half the polemical battle. The whole dispute and each of its stages had to be in full view of the readership. Yet if the view being debated had appeared in the bourgeois press six months or a year before, the effect of the polemical article would be blunted.

Lenin was fully aware of the importance of entering into a polemic in time, of repulsing sudden attacks, slander, insinuations and the distortion of Marxist views. "I ask you particularly not to be late (as you were with No. 2 of *Borba*) in sending me *Yedinstvo*," he wrote to the *Pravda* editors in April 1914 referring to the paper of the Caucasian conciliators, "the pro-Party Bolsheviks on it should, in my opinion, be held up as a laughing-stock, with the straightforward statement that they are zeros, who have never had a single coherent thought on a single question."² "Held up as a laughing-stock" immediately, not later, not in a month or in a year—that was the rule that Lenin constantly followed in his journalistic and editorial practice.

This explains why Lenin so often pressed his correspondents and colleagues for the despatch of issues of bourgeois and opportunist publications which contained hostile attacks on the Party and Marxism. "Could you please send No. 2 of *Nasha Zarya* as quickly as possible, when it comes out, for a reply to L. Martov in *Prosveshcheniye*?" he asks the editor

¹ V. I. Lenin, "To the Editor of *Pravda*, November 24, 1912", Vol. 35, p. 64.

² V. I. Lenin, "To the Editors of *Put Pravdy*, April 1914", Vol. 36, p. 277.

of *Pravda* in March 1914.¹ This issue of the theoretical paper of the liquidators had not yet appeared, yet Lenin was already straining at the leash, having got wind of Martov's article which was to appear in it. He did not wish to be late with his response and therefore asked for it to be sent "as quickly as possible". The dispute was a theoretical one and it was being conducted in journals that came out once a month, which is why it was important not to be late with a reply.

In 1917 Lenin's articles literally teemed with references to "fresh" issues of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois papers; this was a time when conditions for effective polemic were most favourable, in so far as the daily publication of *Pravda* was more stable and Lenin was in direct contact with its editors.

The desire to achieve immediacy of response in polemic with the enemy press explains Lenin's fairly frequent resort to postscripts to his polemical articles. He uses them in some cases to refer, however briefly, to the latest and "freshest" enemy article in print, in other cases to the most recent affirmation of his conclusions in a previous polemical or other article.

The most typical example of the first type is the article "An Increasing Discrepancy: Notes of a Publicist" which he wrote in February 1913 and which was published in March-April of the same year in the journal *Prosveshcheniye* (*Enlightenment*). The article was a response to the recent meeting between Cadet deputies to the State Duma and local officials of the Cadet Party. At the meeting the Cadets had given their assessment of the political situation and had reviewed party tactics for the immediate future. Lenin had carefully analysed the documents of the meeting, had subjected the cowardly, contradictory and extremely scanty political demands, aims and slogans of the Cadet Party to ruthless criticism, and then added, "This article was finished when I received *Golos Moskvyy* No. 30, with an editorial under the heading 'What Next?' devoted to the Cadet meeting."²

He assessed very highly the appearance of an article on the same theme in the newspaper *Golos Moskvyy* (*Voice of Mos-*

¹ V. I. Lenin, "To the Editors of *Put Pravdy*, March 23, 1914", Vol. 36, p. 274.

² V. I. Lenin, "An Increasing Discrepancy", Vol. 18, p. 571.

cow), the paper of the counter-revolutionary Octobrist party of big landowners and the bourgeoisie, which had the closest ties with tsarism, and therefore he thought it necessary to draw the attention of *Prosveshcheniye* readers to it. Criticism in an Octobrist paper of Cadet decisions was simply an example of a "lovers' tiff". Lenin notes this fact as being extremely important and noteworthy both from the standpoint of the issue of the day, and for history generally. In referring to the "critical" assault by the Octobrist paper on the Cadets, Lenin remarks, "The game is obvious. It is transparent. The Octobrists 'tease' the Right Cadets, whom they are trying to represent as defeated and provoke to a more determined struggle against the Left Cadets" (ibid., p. 574). This comment was certainly necessary for readers of *Prosveshcheniye*, inasmuch as it demonstrated on the basis of concrete documentary and newspaper material, the alignment of class and party forces in Russia, and provided a clear-cut programme of action in regard to the two major bourgeois political parties. All this was done with the maximum speed.

An example of the second kind is the article "Deception of the People by the Liberals" published in the paper *Proletary* (*Proletarian*) in March 1908. It was prompted by the German Social-Democrats' campaign for universal suffrage, by the consistent class position on this issue taken up by the central organ of the German Social-Democrats, *Vorwärts*, and the opportunist stance taken by Albert Südekum, one of the Social-Democrat leaders. In a postscript to his article Lenin informs his readers that his article was already prepared when he read the issue of the Cadet paper *Rech*, containing an article from its German correspondent on "The Crisis of German Liberalism". Lenin goes on to draw the attention of his readers to an exceptionally important point in that article: it had zealously defended the opportunist Südekum. "But such is the fate of the revisionists in any country—they are given generous support and heartfelt 'recognition' of their efforts by the bourgeoisie."¹ It is here that Lenin finds the major point of the Cadet paper. It is this he notes in his postscript to the article, regarding it as the truth of the argument he had been putting forward.

Lenin sometimes even had to add postscripts to articles of

¹ V. I. Lenin, "Deception of the People by the Liberals", Vol. 13, p. 489.

his colleagues for the same purpose—i. e., to respond to the most recent articles in the enemy press. Such, for example, is his postscript to Vorovsky's article "The Social-Democrats and the Election Campaign", November 1906. The postscript was about the polemic with Plekhanov's "Open Letter to Class-Conscious Workers", which had appeared in print after Vorovsky's article had been written. The harmful consequences of the spread among the workers of Plekhanov's ideas on blocs with bourgeois parties at the elections to the Second State Duma had to be exposed and uncovered right away, and this Lenin did in his postscript.

No matter what ideological foe Lenin squared up to in his writing, and no matter what subject he campaigned on, he always addressed his thoughts, conclusions, recommendations and appeals first and foremost to advanced workers and to a wide democratic readership.

He naturally did not adapt his style to the level of the mass of readers. Lenin's demand that Party journalism combine maximum popularity with maximum clarity was not a demand for sheer simplification. Even on the eve of the creation of Russia's first Marxist newspaper, Lenin wrote, "The average worker will not understand some of the articles in a newspaper that aims to be the organ of the Party, he will not be able to get a full grasp of an intricate theoretical or practical problem. This does not at all mean that the newspaper must lower itself to the level of the mass of its readers. The newspaper, on the contrary, must raise their level and help promote advanced workers from the middle stratum of workers."¹

One means of raising the level of his readers was, in Lenin's view, to familiarise them with polemic against the bourgeois press on all the vital issues of Russian social life. This was an utterly conscious and consistent position, for Lenin had frequently formulated it at various stages of his journalistic activity, deliberately appealing in his polemic with the bourgeois press not to representatives of that press but to the common people.

In April 1905 Lenin published an article in the illegal paper *Vperyod* (*Forward*) in which he criticised the agrarian programme adopted by the congress of Zemstvo officials and

¹ V. I. Lenin, "A Retrograde Trend in Russian Social-Democracy", Vol. 4, p. 281.

lauded in the bourgeois-liberal papers. Showing up the wretched and selfish class nature of the reform proposed by the liberals, Lenin then presented it to the peasants to judge for themselves: "Peasants, do you hear? They want once again to load you with benefits in true bureaucratic manner, to 'regulate' your life by landlord intervention, to 'redeem' land for you on the pattern of that old-time land redemption of dismal memory! The landlords are so kind, so very kind: seeing that their lands are in danger of being taken away for nothing, they magnanimously consent to *sell* them."¹ The article ends with a direct appeal to the peasants to join together with the urban workers in an armed uprising. Of course, only in the illegal press could he thus end his polemic with the bourgeois press.

Similar appeals by Lenin to a broad democratic readership in the course of a polemic with the bourgeois press can be found although not in such an open way, in articles published in the legal Bolshevik press between 1905 and 1907, 1910 and 1914, and during 1917. This was of particularly great importance since the legal Bolshevik papers, especially the mass workers' paper *Pravda*, had a much wider readership than the illegal publications, and they reached the widest popular readership. It was among them that Lenin felt it particularly expedient to cross swords with the bourgeois press. Exposure of the bourgeois press in front of such a readership meant time and again teaching the workers and peasants a lesson in developing their class self-awareness.

Lenin frequently appealed directly to workers and peasants when campaigning against the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois press in the columns of *Pravda* during 1917. In this period his appeal to a broad democratic readership permeates even the titles of his articles aimed at the bourgeois press. A vivid illustration of this is the article he published in *Pravda* in April 1917 in response to an editorial in the *Cadet Rech*; it was entitled "Citizens! See What Methods the Capitalists of All Countries Are Using!"

Even in describing a new bourgeois periodical, its class and partisan positions, he addresses the same readership of workers and peasants with appropriate advice and recommendations. The newspaper *Russkaya Molva* (*Russian Tid-*

¹ V. I. Lenin, "The Agrarian Programme of the Liberals", Vol. 8, p. 322.

ings) was first published in St Petersburg in December 1912; Lenin attentively studied the first issues of the paper and adjudged its programme as national-liberal. He voiced the opinion that the national-liberal party might fold up at any moment and *Russkaya Molva* would go the way of the paper *Slovo (The Word)* which had propagated virtually the same ideas and had closed down three years before. Lenin's supposition proved correct: *Russkaya Molva* ceased publication the next year. But Lenin had skilfully utilised the fact of the paper's appearance to appeal to the workers with a fervent revolutionary call: "The workers must counter the self-determination of the capitalist bourgeoisie by putting ten times greater energy into *their own* organisation and *their own* self-determination as a class."¹

A socialist paper had to conduct its polemic on a strictly principled Marxist basis, conduct it in a militant, effective manner, directly addressing the ordinary people. That was Lenin's behest.

¹ V. I. Lenin, "The National-Liberals", Vol. 18, p. 443.

In branding the bourgeois press mendacious, Lenin was far from calling every piece of information that emanated from a bourgeois newspaper or journal as false. Some pieces really were deliberately and blatantly mendacious and slanderous. Sometimes, however, they contained unintentionally false information that arose out of the scramble for sensation and the hurly-burly of newspaper work. But such unintentional error constituted only a small percentage of the sum total of news published. Manipulation by doses of truth and lies always constituted, and still constitute today, a very important aspect of the bourgeois strategy of misinformation.

However, even taken separately, authentic information possessed only the illusion of complete objectivity. It has always been coloured by the political orientation determined by the class and partisan position of the given periodical. This orientation was evident in the principles of selection of events "deserving of attention", in the choice of words and terminology in conveying facts and events that were actually true, and especially in comments on the reported news.

By studying the actual events of the day from the most diverse sources, Lenin was able swiftly to determine the degree of authenticity of the information being provided by a given bourgeois periodical, the extent of class and partisan tendentiousness in its comments. He quickly discovered these more or less authentic pieces of information, peeled off their propagandist husks in full view of the reader, purged them of various verbal manipulations, and gave them a scientific Marxist evaluation. This was one of the commonest methods used by Lenin in his polemics with the bourgeois press.

Lenin considered this method of freeing trustworthy facts from their tendentious commentaries, and giving them a Marxist interpretation exceedingly productive and instructive from the viewpoint of enlightening the ordinary people. "Learn from the Enemy" he called one of his articles. In the

text of the article he explains the idea expressed in the heading as follows: "Nothing facilitates an understanding of the political essence of developments as greatly as their evaluation by one's adversaries (that is, of course, unless the latter are hopelessly stupid)." ¹

He regards this notion, put forward in 1905, as so vital that he returns to it time and again.

In 1914, Lenin drew attention to bourgeois press commentary on actual facts and phenomena, stressing that it is extremely useful to acquaint oneself with these assessments, that "it is instructive to know the views of our enemies, both overt and covert, the views of indefinite people and indefinite 'sympathisers', if they are at all intelligent and have some idea of politics". ² Lenin not only underlines his interest in the viewpoint of the bourgeois newspaperman, he demonstrates it many times over in his own writings.

In July 1912 he read in the Moscow and St Petersburg papers the news about the spread of a revolutionary mood in the army and navy. The Octobrist paper *Golos Moskvyy* (*Voice of Moscow*) informed its readers of the impending court case involving sailors from the training ship *Dvina*. The paper of the extreme moderates in the liberal bourgeoisie informed its readers in tones of alarm and servility that sixty-five sailors were being accused of belonging to the Socialist-Revolutionary Party and to a secret association which "had planned an open revolt and the assassination of superior officers". The St Petersburg papers, quoting the official newspaper *Turkestanskiye Vedomosti* (*Turkestan News*), adopted a similar tone in publishing obviously condemnatory news about mutinies by combat engineers in the vicinity of Tashkent. Lenin responded to these reports in the bourgeois press in an article published in the illegal Bolshevik newspaper *Rabochaya Gazeta*; separating the facts from the commentary, he set them out largely in his own words without resorting to quotations, before putting a rhetorical question to the readers of the paper: "But what do these facts mean?" ³ He warned that the information which came to them from the bourgeois newspapers was scanty, "clearly in-

¹ V. I. Lenin, "Learn from the Enemy", Vol. 10, p. 60.

² V. I. Lenin, "A Radical Bourgeois on the Russian Workers", Vol. 20, p. 166.

³ V. I. Lenin, "Revolts in the Army and Navy", Vol. 18, p. 234.

complete and clearly distorted and minimised by the police". With this important correction he invites his readers to formulate their own, independent, Marxist commentary on the facts offered and commented on by the bourgeois press. The very same facts, interpreted differently, take on a completely different colouring. What had figured as "ill-intentioned disorders", as "murder and carnage", as "mob rule" is now called "the flames of revolution". A new approach to the same facts produces a new conclusion as well, which the bourgeois press would never have made: "And the outbreaks of revolt among the armed forces are a *proof* that those flames are flaring up—there is inflammable material *everywhere*, and *everywhere* a revolutionary mood is growing among the masses, including even those workers and peasants who are held down by barrack drill" (ibid., p. 235). Of course, the bourgeois press would never have called soldiers and sailors "workers and peasants who are held down by barrack drill"; nor would it have informed its readers of the growing revolutionary mood in the army and navy. Even if bourgeois editors and publicists had divined the growth in revolutionary mood and the bubbling up of pent-up feelings, they would certainly not, for purely tactical reasons, have spread the "news".

The clash of two class points of view is the basis of Lenin's polemic with commentaries by the bourgeois papers on well-known, irrefutable facts and phenomena. In August 1913, he drew attention to an article by Y. Berman "The Impact of Socio-Legal and Economic Factors on Crimes Against the State", published in the bourgeois-liberal journal *Pravo (Law)*. Lenin found that the statistics cited in the article on "crimes against the state" in Russia were "very instructive", in that "they provide precise figures on the question of the role of the social estates and classes in the liberation movement at different historical epochs".¹ What appeared as a "crime" statistic in the language of a writer in a bourgeois-liberal publication, became, when expressed in Marxist language, statistics showing "participation in the liberation movement". Basing himself on Marxist methodological principles, Lenin compelled the very same figures to speak in a new way. Instead of the history and origins of

¹ V. I. Lenin, "The Role of Social Estates and Classes in the Liberation Movement", Vol. 19, p. 328.

“crimes against the state” the reader can now read the history of major stages in the liberation struggle in Russia and the classes involved—the nobility, the non-aristocratic intellectuals, and the proletariat. With the same figures at his disposal he has convincingly demonstrated the confident leadership of the workers at the last stage of the liberation movement.

Lenin always displayed a special interest in the various statistics published in the bourgeois press. The bourgeois press was particularly clever at juggling with such statistics, was particularly effective at creating the illusion of complete objectivity with a minimum of editorial effort and expense. By means of simple ploys—a biased systemisation of the figures, the tactical choice of emphasis, and the use of esoteric terminology in their presentation—it gained the propagandist results it needed. Lenin would uncover the real meaning of the statistical and factual material presented and its social-class content; and he would accompany the material with a commentary directed against the bourgeois interpretation. Pointing to inaccuracies, he would expose the bourgeois publishers of statistics not only for their slovenliness and inability to add up, but also for their definite tendentiousness in presentation.

Distortions in the statistical material of bourgeois publications were the result both of slipshod methods, and blatantly selfish class considerations and a desire to conceal the truth. Lenin therefore warns his readers not to trust statistics published by the bourgeoisie. Even in a press sympathising with workers one can come across a presentation and interpretation of strike movement statistics thoroughly imbued with a bourgeois spirit. He therefore fervently appealed to worker readers to produce their own, workers’ strike statistics so that they again and again test their strength in the matter.¹

In the article “Mobilisation of Allotment Lands” he gave a profound and all-round analysis of the statistics published by the Ministry of the Interior in the “official newspaper” *Rossiya* on the sale and purchase of allotment lands. He also mentions that the statistics “summarised in *Rossiya* are remarkably slipshod, haphazard and primitive”. He could see in *Rossiya*’s figures a desire to play down the number of “actually landless” peasant households. From this same posi-

¹ See V. I. Lenin, “Metalworkers’ Strikes in 1912”, Vol. 19, pp. 323-24.

tion he also subjected to ruthless criticism a commentary in the journal *Novy Ekonomist* (*New Economist*)—a periodical published by the Cadets and Octobrists—devoted to the new income tax bill in the United States of America. With the aid of the same figures that had set the bourgeois weekly all aglow, Lenin showed incontrovertibly that by the new income tax bill “the Secretary of the Treasury in America wants to be ‘polite’ to the multimillionaires”.¹

Lenin did more than polemicise with the bourgeois press regarding comments on concrete statistical material, he also dealt with its valid socio-psychological interpretations. In 1913, he read the New Year’s Day issue of the Cadet paper *Rech*, and drew attention to a review by writer Vladimir Tan (Bogoraz) headed “Motley Encounters”. Tan had noted the emergence within Russian society of a democratic intelligentsia of a new type—intellectuals of peasant stock. On the factual part of this observation Lenin wrote: “This is very apt and true.”² But he parted company with the Cadet publicists when it came to interpreting this social phenomenon. In fact, uncertain emotions apart, the liberal publicist was unable to say anything of substance on this subject. Lenin, however, provided a profoundly scientific Marxist interpretation of the emergence of “new democrats”. He stated that the new intelligentsia “of peasant stock” was “linked by a thousand threads to the *mass* of the disfranchised, downtrodden, ignorant, starving peasantry... It is for the most part full of vague opposition sentiments and feeds on liberal trash” (*ibid.*, pp. 522-23), even though it is hostile to reaction. In an article published in *Pravda* Lenin turns to the class-conscious workers with a call “to help these democrats to get rid of the influence of liberal prejudices”. Only by casting off the wretched burden of liberal illusions could these new democrats “do something real for the cause of freedom” (*ibid.*, p. 523).

On 4 May 1917, the extreme Right-wing reactionary newspaper *Russkaya Volya* published in its evening edition some correspondence on the mood of delegates to the First All-Russia Congress of Peasant Deputies. The reporter caught the angry mood of the peasants at the Congress, who were of the opinion that all classes except the peasants had

¹ V. I. Lenin, “Capitalism and Taxation”, Vol. 19, p. 198.

² V. I. Lenin, “New Democrats”, Vol. 18, p. 522.

enjoyed the fruits of the February Revolution. The peasants were still being told to wait for the convocation of the Constituent Assembly to set things right. But the peasants did not wish to wait any more. The reporter had expressed this peasant mood in the following expressions: "We don't agree. We are not going to wait, just as others have not waited. We want land now, at once."

Commenting on this reporting in the bourgeois paper Lenin pointed first of all to its correctness. "There is no doubt," he wrote in *Pravda*, "that the reporter of *Russkaya Volya*, a paper that serves the worst of the capitalists, is not slandering the peasants in this case."¹ Lenin puts this veracity down to facing the facts of reality: "All the news coming from the Congress confirms this truth" (*ibid.*). Lenin invites *Pravda* readers to put complete trust in this news printed in a reactionary paper. But only within strictly factual bounds. Then comes an attack on its commentary and conclusions drawn from the reporter's observations. This man, writes Lenin, "is not slandering the peasants in this case (there is no sense in lying), but is telling the truth, is *warning* the capitalists" (*ibid.*).

Lenin then proceeds to present his own interpretation, so as to incite peasants to revolutionary activity and show that the Provisional Government, still hoping to settle the land question at the Constituent Assembly, "is already lagging hopelessly behind even the Peasant Congress" (*ibid.*, p. 366). By exposing the actual meaning of the interpretation by a reactionary paper of a correct observation, Lenin was calling upon the people to display revolutionary vigilance with regard to possible manoeuvres by reaction. In his polemic he turns the fact established in the bourgeois paper in a direction quite different from the one that paper had expected.

Before entering into a polemic with the bourgeois-liberal press, Lenin often had to translate the complex gobbledygook of the opponent's commentary into a language the workers could understand. He noticed in an issue of the Cadet *Rech* in 1913 cogitations about strikes which he saw as deserving the "greatest attention on the part of the workers". However, the bourgeois publicists were obscuring their selfish

¹ V. I. Lenin, "Already the 'New' Government Is Lagging Behind Even the Peasant Mass, Leave Alone the Revolutionary Workers", Vol. 24, p. 365.

position in a fog of phrases which Lenin dealt with as follows: "The point of view of the bourgeoisie is clear. 'We' want an imperialist policy, the conquest of foreign territory. 'We' are handicapped by strikes."¹ In his comments he helped his worker readers elucidate the viewpoint of the class hostile to them on such an irrefutable social phenomenon as the growth in the strike movement and he expressed the viewpoint of the working class.

In rejecting the comments of various bourgeois papers on individual facts of Russian socio-political life, Lenin sometimes presented these facts in concentrated form in an article, bringing them together and drawing conclusions from them.

"You take up a batch of newspapers and at once you are completely surrounded by the atmosphere of 'old' Russia. You read of a trial held in connection with a pogrom in Armavir...

Famine... People selling cattle, selling girls; throngs of beggars, typhus, death from starvation. 'The population have but one privilege—to die quietly and unobtrusively', writes one correspondent."² This was his summing up after reading bourgeois papers in 1911. Lenin's article "Old and New" in which this appeared, has a subtitle typical in such a case: "Notes of a Newspaper Reader". The enumerated facts were garnered from newspapers where socio-political conclusions were far from correct. They did not bring the reader to an understanding of irreconcilable class antagonisms or to any idea of the need for transforming society in a revolutionary way. Lenin took the most outspoken commentaries as ammunition for his "notes". But only so as to pursue them further and subject them to the Marxist principles of comprehending reality. In the context of Lenin's article, the facts extracted from various bourgeois papers acquire a new resonance.

In his commentaries, Lenin was arguing not for the implementation of partial reforms, not for the papering over of cracks in the state system, but for the radical transformation of society, its revolutionary restructuring. Therefore even in the legal paper *Zvezda* (*Star*) which printed his article "Old and New", he resolutely affirms that "condemnations and resolutions are of no avail" (*ibid.*). Why so? Lenin leads his

¹ V. I. Lenin, "The Bourgeoisie and Reformism", Vol. 18, p. 535.

² V. I. Lenin, "Old and New", Vol. 17, p. 300.

readers to an issue which the bourgeois-liberal press had not even raised. He goes on to provide an answer to the question which no other newspaper of the time, save the Bolshevik, would dare to print: "It is a question of the political system as a whole. Historical truth is paving a way for itself through the haze of deceptive dreams that it is possible to pour new wine into the old bottles" (ibid.).

Lenin's campaign against the commentaries of the bourgeois press on the real facts of the moment is extremely instructive. It is a model of acute political acumen in reading bourgeois papers. Lenin's polemic is a model of how to reveal the bourgeois class limitations of these commentaries, their hostility to Marxist philosophy and the interests of the working people.

In his polemic with the bourgeois press, Lenin widely utilised its own self-exposure. It frequently uncovered the anti-popular essence of its own position in frank policy declarations in the course of polemic on important issues of domestic and international affairs, and in its hasty forecasts of the train of events. Lenin ably and energetically seized upon any significant act of self-revelation by the bourgeois press born of political cynicism, polemical fervour, simple "carelessness" or stupid feeble-mindedness in his tireless campaign against the influence of that press on the common people.

Lenin was especially attentive to self-exposures by the bourgeois press which appeared in policy articles and declarations. He held them up before his thousands of readers so as to demonstrate the selfish nature of the policy of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties and their press organs. And, of course, he did so in order to counter this policy with the point of view of the Marxist Party.

Lenin noted the multiplicity of ways in which the bourgeois press revealed itself on the major questions of policy. In one case it is "some not over-clever, but very naive, writer, with a fearlessness worthy of a better cause", carrying the essential characteristics of one or other political group or party "to their full logical development and embodying them in the dazzling picture of some 'project'."¹ In another it is simply a deliberate outspokenness of some political figure which provides an opportunity for people to understand, for example, "what our liberal bourgeois want, and what they fear".² In a yet another, it is a transparently clear presentation of previously masked reactionary or backward politi-

¹ V. I. Lenin, "About a Certain Newspaper Article", Vol. 2, p. 322.

² V. I. Lenin, "What Our Liberal Bourgeois Want, and What They Fear", Vol. 9, p. 240.

cal views.¹ Always, however, the act of self-revelation of the bourgeois press turns under Lenin's pen into an act of Bolshevik agitation, of the revolutionary enlightenment of the working people. "All praise to you, writers for *Rech* and *Duma*! You are helping us, revolutionary Social-Democrats, immensely to explain unvarnished political reality to the people!"² So wrote Lenin ironically about such articles in the bourgeois press.

When the source of self-revelation was naivety, frankness and hard-headedness, the previously concealed reactionary contours of these political propositions became clearly visible. Lenin always appreciated such opponents highly, considering their articles exceedingly useful for the Bolshevik press in its polemic with the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois press. He formulated his attitude to such opponents in the following way: "In disputes it is sometimes useful to have a 'devil's advocate'—one who defends an absurd view which is rejected by everyone."³

A graphic example of the use of self-revelation is Lenin's article "What Our Liberal Bourgeois Want, and What They Fear" written in September 1905 in connection with the appearance in the bourgeois-liberal paper *Russkiye Vedomosti* of "Political Letters" by Professor Pavel Vinogradov, a historian from Moscow University. Lenin remarks that other liberal papers "quoted excerpts from this admirable piece of writing".⁴ Why? Because Prof. Vinogradov had talked of the characteristic features of the bourgeois revolution in France of 1789 and the 1848 revolution in Germany and had frankly advocated the second path rather than the first for Russia. This "learned lackey of the Russian bourgeoisie", "this man of cheap-jack scholarship", in Lenin's words, "is scared to death of the road which has led to the complete victory of the revolution, even for a short time, and yearns with all his heart for an outcome like the German, in which reaction secured complete victory for a long, long time" (*ibid.*, p. 242). And he went on, Vinogradov has graphically expressed

¹ See V. I. Lenin, "A Most Lucid Exposition of a Most Confused Plan", Vol. 9, p. 224.

² V. I. Lenin, "The Present Political Situation", Vol. 10, p. 487.

³ V. I. Lenin, "A Most Lucid Exposition of a Most Confused Plan", Vol. 9, p. 226.

⁴ V. I. Lenin, "What Our Liberal Bourgeois Want, and What They Fear", Vol. 9, p. 240.

“in a way rarely to be met, the interests, tactics, and psychology of the self-seeking bourgeoisie; his outspokenness might, perhaps, be considered inappropriate by certain of the shrewder liberals” (ibid., p. 241). However, Lenin considered it to be, for this reason, all the more valuable for the workers. By this example Lenin showed the people and advanced workers the essence and nature of Russian liberalism. The Russian liberals, by contrast to the European, “immediately skip revolution, or want to do so, and arrive at the moderate and tidy rule of the reactionary bourgeoisie”... The Russian bourgeoisie “merely wants to strike a bargain with the monarchy against the revolutionary people; it merely wants to steal to power behind the backs of that people” (ibid., p. 244).

But, of course, the most valuable of all to Lenin as a publicist were the acts of self-revelation which enabled him to tear the mask from the policy of the whole class of capitalists hostile to the proletarian class.

On 24 August (6 September) 1906, the tsarist government announced that military courts were to be set throughout the country and thereby commenced an offensive against the revolutionary gains of the people. The Octobrist leader Alexander Guchkov approved of the new government policy in an article in the newspaper *Novoye Vremya*; in so doing he incurred the displeasure of some bourgeois liberals by such a frank and hasty act of self-revelation. An open letter was addressed to Guchkov by one of the leaders of the party of “peaceful renovation”, Prince Trubetskoi. In his “Reply to Count Y. N. Trubetskoi” published in *Russkiye Vedomosti* in September 1906, Guchkov went into some detail in arguing his case over the introduction of the military courts. An unseemly and noisy discussion sprang up in the bourgeois press around this epistolary skirmishing.

Lenin used the various evaluations of this event in the bourgeois press to uncover the class political vested interest of the bourgeoisie in the measures adopted by the reactionary government. In an article published in the illegal Bolshevik paper *Proletary*, he showed the policy of all the main parties in relation to revolution and counter-revolution. He thought it especially valuable to use Guchkov as evidence in exposing the betrayal of the revolution by the liberal bourgeoisie. As “a practical, non-idealistic, bourgeois businessman, Mr. Guchkov has grasped the actual political situation

better than many philosophers and phrase-mongers among our bourgeois intelligentsia".¹

Lenin finds in Guchkov's "Reply to Count Y. N. Trubetskoi" the very part that is not appreciated by the "servile press", and which conveys the essence of the position adopted by the liberal bourgeoisie in the existing political situation. "'There is no doubt now,' writes Guchkov to Trubetskoi, 'that the triumph of the revolution, or even a new intensification of the revolutionary crisis, will put an end to our young political liberty and the remnants of our civilisation and prosperity'" (ibid.). As far as Lenin is concerned, this part of the "Reply" is valuable in that it provides "a remarkably correct and remarkably apt estimation of the present political situation from the point of view of the interests of the capitalist and landlord" (ibid.). In ironical vein Lenin expressed his appreciation to the Octobrist leader for correctly assessing the very nub of the political situation. In dealing with the crux of the "Reply", Lenin is in no doubt that it "really has a certain significance" (ibid., p. 207). But its significance is only in what the bourgeois press kept silent on. Out of the haze of liberal phrases about the need to save "our young political liberty" and "the remnants of our civilisation and prosperity", Lenin brings into the daylight that vital issue which was so topical for Russia's social and political life: "revolution or counter-revolution?"

Lenin qualifies Guchkov's exposures as an extraordinary example of self-revelation in the bourgeois press. He shows his reader the displeasure of certain bourgeois-liberal papers at Guchkov's excessive frankness and straightforwardness. "We quite realise that the bourgeois professors and diplomats on *Rech* dislike your determination, straightforwardness, quickness and aggressiveness, your—pardon the vulgar expression—capacity for 'dropping bricks', but we socialists are delighted by it. It just suits us" (ibid., p. 208).

As we can see, Lenin counterposes here not the position but rather the various means of expressing one and the same point of view in relation to the prevailing political situation.

The organ of more refined bourgeois-liberal speculative political science—the Cadet *Rech*—was also inclined to speak frankly now and then. Its openness was addressed to a select

¹ V. I. Lenin, "A New Coup d'Etat in Preparation", Vol. 11, p. 208.

reading public rather than to the workers at large. And it contained a certain degree of calculation and premeditation.

Lenin often drew the attention of his readers to exceedingly important and instructive acts of self-revelation perpetrated by that paper. In May 1917, for example, he widely cited in *Pravda* the indignant article published by *Rech* in defence of the imperialist foreign policy of the Provisional Government. As always he followed this up with an ironic expression of gratitude to the paper: "Truly, Milyukov, or whoever it was wrote these lines, deserves to have a monument set up to him in his lifetime ... for frankness. Bravo, candid *Rech* diplomats!"¹

Candour, directness and clarity in setting out reactionary plans or projects helped Lenin as a publicist to be more graphic and convincing in revealing to his readers the danger that lurked within them. He stressed that such projects "always turn out to be dazzling, so dazzling that merely to show them to the reader is to prove" precisely how harmful they are.² The utilisation of such self-revelations with a minimum of comment led by the shortest route to the desired polemical goal. It was therefore no accident that, in reference to one such article, Lenin noted that its author "has blurted out the innermost 'thoughts' of the landlords and capitalists, which we have laid bare hundreds of times".³

Lenin invariably made skilful use of quotations from the press inimical to him during his polemical contentions with it. Through these quotations he could not only show up "the gross lie", but also nail it down, "so that it would be impossible to wriggle out of it".⁴ He was able to show his readers with utmost clarity the whole gamut of various reactionary views and theories and prove all their harm, "draw a full-length portrait" of his political opponents "by quotations from their own writings", and thus "make them into a type".⁵

Lenin's polemical articles often contained an unabridged

¹ V. I. Lenin, "Secrets of Foreign Policy", Vol. 24, p. 379.

² V. I. Lenin, "About a Certain Newspaper Article", Vol. 2, p. 322.

³ V. I. Lenin, "In the Wake of the Monarchist Bourgeoisie, or in the Van of the Revolutionary Proletariat and Peasantry?", Vol. 9, p. 216.

⁴ V. I. Lenin, "To A. V. Lunacharsky, August 15-19, 1905", Vol. 34, p. 328.

⁵ V. I. Lenin, "To A. V. Lunacharsky. End of August 1905", Vol. 34, p. 335.

reproduction of an article or note of hostile content. Furthermore, as a rule Lenin did not interrupt the text with some hasty comment; he reproduced the original in full, exactly as it was printed in the opposing paper or journal. More often than not he opens his polemical attack with this text.

This device was based on that complete trust which Lenin placed, as it were "in advance", in his readers. It also expressed Lenin's truly chivalrous honesty in political dispute, his desire to give the reader a full picture of the position, and especially of the argument of the opponent.

Lenin rode to the joust with open visor, so to speak. He challenged his opponent to ride into battle fully armed, permitting him to display to the reader all that he was capable of; only then would Lenin himself appear on the battlefield. He would seem to surrender the reader voluntarily and freely to the powers of his foe's arguments, and only then would he go into attack himself against the enemy's views, ruthlessly and in earnest. This method exhibited most graphically Lenin's unusual power as a publicist, his forceful ability to convince and reconvince, and consequently, to win in open debate. Lenin's liking for this form of polemic shows how deeply he believed in the truth of those doctrines to which he had devoted his life, to the truth of the cause for which he fought.

This mode of polemic enabled him not only to expose his opponent's position in an all-round and exhaustive fashion, but also to sketch a political portrait of his ideological foes, to "hoist them with their own petard", so to speak.

The editors of Lenin's *Iskra* were often accused of sectarian intolerance, a tendency to describe all disagreement with them as crossing over into the enemy camp. This "intolerance" was attributed to the allegedly exaggerated importance the *Iskra* editors gave to the role of ideology in the liberation movement. This torrent of accusations was not very well backed up with arguments, it is true, but it did leave a certain impression, so that the not very well-prepared reader could quite likely be led away from a consistently Marxist path.

On 1 January 1903, *Iskra* published an article by Lenin with the full text of "Letter to the Publisher" by the worker F. A. Slepov, addressed to the publishers of *Moskovskiy Vedomosti* and printed in that paper on 15 December 1902.

Lenin offered *Iskra* readers this "Letter" in full with a brief introduction, with "a few comments ... in brackets" and a short conclusion. In his introduction he ironically thanked the editor of *Moskovskiy Vedomosti*, Gringmut, "for publishing a document of such great interest".¹ He found it exceedingly useful for the workers, in so far as it helped them to "watch every step of Zubatovism" (ibid.).

In his comments en passant, on some of the most frank and typical aspects of the "Letter", Lenin convincingly and effectively exposed the activity of the legal workers' organisations set up in Russia by the government on the initiative of Zubatov, chief of the Moscow Secret Police Department; he showed that such activity was government diversion against the workers. At the same time, drawing on the text of the "Letter" he depicted the type of worker connected with such an organisation, drew his political portrait. The *Iskra* readership is offered the picture of someone who is attempting to mask his links with the secret police department. He is an ignorant person, completely lacking any political sophistication; he sincerely believes that representatives of "higher society" can do a lot of good for the workers through education, that the spread of "malicious" socialist propaganda among the workers can be put down to their lack of education. On such reasoning, Lenin remarks in parenthesis, "if the lack of education is advantageous to the *socialists*, why, then, is the *government* closing schools for workers and reading-rooms? It doesn't make sense, Mr. Slepov!" (ibid., p. 303).

Such an individual, divorced from reality and with no desire to know it, has no idea of the class antagonisms within society. He seriously supposes that the mutual aid societies kindly permitted by the entrepreneurs would undermine "malicious" socialist propaganda, that it "had lost all its appeal of late" in Moscow. Lenin is obliged to take Slepov to task before the readers of *Iskra* for his blindness with a question once again put in parenthesis: "Can it really be that Mr. Slepov—and what an appropriate name he has!²—seriously believes that for the sake of some miserable hand-out a class-conscious worker would cease striving for liberty?" (ibid.).

¹ V. I. Lenin, "Moscow Zubatovists in St. Petersburg", Vol. 6, p. 301.

² The word Slepov in Russian means "blind".

However blind and ignorant he might be, the Zubatovist worker Slepov was nonetheless very active publicly. It was, of course, activity with a "minus" sign. This is expressed with particular force in the concluding lines of his "Letter", which resound as a call to the workers to "unite for a joint struggle against the enemies of our native land, who are stirring up sedition among the mass of the people, sowing the seeds of internecine strife and undermining loyalty to the time-honoured traditions, and respect and reverence for the supreme authority". The call "to form groups from among the workers themselves to combat socialism" is precisely what these wretched arguments boil down to (ibid., pp. 305 and 306). Lenin draws the attention of *Iskra* readers to this circumstance, just as he does to the fact that these workers' societies will instil "respect and reverence for the supreme authority" (ibid., p. 306).

Thus, the portrait of a backward worker who has swallowed the bait offered by police "ideologists" is painted in his own words. Lenin's comment is kept to the bare minimum. It is intended only to single out or underline certain parts of the "Letter", to draw *Iskra* readers' special attention to them.

As a publicist Lenin's main aim in reprinting hostile material is to debunk a particular political programme or theoretical concept of the bourgeois or petty-bourgeois parties. However, in so doing Lenin would always use his polemical skills to produce a brief but telling portrait of the author of the article as a representative of a certain political party, group or tendency.

Lenin's article "To the Social-Democrats" was printed in pamphlet form in late January 1913 in the Polish city of Cracow. At the outset Lenin fully reproduced the article "The Mass of the Workers and the Underground" from the opportunist paper *Luch*. He did not waste time on detailed comment, since he would have had to repeat all that he had written against the Mensheviks and opportunists in previous years. Instead, he dwelt only on a few of the more substantial aspects of the article. And above all he exposed the author's attacks on the "underground" and uncovered the essential danger of the opportunist position for the working-class party.

"Comparing the underground with terrorism is an unheard-of affront to revolutionary work among the masses,"

he wrote.¹ This remark not only exposed the opportunism of the Mensheviks, it also showed the moral make-up of those political figures whose precepts denied the aspirations of the most advanced workers and who made a mockery of their sympathies. "They stand unmasked," noted Lenin (*ibid.*). And he proceeded to give his readers a picture of political hypocrisy which the liquidators refused to recognise as their portrait, and yet which depicted them perfectly.

Another article by Lenin published in *Pravda* on 3 May (20 April) 1917 is similarly devoted to unmasking the views, position and programme of the so-called socialist parties (the Socialist-Revolutionaries, Mensheviks, and so on), who "have bound themselves hand and foot by tying themselves to the capitalists through their notorious 'agreement' with the Provisional Government".² In order to achieve his purpose as briefly as possible, Lenin fully cites the article "The Lefts and the Loan" from *Finansovaya Gazeta (Financial Newspaper)*, the paper of the capitalist and banking group.

By reproducing this article, Lenin succeeds in drawing two portraits: one is that of the bosses of the banking world who are "men of business" in politics; the other is that of the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries as seen through the eyes of these "men of business". "Octobrist pussyfooting" – what a winged little phrase! This is not only a practical, but also a correct evaluation of the Socialist-Revolutionary and Menshevik political line by people who really know what it's all about" (*ibid.*, p. 178). This is the brief resumé that Lenin appends to the portrait of both the Socialist-Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks as given by the newspaper of the financial-industrial big shots.

The full reproduction of an inimical article was not always possible, however, owing to lack of space in the newspaper, and, in any case, it was not always necessary. As a polemicist Lenin made splendid use in his publicist works of the weapon of quotation. The ability to find the most apt quotation for politically characterising an opponent was a major feature of his journalistic skill. In 1911, when analysing the article by V. Levitsky, a liquidator from the Menshevik jour-

¹ V. I. Lenin, "To the Social-Democrats", Vol. 18, p. 531.

² V. I. Lenin, "Now They Tied Themselves to the Capitalists", Vol. 24, p. 176.

nal *Nasha Zarya* (*Our Dawn*), Lenin notes, after quoting from him: "This one sentence represents a remarkably apt and concentrated expression of the *spirit* of all the writings of the Levitskys, Potresovs, Bazarovs, of the whole of *Vozrozhdeniye*, the whole of *Nasha Zarya*, and the whole of *Dyelo Zhizni*."¹ He accompanied his quotations with such remarks fairly frequently. In the context of Lenin's articles the quotations very precisely expressed the quintessence of his opponent's outburst and his class-partisan position on the paramount issues of domestic and foreign policy.

"Make them into a *type*. Draw a full-length portrait of them by quotations from their own writings!" he advises Lunacharsky.² He utilised this device constantly and very successfully himself. Nothing personal and nothing superfluous in quoting, only what most fully expresses the position of the ideological opponent, portrays the typical bourgeois publicist, his adherence to a particular social stratum or political tendency with all the consequences that follow, both from a social-political and from a moral-psychological standpoint. Individuals with their own fads and foibles were of no interest to Lenin when he quoted hostile articles.

In the article "Pogrom Agitation in Ministerial Newspaper" Lenin cites two quotations from the Cadet paper *Rech* of 22 April (5 May) 1917. These quotations contained an assessment of demonstrations that had taken place in Petrograd on 20 and 21 April 1917 in response to a note from the Provisional Government in which it had assured its imperialist allies of its intention to continue the war until its victorious conclusion. In the first of these quotes it was claimed that "the whole of Petrograd" had come out into the streets to express support for the Provisional Government policy. In this connection, Lenin declared: "If from the 'whole' of Petrograd we subtract all the *workers*, who demonstrated *against* the Provisional Government, ... if we subtract the hundreds of thousands of people who simply stayed at home, if the 'whole' of Petrograd is taken to mean an insignificant minority of the bourgeoisie, a small section of ... senior army officers—then the ministerial paper is right: the 'whole' of Petrograd has come out for the Guchkovs and the

¹ V. I. Lenin, "Marxism and *Nasha Zarya*", Vol. 17, p. 57.

² V. I. Lenin, "To A. V. Lunacharsky, August 1905", Vol. 34, p. 335.

Milyukovs...”¹ The second quotation depicted the “bloody outrages of the Leninists” during these demonstrations: the murder of soldiers, the raising of the defeatist flags over the German Embassy. Lenin firmly rebutted these charges as well: “Every word there is lies and slander. Our comrades did not fly any flags at all from the German Embassy. Our comrades are not to blame for the killing of the soldiers” (ibid.).

In exposing the onslaught of the bourgeois paper on the Bolshevik *Pravda*, Lenin at the same time paints a picture of *Rech* which, “rehearsing the *Russkaya Volya* elements, does enough lying for two papers” (ibid.). He calls it “ministerial”, although it was not officially a government paper, having in mind its responsibility for the policy being pursued by the Provisional Government. He points out its vividly-expressed counter-revolutionary nature: *Rech* had launched into pogrom baiting against the Bolshevik Party. In a short note Lenin draws a true and capacious picture of the paper of the ruling bourgeois party: *Rech*’s anti-popular nature was convincingly revealed.

Lenin described this same newspaper in similar terms in May 1917 in a note also published in *Pravda*. *Rech* is presented to the readers not simply as the paper of a political party, its tribune and instrument, but also is personalised and attributed its own line of conduct and even its own character. Lenin writes about it as follows: “The newspaper of ex-Minister Milyukov is so furious with the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries for having forced certain individuals out of the Cabinet that it lets itself be forced into making rather ‘indiscreet’ statements.”² “Is so furious”, “lets itself be forced” are notions akin to human nature. For Lenin, in the circumstances, the paper is indeed a living organism. He wishes to speak with it as with a person responsible for its own words. This intensifies the vividly publicist expressiveness of his polemic.

Lenin goes on to cite from *Rech* a tirade which ends with a call to stop talking about “iron discipline” and get down to business. He thanks it for the fact that “*Rech* gives its readers a true and accurate picture of what is going on in

¹ V. I. Lenin, “Pogrom Agitation in Ministerial Newspaper”, Vol. 41, p. 408.

² V. I. Lenin, “In Search of a Napoleon”, Vol. 24, p. 383.

‘our new’ government” (ibid.). What is it that *Rech* helps us understand in the activity of the Provisional Government? Kerensky’s proclamation in the new government on the need for “iron discipline” in the armed forces for the sake of a “victorious offensive”. The Socialist-Revolutionary press had not wanted to give publicity to this appeal. But *Rech* had rushed to communicate the important news. It had also exposed the attitude of other members of the government to Kerensky’s declaration. “And the landowners and capitalists, who have ten out of the sixteen posts in the Cabinet,” writes Lenin, “fume at Kerensky: ‘Must we be content with mere talk about iron discipline?’” (ibid.). Lenin likens the paper’s voice to that of the landowners and capitalists. It was a precise class description of the Cadet paper as the voice of counter-revolution, the voice of instigators inciting the government to decisive action. Lenin further deciphers the phrase from *Rech* as follows: “Is it not clear that this phrase is calculated to inspire Kerensky or some ‘suitable’ general to take upon himself the role of a Napoleon, the role of a strangler of freedom, the role of an executioner of the workers?” (ibid.).

So here we find the readers of *Pravda* yet again faced with a rare example of a paper of capitalists and landowners, speaking the truth, lightly divulging ministerial secrets in a moment of anguish at the party’s failure, angry and provocative in relation to the common people.

Lenin considered the task of elucidating political reality for the people as one of the main tasks of the Marxist Party and its periodicals. It was not easy to fulfil this task in the pre-October period because the whole of the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois press complicated this explanatory work. Sometimes, however, its publications made forced or incautious testimonies and admissions, even extraordinarily frank and cynical statements and declarations which facilitated this explanatory work. An attentive and thoughtful reader of the bourgeois press, Lenin seized upon such statements in an instant, accurately determining their “agitational” value and, having supplemented the original with comments and “triumphant”-ironical remarks, boldly offered it to the reader, without fear of its having any “harmful” effect.

Moreover, he repeatedly called these “harmful” original sources “instructive”, above all for the mass reader. Lenin was of the opinion that one should not hide this “instruc-

tive” self-revelatory literature from the workers; on the contrary, one should do all one could to spread it among them.

The Menshevik pamphlet *Workers and Intellectuals in Our Organisations* was issued in 1905; Lenin regarded it as very important from the standpoint of self-revelation by the Mensheviks. He felt that he would probably refer more than once to this pamphlet, for it “illustrates beautifully” the fruits of the devastating anti-Party activity of the Mensheviks. On this basis Lenin finds it possible to “recommend this pamphlet particularly to the workers”.¹ Referring to one self-revelation by the Cadet *Rech* in May 1917, he issued the following challenge: “Comrades, workers and soldiers. Consider these strikingly frank and strikingly truthful statements of *Rech*, coming from well-informed diplomats and former ministers.”² Having read in October 1917 in the official Socialist-Revolutionary paper *Dyelo Naroda* that the “landowners have hit it off with the Cadets”, Lenin finds this confession particularly valuable. He believes that these lines “should be reprinted everywhere, issued as leaflets, and circulated in millions of copies among the peasants... The people must be given the chance to read and reread these lines. Every class-conscious peasant, soldier and worker must give thought to the meaning of these admissions”.³

It is, of course, not fortuitous that Lenin should use the epithet “class-conscious”. He knew he could not rely on every reader from among the people. But the degree of his trust in the class-conscious reader—that is, in a sufficiently politically-trained worker, peasant, soldier or sailor, was truly infinite. On the one hand, it would have been impossible to use self-revelation without this trust. On the other, each new communication by Lenin of the self-revelation of the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois press multiplied that trust and raised it to a new level.

Lenin vigorously used a valuable confession, an involuntary statement on the services of the working class and its Party in the liberation movement, a denunciation of bourgeois lies by a witness from among the bourgeoisie—in fact, any grain of self-exposure by the bourgeois press in his tire-

¹ V. I. Lenin, “Fine Words Butter No Parsnips”, Vol. 8, p. 61.

² V. I. Lenin, “Secrets of Foreign Policy”, Vol. 24, p. 379.

³ V. I. Lenin, “The Landowners Have Hit It Off with the Cadets”, Vol. 41, p. 449.

less battle against its influence on the common people. "Try hard, you 'wreckers of legends', do your utmost!" he tells bourgeois journalists and editors.¹

And the "wreckers of legends" certainly did try. Not that they wanted to, of course. Frequently various papers and magazines of the same party or group let through contradictory admissions which Lenin right away used as acts of self-revelation. In early November 1913, he seized upon a very valuable contradiction, in this respect, between the two periodicals of the liquidator Mensheviks—*Novaya Rabochaya Gazeta* (*New Workers' Gazette*) and the journal *Nasha Zarya* (*Our Dawn*). The former was angry and abusive when it encountered facts and figures concerned with the prevalence of the *Pravda* tendency among the class-conscious workers, and it tried to deny them. Issue No. 9, 1913, of the magazine *Nasha Zarya* contained an article by G. Rakitin (V. Levitsky) in which he "is forced to admit that which the liquidators' newspaper brushes aside in impotent wrath".² Lenin applied this self-exposure with great skill in affirming the extent of Bolshevik influence on the workers. In the same year Lenin wrote about the fact that the Left-wing Narodnik press had admitted that it shared the views of the liquidator Mensheviks on tactics in the trade union movement: "We have always said it, but it is pleasant indeed to hear this confession from our opponents' lips."³ The Left-wing Narodnik press had let slip information that the liquidator press was shamefully trying to hush up.

Confession from the lips of the enemy is, consequently, a fact of not only immense agitational force, but also a fact that brings great moral satisfaction. It helps reinforce amidst the readership of the Marxist newspaper an even greater confidence in the historical truth of their cause. On this subject Lenin freely shared his delight with his readers. He makes them witnesses to a major political act, that of self-exposure by the bourgeois press.

¹ V. I. Lenin, "Wreckers of the Party in the Role of 'Wreckers of Legends'", Vol. 17, p. 133.

² V. I. Lenin, "The Working-Class Masses and the Working-Class Intelligentsia", Vol. 19, p. 477.

³ V. I. Lenin, "Narodniks and Liquidators in the Trade Union Movement", Vol. 20, p. 138.

"OUR STRENGTH LIES
IN STATING THE TRUTH!"

In his polemic with the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois press Lenin fairly frequently had to resort to denials. Lies and slander poured down in torrents in the millions of copies of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois legal publications. The voice of truth rang out in the ever-persecuted or illegal and irregularly-published, small-circulation newspapers and journals of the Bolsheviks.

It was necessary to have a certain selectivity in approaching the lying and calumnious assaults of the enemy press. Some needed no comment, since they were so obviously false, so petty, so far from the principled issues of politics. Lenin felt it unnecessary to reply to them, inasmuch as one would need "a staff of ten secretaries and a special newspaper to refute all the nonsense that is uttered in the wide world".¹ But in many cases it was impossible to hold one's peace for then one ran the risk of losing readers' trust. So Lenin relentlessly reminded his colleagues: "Our strength lies in stating the truth!"² And he personally went into the fray in defence of the truth.

He invariably opposed any distortion of Marxist theory, particularly when it began to have a deleterious effect on the revolutionary struggle of the working class, or posed a threat to Bolshevik Party activity. He laid bare the mendacious writings of the bourgeois and opportunist press which defamed the party of the working class, its programme, tactics, political slogans and practical action. Nor did he let pass the calumnious statements of the enemy press concerning individual Party members if such statements could smear the whole Party as a result of wide circulation and could cast a shadow on its activity. Lenin's exposure of the lies of the

¹ V. I. Lenin, "Mr. Gorsky and a Certain Latin Proverb", Vol. 19, p. 551.

² V. I. Lenin, "No Falsehood! Our Strength Lies in Stating the Truth!", Vol. 9, p. 295.

bourgeois press became a factor of enormous strength in the revolutionary education of the common people. By spreading lies and slander the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois press wished to push the mass of people, unsophisticated in politics, into counter-revolutionary action. In denouncing these insinuations, Lenin was recruiting more and more supporters into the ranks of the revolutionary army, especially from the workers and peasants.

During Lenin's lifetime the bourgeois press often tried to pour scorn on Marxist teaching and portray it in a false light so as to compromise the activity of the party that was most consistently relying on Marxist philosophy. Even at that time bourgeois publicists would frequently assure their readers that Marxism had been invalidated, destroyed, buried. Lenin had the following comment to make on such bravado: "For many years now scientists and very learned people in Europe have been gravely declaring (and newspaper scribes and journalists have been repeating it over and over again) that Marxism has been jolted from its positions by 'criticism', and yet every new critic starts from the beginning, all over again, to bombard these allegedly destroyed positions."¹

Lenin was never content with a purely theoretical denunciation of the lies and slander of the bourgeois press. He always related any Marxist proposition which he had had to recover from under a deluge of lies, to reality and, by means of this infallible criterion, proved its accuracy. This made it possible to enrich Marxist theory, which is why each of his defences of Marxism was at the same time a step in its creative development.

In his disputes on Marxist theory Lenin was on the side of orthodoxy, however, by orthodoxy "*I do not at all mean the simple interpretation of Marx*",² he wrote, and further, "Let us not believe that orthodoxy means taking things on trust, that orthodoxy precludes critical application and further development, that it permits historical problems to be obscured by abstract schemes. If there are orthodox disciples who are guilty of these truly grievous sins, the blame must rest entirely with those disciples and not by any means with orthodoxy, which is distinguished by diametrically opposite quali-

¹ V. I. Lenin, "The Agrarian Question and the 'Critics of Marx'", Vol. 5, p. 107.

² V. I. Lenin, "Uncritical Criticism", Vol. 3, p. 630.

ties.”¹ This was written in the spring of 1899, at the outset of Lenin’s theoretical and socio-political activity, and it remained the undeviating principle of his approach to Marxist theory throughout his life. He insisted on this creative “orthodoxy” every time he had to defend Marxism from slanderous perversions and hostile calumny. He endeavoured not only to free the genuine thoughts of the founders of Marxism from perversions, but also to apply them to contemporary life and express his own thoughts and judgements. Any polemic was important to Lenin not in itself, not as “art for art’s sake” and not to “catch out” an opponent, *but to explain how things are.*

In the fourth issue of *Zhizn* in 1899, a certain P. Nezhdanov (F. A. Lipkin) had criticised Lenin’s article on market theory published in the journal *Nauchnoye Obozreniye* (*Scientific Survey*) No. 1 of that year. In his reply, Lenin first of all contrasts Nezhdanov’s false thesis with his own anti-thesis: “Mr. P. Nezhdanov maintains that ‘capitalist production does not suffer from any contradiction between production and consumption’. From this he concludes that Marx, in recognising this contradiction, ‘suffered from a serious internal contradiction’ and that I am repeating Marx’s error.”²

In polemic Lenin demanded “the line of reasoning of the parties concerned or exact quotations”.³ He permitted no jeering at an opponent or distorting of his views for polemical convenience. No matter how hostile one’s opponent’s views or how dangerous they were in their distortion of Marxism, Lenin would quote them verbatim. This is what he did on this occasion, immediately following up the quotation with his own opinion: “I believe Mr. Nezhdanov’s opinion to be a mistaken one (or one based on a misunderstanding) and cannot see any contradiction in Marx’s views.”⁴

The notions that Lenin then expounds are not a simple reproduction of Marx’s propositions. They constitute an examination of a question important both in theory and practice, which is analysed in close connection with reality. Lenin

¹ V. I. Lenin, “Once More on the Theory of Realisation”, Vol. 4, pp. 92-93.

² V. I. Lenin, “Reply to Mr. P. Nezhdanov”, Vol. 4, p. 160.

³ V. I. Lenin, “Deception of the People by the Liberals”, Vol. 13, p. 488.

⁴ V. I. Lenin, “Reply to Mr. P. Nezhdanov”, Vol. 4, p. 160.

showed the form of contradiction between production and consumption in contemporary bourgeois society, underlining that it "is due to the tremendous rate at which production is growing, to the tendency to unlimited expansion which competition gives it, while consumption (individual), if it grows at all, grows very slightly; the proletarian condition of the masses of the people makes a rapid growth of individual consumption impossible" (ibid., p. 161). Examining capitalism with all its advantages and disadvantages in the Russia of the time, Lenin adds: "This contradiction does not, by any means, lead inevitably to the regular production of a surplus product (as Mr. Nezhdanov would like to think)" (ibid., p. 162).

It is thus that Lenin defended Marxist theory from perversions, not only restoring the truth of a fundamental precept, but also striking a blow at a vulgar Narodnik criticism of Marxism which ruled out the progressive character of capitalism for Russia—that is, he was dealing with a burning political issue of the day. So it was at all times. In refuting the presumptuous subverters of Marxism who appeared one after the other, Lenin made use of the whole arsenal of his extensive theoretical knowledge, strictly logical assessment and the contrast between his opponent's theoretical constructions and objective reality.

He used the compass of objective reality to an even greater extent in denouncing the mendacious comments of the bourgeois press on the practical activity of the working-class party.

In 1917, many bourgeois and petty-bourgeois papers joined in a united attack against the Bolshevik press, accusing it of "subversive" agitation, of inflicting damage on the "revolutionary cause" (i. e., the bourgeois revolution), of instigating anarchist outbursts, disorders and arson, and of trying to force the pace of events. In connection with these attacks, Lenin called upon the Bolsheviks to calmly ponder the historic relationship of events, and their political, that is class, content when refuting these falsehoods and slander: "The stupid, crude, infamous lie that this action was artificially created, that the Bolsheviks campaigned *in favour* of action, will daily be more and more exposed."¹ That was Lenin's unwavering conviction.

¹ V. I. Lenin, "Three Crises", Vol. 25, p. 172.

How amidst the welter of insinuations by the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois press, did Lenin select those which demanded refutation. First and foremost his choice was, of course, made in the interests of the liberation movement in Russia under the leadership of the working class and its Marxist party. If a false comment concerned facts and phenomena that were politically important, if it could lead the working people astray, and major political forces were behind it, Lenin was never slow to respond.

In December 1900 a certain V. Dadonov published the article "Russian Manchester" in the journal *Russkoye Bogatstvo*, in which he depicted workers in the big industrial town of Ivanovo-Voznesensk (now called Ivanovo) as people inclined to drunkenness, indifferent both to politics and to knowledge generally, devoid of social demands, aspirations and comradely solidarity. The journal offered any of its readers the chance to reply to Dadonov, but in response to one such reply, Dadonov had written an even more spiteful and slanderous article. At that point the journal had closed the "discussion", having tarnished, in fact, both the workers of Ivanovo-Voznesensk and the entire proletariat of Russia. Such writings in a popular magazine which was widely read among the democratic public, could have seriously impeded the organisation of the proletarian party and its acceptance in the country as a leading political force. Therefore, Lenin asked Ivan Babushkin, a contributor to *Iskra* who knew the Ivanovo-Voznesensk industrial area well, to write a denial of these "accusations", made not so much by Dadonov as the editors of *Russkoye Bogatstvo*. Lenin's wife, Nadezhda Krupskaya, who wrote a letter to Babushkin setting out Lenin's request, recalled later that Lenin had then added a correction which was very typical in such instances. She had asked Babushkin to write a note of denial, but Lenin had amended that to "an article or a note". He felt it desirable to respond more fully to the slanderous attack by *Russkoye Bogatstvo*. In fact, Babushkin wrote the pamphlet *In Defence of the Ivanovo-Voznesensk Workers* which was published under the signature "A Worker for the Workers" as a supplement to *Iskra*.

In 1906, the newspaper *Novoye Vremya* began to spread the provocative thesis that the Bolsheviki were fighting for power rather than for freedom. The paper backed up its accusation with references to the legal Bolshevik paper *Volna*

(*The Wave*) which had come out in the spring of 1906 for one month under Lenin's editorial guidance and with his active participation as a publicist (he published 25 articles in the 25 issues of *Volna*). Lenin was obliged to denounce the provocation by *Novoye Vremya* in an article entitled "The Fight for Freedom and the Fight for Power".

For a number of reasons he decided to direct his reply to a paper that was not very popular among the democratic reading public. He did this, first of all, because he felt that among the paper's run-of-the-mill arguments on the danger of the proletarian class struggle, or rather, among "its usual denunciations to the authorities" this problem of freedom and power was of "vital, public interest". In the second place, he had to bear in mind that *Novoye Vremya* was making its insinuations on this occasion not only and not so much to its own readers as to the editors and publicists of Cadet papers and journals, and to their readers. Therefore, the repercussions from these insinuations could be much wider. Its scare tactics with "sovereignty of the people", a notion taken from the columns of the Bolshevik *Volna* and maliciously interpreted, could have had fatal consequences.

Lenin had to explain to his readers that freedom of the people was "when the people can really, without let or hindrance, form their associations, hold meetings, publish newspapers, make their own laws and elect and replace all officials in the state who are entrusted with carrying out the laws and administering the country on the basis of the laws".¹ Quite naturally, genuine freedom could only be guaranteed in a state where power "really and fully belongs to the people". Lenin emphasised that it was precisely that freedom and that power which *Volna* was talking about in referring to "sovereignty of the people" as a goal to be pursued in the course of the bourgeois-democratic revolution. The behaviour of *Novoye Vremya*, which had tried to instil the idea in people that in place of the old autocracy the Bolsheviks wanted to affirm a new "sovereignty of the proletariat" was, in Lenin's explanation, characterised as follows: "*Novoye Vremya* is a faithful servant of the autocratic government. The servant, in his master's interests, is at pains to scare the bourgeoisie with the spectre of socialist revolution.

¹ V. I. Lenin, "The Fight for Freedom and the Fight for Power", Vol. 10, pp. 383-84.

That is its first object. Its second object is to depict the revolution now in progress as socialist: to confuse 'sovereignty of the people' with 'sovereignty of the proletariat'" (ibid., p. 383). Stressing that it is "only the deliberate desire to confuse the minds of the people that prompts such servants of the government as *Novoye Vremya*" (ibid., p. 384), Lenin demolished the malicious invention of the reactionary paper and exposed the political motives and selfish class considerations which had led it to do so.

He constructed his denunciations in a unique and instructive way on those occasions when the bourgeois press took actual negative facts and began to twist them in a fashion that was advantageous to the bourgeoisie, putting about legends that compromised the party of the working class, sowing rumour and conjecture about its activity. While confirming the real facts of the situation, he decisively rebuffed attempts to make them out to be common practice, to lend them the generalised character of a typical phenomenon, and to attribute them exclusively to the Marxist Party and its press.

In 1917, immediately after the February Revolution, the bourgeois press, both in Russia and abroad, began to spread reports about provocateurs Malinovsky and Chernomazov who had worked in the Bolshevik *Pravda* between 1912 and 1914. That they had proved to be provocateurs was true. But the enemy press produced the facts in such a tendentious way, with such an overlay of slanderous rumour, that an ill-informed person might well conclude that the Bolshevik Party alone was unable to recognise provocateurs in its ranks at once, that provocateurs had set the tone for the Party and its main periodical (the bourgeois press was naming Chernomazov as an ex-editor of *Pravda*). Thus everything written in the paper between 1912 and 1914 was put to doubt. What is more, they were casting doubt also on *Pravda* whose resumed publication had been greeted by the workers with such enthusiasm.¹ The bourgeois press decided to use every available means to undermine *Pravda*'s influence that was growing with every passing day.

At that moment Lenin was preparing to return to Russia from Switzerland; he was extremely anxious about the bour-

¹ The tsarist government suppressed *Pravda* in July 1914, on the eve of World War I. It resumed publication after the February 1917 Revolution.

geois press campaign of slander against *Pravda*. He published the article "Tricks of the Republican Chauvinists" in the Swiss Social-Democrat paper *Volksrecht* showing the sources, aims and mechanism of the ballyhoo. He did not deny the news that Chernomazov was a provocateur, regarding it as a very likely fact. What is more, he wrote that Chernomazov had been suspected of being a provocateur when he had been on the *Pravda* staff and, for that reason, he had been sacked in early 1914. Lenin also brushed aside the attempt to depict Chernomazov as *Pravda* editor, saying that he had, in fact, been the secretary to its editorial board in 1913. Secretary, not editor, and not for the whole period of *Pravda's* existence, but only in 1913. It was, of course, not Chernomazov who determined *Pravda* policy. His usual modesty forbade Lenin to say that he himself had actually been the *Pravda* editor and had shaped its position by his written and verbal instructions and by his almost daily work on the paper. But he removed any basis for alleging that Chernomazov had determined the line of the paper or that it was therefore published in "collusion with the old regime". Lenin showed that the paper was actually the organ of the Party Central Committee. Lenin assessed the rumours spread by the bourgeois press as an attempt "to cast a shadow on our Party" by the bourgeois Provisional Government and the press loyal to it.¹

In 1917, in the period from February to October, the torrent of lies and abuse against the Bolshevik Party and its press, against Lenin and his followers, became particularly violent and dirty. The bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties and their press sensed the real threat from the mounting influence of the Bolshevik Party among the people. The bourgeois press did not disdain to use any means to compromise its political opponent.

At first it often set in motion a half-rumour or half-fact, then it grew to "details" of a purely fantastic order and a dirty slanderous campaign ensued. "News, speculation, apprehensions and rumours of an impending disaster are becoming more and more frequent," Lenin wrote in an article published in *Pravda* in May 1917.² He notes that the capitalist papers are scaring the public as if anarchy was

¹ V. I. Lenin, "Tricks of the Republican Chauvinists", Vol. 23, p. 364.

² V. I. Lenin, "Impending Debacle", Vol. 24, p. 395.

developing everywhere as a result of Bolshevik activity; they usually relied on anonymous references to a "certain" factory, a "certain" enterprise, or "certain" plants. "Peculiar methods, strange 'proofs,'" Lenin notes with bitter irony, and at once throws out a challenge to the falsifiers: "Why not *name* a definite factory? Why not give the public *and the workers* a chance to verify these rumours, which are deliberately calculated to excite alarm?" (ibid.). But the bourgeois press had no intention of providing facts that could be verified. It did not wish the workers to be able to see its falseness by specific examples. It aspired "to *shout down* the truth, to prevent it from being heard, to drown it in a torrent of invective and shouts, to *prevent* an earnest *elucidation* of the facts".¹

It was not always easy to refute the slander. It needed a great deal of time, physical and moral effort. Sometimes it meant undertaking real research, conducting an investigation. "It is easy to tell an untruth, but sometimes it takes a long time to *find out* the truth," Lenin wrote as he denounced the slanderous article by Martov published in *Luch* on 28 October 1912.² Martov had distorted a speech delivered by Hugo Haase, leader of the German Social-Democrats, at a session of the International Socialist Bureau; Martov claimed that Haase had said: "Lenin *is deceiving* the International." Before rushing into print, Lenin had to do a great deal of painstaking work. In so far as Martov had cited a newspaper source, Lenin had to rummage through a mass of German papers before he could find the words mentioned in the paper of the Bremen Social-Democrats. Lenin questioned Haase about the veracity of what had appeared in print. In a letter dated 31 December 1912, Haase denied the report. And only then, on 11 January 1913, did the denial appear in *Pravda*, in an article by Lenin entitled "Better Late Than Never".

On occasion it was not possible to reject the malicious abuse circulated by the bourgeois press in a single article or short note. This was particularly so when it was taken up by many bourgeois papers and led subsequently to a lengthy slanderous campaign. It then became necessary to repeat patiently and insistently the denial of the insinuation.

¹ V. I. Lenin, "A Partnership of Lies", Vol. 24, p. 118.

² V. I. Lenin, "Better Late Than Never", Vol. 18, p. 469.

This was the situation which arose on Lenin's return from emigration in 1917. This was a time when, following the overthrow of tsarism, a bourgeois Provisional Government had been formed and had to coexist with the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies. All the political parties, both bourgeois and petty-bourgeois, joined forces against Lenin's principal thesis that "the country is *passing* from the first stage of the revolution—which, owing to the insufficient class-consciousness and organisation of the proletariat, placed power in the hands of the bourgeoisie—to its *second* stage, which must place power in the hands of the proletariat and the poorest sections of the peasants".¹ In order to avert the "danger" bound up with the prospect of socialist revolution, the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties and their press resorted to the time-tested method of slander against their political foe. By dropping hints, allusions and references to rumours, they were gradually producing the false impression that political émigrés returning to Russia through Germany, which was then at war with Russia, had "contacts" with the German High Command. This rumour was greatly exaggerated and finally the bourgeois press began to brand Lenin and the comrades who had returned with him as "German agents".

Bourgeois papers suggested that the newly-arrived revolutionaries were actually assisting the German imperialists. This "idea" permeated, for example, the reports appearing in *Russkaya Volya* and *Rech* on 5 April. They hinted that the new-arrivals "were benefiting from some sort of impermissible or supplementary 'sops' from the German Government". They claimed that the Swiss Social-Democrat Friedrich Platten, who had arranged for their passage through Germany, was "a friend of the Germans". They "reported" that the new-arrivals were advocating a separate peace with the Germans and had actually met in Stockholm with German socialists who supported the German government to decide on the issue; they claimed that the new-arrivals were trying to set the workers against the soldiers and sow dissension between them. The capitalist press branded the *Pravda* people as "traitors". In May, *Rech* printed a provocative article entitled "Curious Sources of Information" in which it

¹ V. I. Lenin, "The Tasks of the Proletariat in the Present Revolution", Vol. 24, p. 22.

enquired with a great deal of meaning: where does *Глуш* get its information about Germany, which is not to be found in any other newspaper? Finally some papers began to declare openly that Lenin was a spy and to accuse the Bolsheviks of spying or collusion with an enemy government; they began to demand that the Bolsheviks be brought to trial for treason and the organisation of an armed uprising. Here we see how certain "scurrilous hints" grew into a slander campaign which eventually brought its results—the bourgeois Provisional Government decided to bring Lenin to trial, and Lenin went underground.

Nowadays Soviet historical literature sometimes writes of this slander by the bourgeois press as if it was transparently a fable, a manifest fiction. However, given the complex political circumstances of the time, these insinuations, seized upon by many bourgeois papers and repeated time and again, did constitute a great menace. They could have caused mistrust and loss of confidence among the not very educated and politically not very enlightened sections of the public in the party led by Lenin. From the very outset Lenin treated with all seriousness the danger latent in the false reports of the bourgeois press. He devoted more than a few articles to exposing the slanderous assaults concerning the circumstances of his return home.

To gain a full picture of the work done by Lenin, let us examine each of these exposé documents separately.

1. Communiqué by a group of Russian revolutionaries—this was the first document explaining the circumstances of the journey through Germany by the émigrés led by Lenin. On arriving in Stockholm on 31 March, Lenin passed this communiqué to the editors of *Politiken*, the newspaper of the Left Social-Democrats, who then passed it on to all the press representatives, including the Russian. Having received the "Communiqué" through the Petrograd Telegraph Agency, the newspapers *Rech* and *Dyen* printed it in shortened form on 5 April, omitting the last paragraph which contained the testimony of representatives of the international Social-Democrats on the organisation of the journey through Germany.

2. The article "How We Arrived" published in *Pravda* on 5 April 1917. This set out Lenin's report to the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet on the journey by the group of political émigrés through Germany. The article

explained that the plan of the journey through Germany had arisen after it was discovered that the British authorities had no intention of allowing the Russian Social-Democrat internationalists to return home through Britain. It had been decided to arrange to trip through Germany in exchange for German and Austrian prisoners interned in Russia. Lenin briefly explained the terms on which the German Ambassador to Switzerland had given Friedrich Platten his consent to the journey of the émigrés. Platten had conducted the negotiations with the Ambassador on behalf of the émigrés. "(1) All emigrants, regardless of their opinions on the war, shall be allowed passage. (2) The railway coach in which the emigrants will travel shall have the privileges of extraterritoriality; no one shall have the right to enter the coach without Platten's permission; there shall be no control either of passports or luggage. (3) The travellers agree to agitate in Russia that the emigrants who have been granted passage be exchanged for a corresponding number of Austro-German internees." ¹ In fulfilment of the last point, Lenin expressed the hope in this article that the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet would manage to set free a corresponding number of internees and, above all, the eminent Austrian socialist Otto Bauer.

3. "Two Worlds"—a note published by Lenin in *Pravda* on 6 April in which he contrasts the newspaper *Izvestia Soveta rabochikh i soldatskikh deputatov* (*News of the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies*) with all the bourgeois papers such as *Rech* and *Novoye Vremya*. *Izvestia*, which at that time had taken up a Socialist-Revolutionary-cum-Menshevik stance, merited praise for reproducing in full, unlike the bourgeois papers, Lenin's report to the Executive Committee and that Committee's decision "to take the matter up immediately with the Provisional Government and to take steps towards securing the immediate return to Russia of all emigrants, irrespective of their political views and their attitude towards the war".

4. The article "In the Footsteps of *Russkaya Volya*" which was published by Lenin in *Pravda* on 13 April in reply to Plekhanov's article in the paper *Yedinstvo* against the April Theses. Plekhanov had begun by citing Lenin's words that the war on Russia's part remains predatory and imperialist;

¹ V. I. Lenin, "How We Arrived", Vol. 24, p. 28.

but then, playing up to the bourgeois press, he went on to ask, "and how about Germany? Lenin says nothing about that". The provocative nature of this statement literally shocked Lenin. "The reader can scarcely believe the evidence of his own eyes. Can it be that Mr. Plekhanov has sunk to the level of *Novoye Vremya* and *Russkaya Volya*? Believe it or not, but the fact stares you in the face."¹ Plekhanov had followed in the footsteps of the two papers which led the campaign of persecution against Lenin and his followers as "Germanophiles" and "agents" of Germany. It is not by chance that in all his articles of the period Lenin calls him in no other way but "Mr. Plekhanov".

5. The appeal "To the Soldiers and Sailors" was written between 11 and 14 April, but was first published only in 1925 in *Lenin Miscellany*. Evidently, it had been planned to bring it out as a separate leaflet. At any rate, the text is written in leaflet style, and is entirely aimed at exposing "a most shameless campaign of lies and slander concerning the passage through Germany of myself and thirty other emigrants".²

6. The appeal "Against the Riot-Mongers" with the sub-heading "To the Workers, Soldiers and the Whole Population of Petrograd" was a revised version of the earlier appeal "To the Soldiers and Sailors". It was written by Lenin on 13 or 14 April and was adopted by the Petrograd City Party Conference on 14 April, and then published in *Pravda* on 15 April.

7. The same day *Pravda* printed an appeal article entitled "Citizens! See What Methods the Capitalists of All Countries Are Using!" A few days later it came out as an editorial in the paper *Volna*—the newspaper of the Helsingfors Party Committee. In this article Lenin was replying to a reactionary article in the Cadet paper *Rech* of 14 April, in which he and all the *Pravda* people were accused of undermining the "unity of revolutionary Russia", of setting the Russian government against the "allied governments" of Britain and France. *Rech* had asked its readers a provocative question: "Are we not entitled to say that the Lenin crew is working for von Bethmann-Hollweg (the German Chancellor—*B.B.*) and Wilhelm II?" To which Lenin replied, "No, gentlemen

¹ V. I. Lenin, "In the Footsteps of *Russkaya Volya*", Vol. 24, p. 115.

² V. I. Lenin, "To the Soldiers and Sailors", Vol. 24, p. 124.

of the capitalist fold, you are not entitled to say it.”¹

8. In the note “An Honest Voice in a Chorus of Slanderers” published in *Pravda* on 15 April, Lenin paid credit to the gutter press newspaper *Malenkaya Gazeta* for publishing the appeal by a group of soldiers of the Fourth Motor Ambulance Unit “to all comrades in the army” with a demand to investigate the circumstances of the journey by Lenin and his colleagues through Germany. In the atmosphere of abuse from the bourgeois periodicals, the simple and modest desire for investigation sounded to Lenin like “an honest voice in a chorus of slanderers” who had naturally given no thought to any objective investigation.

9. The note “On the Return of the Emigrants” was published in *Pravda* on 16 April. Lenin draws his readers’ attention to telegrams sent by the émigrés in which they state quite unequivocally: “*We find it absolutely impossible to return to Russia via England.*” Naming these émigrés, Lenin then asks with irony, “Why shouldn’t the gentlemen of *Russkaya Volya* and *Yedinstvo* declare these political emigrants, too, to be German agents?”²

10. The note “The Logic of Citizen V. Chernov” was printed in *Pravda* on 4 May in reply to the article by Victor Chernov, a leader of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party, in *Dyelo Naroda*, criticising Lenin for his passage through Germany. Chernov chastises Lenin for giving insufficient thought to the consequences of a passage through Britain and through Germany, in order to ensure the correct choice of itinerary, as if these two itineraries had been equally possible. In response to this “reasoning” Lenin draws the conclusion: “It is this—either V. Chernov is a queer fellow who uses phrases to avoid the *facts*, or he has allowed himself to be so frightened by philistine-chauvinist gossip and slander that he has lost his head.”³

11. On the very same day *Pravda* published the note “Mr. Plekhanov’s Futile Attempts to Extricate Himself” in which Lenin takes Plekhanov to task for trying to hush up “two incontestably established facts” in his paper *Yedinstvo* with

¹ V. I. Lenin, “Citizens! See What Methods the Capitalists of All Countries Are Using!”, Vol. 24, p. 131.

² V. I. Lenin, “On the Return of the Emigrants”, Vol. 24, p. 171.

³ V. I. Lenin, “The Logic of Citizen V. Chernov”, Vol. 24, p. 198.

“an abundance of abuse”.¹ The first fact was that Plekhanov had reprinted in *Yedinstvo* neither Lenin’s report on the journey through Germany, nor the resolution of the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet on the issue. The second was that even the Socialist-Revolutionary paper *Dyelo Naroda* compared Plekhanov’s attacks on Lenin to methods of polemical battle practised on the pages of the extremely reactionary *Russkaya Volya*. “There was a time when Mr. Plekhanov was a socialist,” concludes Lenin. “Now he has sunk to the level of *Russkaya Volya*” (ibid.).

12. On 13 May the paper *Soldatskaya Pravda* (*Soldiers’ Truth*) published the article by Krupskaya “A Page from the History of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party” exposing the inventions of the bourgeois press on the circumstance of the journey by Lenin and other émigrés through Germany. Lenin wrote an insert for the article, in which he referred once more to his report to the Executive Committee and to the testimony of the Swiss and Swedish socialists, who had confirmed in writing that “the trip across Germany was undertaken of necessity and that it did not involve relations with the German Government which were in any way reprehensible”.²

13. The article “Where Is State Power and Where Is Counter-Revolution?” was published in *Listok “Pravdy”* on 6 July. It exposed a routine provocative falsification composed by the well-known mischiefmaker and slanderer Grigory Alexinsky, former Social-Democrat and journalist who in 1917 was treated with kid gloves even by the bourgeois papers because of his scandalous reputation for fabricating mendacious and calumnious reports. On this occasion Alexinsky was the author of a true detective story about a certain ensign, D. S. Yermolenko who, while a P.O.W. in Germany, was supposed to have been recruited by German intelligence and then planted in the rear of Russian front-line units to agitate in favour of a separate peace with Germany. According to Alexinsky, Yermolenko had provided information showing that Lenin and A. Skoropis-Yoltukhovsky, Chairman of the Ukrainian Section of the Union for the Liberation of the Ukraine and an agent of the German General Staff, were

¹ V. I. Lenin, “Mr. Plekhanov’s Futile Attempts to Extricate Himself”, Vol. 24, p. 200.

² V. I. Lenin, “Insertion for N. K. Krupskaya’s Article ‘A Page from the History of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party’”, Vol. 41, p. 435.

performing a similar mission within Russia. "Lenin was commissioned to do all he could to undermine the confidence of the Russian people in the Provisional Government."¹

At that time Lenin was not to know that Yermolenko was a secret agent in the pay of Russian military intelligence, and that this whole story had been hatched from start to finish within the military department of the Provisional Government for provocative reasons. He therefore suggested that in this case it was provocation by officers of the German GHQ which had caused Yermolenko "to commit this dishonourable act", and that they had "shamelessly lied to him about Lenin" (ibid.). He reminded his readers of his widely-known position on the issue of a separate peace with Germany, which he "has always *rejected* most emphatically, consistently, and unconditionally" (ibid.). He described a comparison between himself and some Yoltukhovsky from a bourgeois-nationalist organisation as blatantly ridiculous. He noted the inactivity of the authorities, in the person of Kerensky, who had for some time been in possession of documents showing that Alexinsky's story of cash relations "between German agents and Bolshevik leaders" was gross invention, and yet had done nothing to sort things out. At the same time he pointed to the precision of the combined actions of the counter-revolutionary forces. General HQ had given Alexinsky false documents to be published in the press at the very moment when a detachment of Cossacks and military Cadets had been sent to destroy *Pravda's* premises. As a result, the Bolsheviks were unable to reply in their newspaper to Alexinsky's base lie in the gutter press paper *Zhivoye Slovo* owing to the fact that *Pravda* had been closed down, and therefore Lenin was obliged to do so in *Listok "Pravdy"*.

14. In the same *Listok "Pravdy"* Lenin simultaneously published the note "Foul Slander by Ultra-Reactionary Newspapers and Alexinsky". Once again he appealed to people not to believe Alexinsky's "foul slander". He remarked that Chkheidze, Chairman of the Central Executive Committee, had, on the eve, 4 July, telephoned all the major papers to stop Alexinsky's infamous article. And the following day

¹ V. I. Lenin, "Where Is State Power and Where Is Counter-Revolution?", Vol. 25, p. 159.

not a single paper, save the gutter press *Zhivoye Slovo*, had printed it. The nature of the publication, therefore, corresponded to the orientation of the paper in which it appeared.

15. "A New Dreyfus Case?" was yet another note in the same *Listok "Pravdy"* devoted to a denial of Alexinsky's allegations. On this occasion, Lenin drew a historical parallel between the "case" built up about him by the bourgeois press and the Dreyfus case. He wrote of the antics of the General HQ, which had used the gutter press to spread slander against him: "This is strange and significant and incredible".¹

16. "Dreyfusiad" was written on 6 and 7 July, but not published at the time; it dealt with the same provocation and its further development in the press. Lenin noted that the day after *Zhivoye Slovo* had printed Alexinsky's inventions, it started to publish corrections admitting that the Bolshevik leader was not in the pay of others, but was simply a fanatic. Fresh inventions were now appearing in the press alongside other corrections. For example, some papers were suggesting that the Bolsheviks had had contacts with the German authorities through the German Social-Democrat Parvus (A. L. Gelfand). Lenin was obliged to remind them that he had relentlessly criticised Parvus in the paper *Sotsial-Demokrat* some time back as a social-chauvinist and had called him a renegade. "They have gone to the ridiculous extreme of blaming *Pravda* for the fact that its dispatches to the socialist papers of Sweden and all other countries (dispatches which, of course, had to pass the censor and are fully known to him) were reprinted by German papers, often with distortions! As if reprinting, or malicious distortions, can be blamed on the original source!"²

17. The note "In Refutation of Sinister Rumours" was penned on 7 July, but not published at the time. It refers to the denials printed in *Listok "Pravdy"* and calls yet again on the public not to believe such scurrilous rumours, particularly those about his (Lenin's) arrest.

18. The article "The Question of the Bolshevik Leaders Appearing in Court" was written by Lenin on 8 July but also not published at the time. It expressed the view of Lenin and the whole Party on the question of the Bolshevik leaders

¹ V. I. Lenin, "A New Dreyfus Case?", Vol. 25, p. 166.

² V. I. Lenin, "Dreyfusiad", Vol. 25, p. 169.

appearing in court on the false accusation of treason. “*The authorities need not a trial but a persecution campaign against the internationalists*”, he concludes.¹

19. The “Letter to the Editors of *Novaya Zhizn*” was printed in the quasi-Menshevik paper on 11 July and wholly devoted to denying Alexinsky’s “version” and other malicious slander on the part of the gutter press owing to the suppression of *Pravda*—but he did so only to get his denial printed. The circumstances that obliged him to take this step were that “certain papers have begun a furious baiting campaign against us, accusing us of espionage or of communicating with an enemy government”.² It was not simply a campaign of slander, but a “furious baiting campaign”—these words vividly enough convey the extent of drama and danger in the prevailing situation. Lenin drew the attention of *Novaya Zhizn* readers to the casuistic methods of this baiting. At first slanderous accusations were made followed by a “correction” that did little to alter things. He called for an open debate on all the accusations inspired by the bourgeois press and expresses his confidence that he will be able to reply to all the questions in the “near future”.

20. The “Letter to the Editors of *Proletarskoye Dyelo*” (*Proletarian Cause*) was published in that Bolshevik Kronstadt paper on 15 July. It explained why Lenin had changed his mind about appearing in a Provisional Government court: it had become evident from a letter written by the ex-Minister of Justice P. N. Pereverzev and printed in *Novoye Vremya* that the so-called case against Lenin for spying had been fabricated so as to whip up the fervour of soldiers against Lenin’s Party.

21. The article “Slanderers” appeared in the paper *Rabochy* (one of the later names used by *Pravda*) on 30 August. Lenin rejected the slanderous reports of *Rech* and *Russkaya Volya*, which were continuing to chew over the insinuations being circulated by Alexinsky and the military counter-intelligence. As if generalising the situation that had taken shape in the bourgeois press over all these malicious inventions, Lenin noted: “The law on libel in the press has virtually been suspended in Russia. Slanderers, especially

¹ V. I. Lenin, “The Question of the Bolshevik Leaders Appearing in Court”, Vol. 25, p. 177.

² V. I. Lenin, “Letter to the Editors of *Novaya Zhizn*”, Vol. 25, p. 181.

those contributing to the bourgeois papers, have been granted complete freedom. They can come out in the papers anonymously, lie and slander as much as they please, and hide behind allegedly official reports not signed by any official—they can get away with anything! Those infamous slanderers, headed by Mr. Milyukov and his like, enjoy the privilege of immunity.”¹

Thus, Lenin took up his pen on twenty-one occasions to deny rumours instigated against him by the military authorities and set in motion by the gutter press. Seventeen of these denials were published. Lenin also returned to this not very pleasant theme in several speeches. Why? The reason was that the danger presented by the dirty campaign launched by the bourgeois papers was too great. This danger threatened not only and not so much Lenin as the whole Party and its authority among the people as well as the cause for which the Party was fighting. Thus Lenin attacked the bourgeois press with all the power of his journalistic and polemical skill. And, as always, he appealed in his articles not to so-called bourgeois public opinion but to that of broad public: to workers, soldiers, peasants, to the people of Petrograd, to all the citizens of Russia. In appealing to them, he did not simply deny the malicious inventions about his “spying” activity for Germany, he also furiously exposed the lying nature of the bourgeois press. That is why his exposure of individual bourgeois papers is virtually always accompanied by generalisations about the depravity of the bourgeois press. He shows the reader how counter-revolutionary the bourgeoisie is: they “flavour their political baiting” of the Bolsheviks “with the foulest slander and ‘campaigning’ in the press”.² He writes of “a chorus of slanderers” and of “the torrent of filthy lies, foul slander, and riot-mongering agitation”.³ Further, he talks of the “methods of the capitalists of all countries”.⁴

The entire Party and the whole Bolshevik press, which between February and October was already backed up by

¹ V. I. Lenin, “Slanderers”, Vol. 25, p. 287.

² V. I. Lenin, “Dreyfusiad”, Vol. 25, p. 168.

³ V. I. Lenin, “An Honest Voice in a Chorus of Slanderers”, Vol. 24, p. 135.

⁴ V. I. Lenin, “Citizens! See What Methods the Capitalists of All Countries Are Using!”, Vol. 24, p. 131.

a wide network of local papers, helped to mobilise genuinely popular and genuinely democratic public opinion against the persecution of Lenin in the bourgeois press. The Party Central Committee, Bolshevik organisations in factories and military units, congresses, conferences and meetings of workers, soldiers and peasants more than once registered their firm protest against the way Lenin, his colleagues and *Pravda* were being hounded by the bourgeois press. In May 1917, Lenin noted with satisfaction in the article "Despicable Methods" that "a whole congress of delegates from the front in a resolution adopted unanimously ... condemns the shabby methods" of *Rech* which had written of the "curious" sources of information of *Pravda* on the German affairs.

The malicious and dirty campaign of the bourgeois press against Lenin did not bring the desired results. The influence of the Bolshevik Party among the workers, peasants, soldiers and sailors was mounting all the time. In September 1917 there began an irresistible and tempestuous process of Bolshevisation of the Soviets, workers' control intensified, and the strike movement acquired a political character, increasingly advancing the demand "All Power to the Soviets!". Bolshevisation of the armed forces increased rapidly. The authority of Bolshevik organisations in the countryside grew markedly—the Bolsheviks became the most reliable leaders of the peasants in the fight for land. The Communist Party under its experienced leader was confidently leading the people towards socialist revolution.

One more circumstance is worth noting. When Lenin came out with a denial, he was always anxious not to give the bourgeois press the opportunity to publish in its turn a "denial" of his denial. He deprived his foes of such an opportunity through a careful checking of the facts, and strictly logical arguments. Once he had finished the denial itself he seemed to begin a dialogue with his future "denunciator" and started to challenge all possible objections to his denial.

The lessons that Lenin provided in exposing the bourgeois press are exceedingly instructive for the ideological struggle today. They teach us to be principled in our dealings with all manner of insinuations by the bourgeois press. Lenin's journalistic work teaches us how important is a high degree of theoretical and all-round practical information in writing

denials, how important is rapid response and persistence in reiterating the truth. Lenin's methodology of criticism of the bourgeois press shows how important it is to orient oneself on a truly democratic reading public, how important it is when denouncing the bourgeois press to avail oneself of the opportunity to educate the people in the spirit of revolution, how important it is, finally, to foresee the opponent's likely response to the denial and to demolish him completely.

Not only the general principles governing Lenin in arguments in his contention with the bourgeois press, not only his favourite ploys in his polemics with it, but also the mechanism of his polemic, its originality in comparison with that of other newspapers and magazines, are also of interest. In each separate case we can observe individual modes of argument as well as general aspects of principle. First and foremost Lenin showed how to take into account the specifics of the class and Party forces whose opinion is being expressed by the given paper. We must not leave out of account the extent of the influence of a particular paper, and the political forces that stand behind it, on the general public, as well as the overall readership for which it is intended. Nor did Lenin ever ignore the paper's staff, its editors or the leading publicists with whom he crossed swords.

Lenin's discriminating choice of method of polemic against the press of reactionary, bourgeois-liberal, petty-bourgeois and opportunist orientations is, therefore, instructive for every modern journalist fighting against the bourgeois press, in so far as this press is still politically heterogeneous in every capitalist country in the world.

"THE DESPICABLE KIND OF TRICK
PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN ORDERED
TO RAISE A CHEER WOULD USE"

Lenin did not often get into an argument with the extreme Right-wing monarchist reactionary press. The position it took up was so blatantly part of the past that it frequently exposed itself effectively without outside assistance as soon as it began to publish. Of course, that was so to the readers to whom Lenin was addressing himself in his press—to the advanced, most politically conscious workers and peasants, and to the democratic intellectuals. The liberal press disputed with it often enough although, perhaps, not always on real issues, yet at least in a "serious manner" and vociferously. And that is understandable: after all, the readership of both the liberal and the reactionary press often overlapped.

The reactionary press, with the aid of the government exchequer, was fairly well provided for in terms of printing works; it had an impressive tribune, if a half-empty auditorium. The readership of *Novoye Vremya*, *Moskovskiye Vedomosti*, *Grazhdanin (Citizen)*, *Russkaya Volya* and *Zemshchina* consisted of tsarist dignitaries, conservative officials, monarchist officers and self-owning landlords who still lived with memories and images of the pre-reform period (i.e., pre-1861). It constituted the ruling elite, only a tiny part of Russia.

Talking of the limited and weak influence of the reactionary press on the ordinary people, Lenin wrote: "Can one give any instance of the Black Hundreds having corrupted and misled any considerable section of the population? One cannot."¹ The reactionary press was unable to by dint of its clearly expressed anti-popular character.

In several press writings Lenin provided a typical characterisation of this press, designating it not only by the term "reactionary press" but by the closely related terms "extreme

¹ V. I. Lenin, "In Memory of Count Heyden", Vol. 13, p. 51.

Right", "monarchist", "Black-Hundred", "conservative" and "official".

What actually distinguishes this press? In Lenin's view its distinctive feature was mainly its defence of the interests of the nobility and the bureaucratic elite, as well as those sections of the bourgeoisie which saw their interests upheld in the prevailing system. Hence the "sycophantic" tone, which Lenin frequently remarked upon, of reactionary newspapers and magazines in regard to government policy. Lenin wrote of this press that it "baits everything that aspires to light and freedom and glorifies every bestiality of our government".¹ At times their journalists wrote "grovelling and rapturous reports of the tsar's gracious words".² Frothing at the mouth, as Lenin says, they defend with might and main the right of the government to plant provocateurs among revolutionaries.³

It was not only useless to argue with such a press, it was also dangerous, inasmuch as polemic with it could, whether one wished or no, develop into a polemic with the secret police department and the government itself. One needed criticism by weapons, not the weapon of criticism to resolve any conflict with it. Lenin explained this concept with pamphleteering force in the following words: "You *cannot* fight against the Krushevans with words, with the pen. You have to fight against them in another way."⁴ It was clear enough to the readers of these lines published in the legal Bolshevik paper *Nashe Ekho* (*Our Echo*) in 1907, what Lenin meant by "in another way"—he often called for force of arms in fighting counter-revolution, which was rearing up its ugly head.

The stupidity and blindly retrograde nature of these papers prevented them from understanding even individual steps taken by the government if they involved manoeuvring or long-term political calculations not visible to the superficial observer. Lenin pointed out this situation, for example, to *Iskra* readers in the following words: "The police state is

¹ V. I. Lenin, "The Drafting of 183 Students into the Army", Vol. 4, p. 419.

² V. I. Lenin, "The Struggle of the Proletariat, and the Servility of the Bourgeoisie", Vol. 8, p. 543.

³ See V. I. Lenin, "In the World of the Azefs", Vol. 18, p. 532.

⁴ V. I. Lenin, "Banality Triumphant, or S.R.'s Ape the Cadets", Vol. 12, p. 342. (P. A. Krushevan was an inveterate and notorious reactionary.)

arousing so much hostility against itself among the masses that it finds it necessary artificially to create groups that can serve as pillars of the fatherland.”¹ Lenin illustrates this idea by pointing out the government’s desire to use the “Zemstvo element” to strengthen its position in various parts of the country, particularly in Siberia, where there were at that time many deported settlers amongst the local population. He notes with irony that reactionary publications such as *Grazhdanin* and *Moskovskiye Vedomosti* had “no understanding or realisation” of the government’s plan.

Lenin time and again underlines the trite optimistic tone of material in this press: it cheers when it would be more logical and suitable to hang one’s head in shame.

From their position of unconditional and blind glorification of the autocracy’s policies, the reactionary periodicals took exception even to the circumspect, unsystematic and superficial criticism which appeared in the liberal press. They attacked the liberal papers, disgustedly pointing out their “tendentiousness”, and by way of contrast pointed, “objectively” not only to the “seamy side”, but to the “gratifying features”.² Furthermore, they showed their obvious preference for precisely the “gratifying features”, despite the fact that in reality there hardly remained any room for them.

The reactionary press generally was distinguished by its fanatical hatred of any manifestation of social protest by the common people, any organised or spontaneous popular anger at the dreariness of their existence. At moments of popular revolutionary activity, the reactionary press, in Lenin’s words, began to howl and to resort to “foul language”,³ defending measures for the government’s salvation “with a gnashing of teeth and the rage of despair”,⁴ and resorting to threats.⁵ They needed the power which they lauded and upheld both for their class interests and for reasons of a purely mercantile order, in so far as the publishers and editors of *Moskovskiye Vedomosti*, *Grazhdanin* and *Rossiya* were in receipt of cash subsidies from the government of

¹ V. I. Lenin, “The Serf-Owners at Work”, Vol. 5, p. 99.

² V. I. Lenin, “Casual Notes”, Vol. 4, p. 409.

³ V. I. Lenin, “‘Freedom of Speech’ in Russia”, Vol. 18, p. 173.

⁴ V. I. Lenin, “The First Results of the Political Alignment”, Vol. 9, p. 400.

⁵ V. I. Lenin, “Conspiracies of Reaction and Threats of the Pogrom-Mongers”, Vol. 11, p. 105.

pogrom-mongers "as a vehicle for the views of this government" (ibid.).

The reactionary press reaped what it sowed—hatred—the growing hatred of the common people both for the tsarist government and for the press loyal to it. In an article published in 1901 in *Iskra* Lenin drew a picture of popular fury with one of the most reactionary local papers—the Kharkov *Yuzhny Krai* (*Southern Region*). In December 1900 when this—in Lenin's words—"corrupt paper" was celebrating its jubilee, the editors were faced with a protest demonstration. The crowd "solemnly" tore up copies of the paper, tied them to the tails of horses, threw stones and stink-bombs containing sulphuretted hydrogen at the windows of the editorial office, and shouted "Down with the corrupt press!" "Such celebrations are well deserved, not only by the corrupt newspapers, but by all our government offices",¹ Lenin remarked, once again underlining the unity between the government and the reactionary press devoted to it.

In Lenin's work as a publicist, the paper *Novoye Vremya* takes first place among all the reactionary publications as regards the number of references. In contrast to *Moskovskiy Vedomosti* and *Grazhdanin*, it expressed the interests both of the aristocratic-bureaucratic elite and the most conservative circles of the big bourgeoisie. It was certainly well established, having the biggest circulation of any paper of the time, was printed on the most up-to-date machinery and its material was contributed by an army of ubiquitous reporters.

Grazhdanin ceased publication in 1914. Although it continued to be published until October 1917, the newspaper *Moskovskiy Vedomosti* had virtually no impact on Russia's social and political life in its last years; so Lenin not only ceased to join battle with it in the final period, but even to make reference to it. On the other hand, he continued to refer to *Novoye Vremya* right up to October 1917, although in the final period, between February and October 1917, he more frequently attacked another reactionary paper—*Russkaya Volya*. Thus when reviewing the particular aspects of Lenin's polemic with the reactionary press, one has most frequently to deal with his references to *Novoye Vremya*.

In many cases Lenin does not distinguish the voice of the

¹ V. I. Lenin, "The Drafting of 183 Students into the Army", Vol. 4, p. 419.

reactionary press from that of the government itself. Therefore Lenin comments upon the opinion of the paper on a particular topical socio-political issue as the opinion of government circles. And indeed, if the government were to try not to disclose its stance on any issue, not to make it public, Lenin would use the fact of the reactionary paper divulging that position as a fact of self-revelation more of the government itself than of the newspaper. In their comments on government circulars and statutes, the reactionary papers often spoke precisely of what the government was trying to mask in those circulars by various verbal intricacies. Sometimes they revealed the reasoning behind government measures that were being prepared and not only divulged a few of their details, but also gave their advice and alternatives. In that respect the reactionary papers "competed" with one another, endeavoured to outdo one another in their intimacy with high official spheres, with the tsar's court, to show how well informed they were, how "perceptive" were their observations and how in tune they were with changes in government policy and draft legislation. By their advice and recommendations, the editors of these papers tried to establish precisely the opinion that they wished to see prevail in government circles.

Lenin's article "A Valuable Admission", which was printed in *Iskra* in July 1901 is a typical example of an exposure of government policy based on an analysis of reports in the reactionary *Novoye Vremya*. The article which had caught Lenin's eye had been published in *Novoye Vremya* in May of that year under the title "Apropos of Labour Unrest". If for no other reason, it was noteworthy because a full-scale scandal had blown up around it: publication of the paper had been suspended for a week for printing the article. Of course, it was not for its treatment of the issues it had raised, but for the fact that it had dealt with a subject officially banned by a special secret directive from the police department. In Lenin's description, the punishment of "that arch-loyal newspaper ever fawning on the authorities"¹ was not so much a result of the circular as of the sharp increase in worker unrest. It was this circumstance that had forced the government to apply the directive even to this invariably loyal newspaper.

¹ V. I. Lenin, "A Valuable Admission", Vol. 5, p. 81.

The paper's arguments in the article constituted, in effect, an attempt to help the government work out a system of more effective measures in dealing with worker disorders. As Lenin noted, it outlined "a complete state programme, which in effect amounts to allaying the discontent by a few petty and in part fictitious doles to which are attached pompous signboards about protective policy, cordiality, etc., and which provide pretexts for increasing surveillance by government officials" (ibid.).

In setting out the programme, the *Novoye Vremya* editors were making valuable admissions without realising it. With the eagle eye of the experienced polemicist, Lenin singled them out for his readers from the verbal nonsense accompanying them, and added his own commentary.

He made the point that the reactionary paper would never lose an opportunity to revile the workers for their backwardness and ignorance, for the fact that, as a result, they hearkened to the "pernicious" propaganda of the socialists. But here the paper was obliged to admit an objective fact also—that "the success of socialism is due to the really bad conditions of the workers" (ibid., pp. 84, 85). Lenin writes that "Government supporters are compelled to admit..." Once again he was emphasising the firm bond between the paper and the tsarist government.

Novoye Vremya makes one more, in Lenin's view, valuable admission. It says: "Unfortunately ... we know too little about the actual state of affairs in regard to the labour question in Russia." To these crocodile tears Lenin notes in anger and irony, "Yes, unfortunately indeed! And 'we' know little, precisely because we permit the police government to keep the whole press in slavery, to gag every one who honestly attempts to expose the scandalous state of affairs in our country" (ibid., p. 85). "We", of course, are the editors of *Novoye Vremya*. While denouncing the "police government" for its persecution of the free press, for trying to keep "the whole press in slavery", Lenin at the same time denounced *Novoye Vremya* for in fact aiding and abetting the tsarist government in its implementation of this press policy.

Lenin also regarded as very valuable the further admission by the paper that the worker is now no longer so cowed as the peasant. In this connection the paper expresses its regret that, once they become industrial workers, the peasants

abandon "their rural nests", "their villages with their modest (that is the heart of the matter), but independent social and economic interests", that as a result, "factory districts become the gathering centres of mixed masses". Lenin reveals the ins and outs of these grumbings, their class motivation. He shows *Iskra* readers that *Novoye Vremya*, and that means the tsarist government, is hankering after and "bemoaning" the good old days when the "villager" was completely tied to his "nest". Out of fear of losing his nest he would not present legitimate demands to his landowner, being brought up in the servile spirit of meek subjection, and there had been no one to excite not only a class self-awareness in him, but even a sense of his own worth. Lenin deliberately underlined for his readers—the progressive workers—the testimony of the reactionary paper as regards the danger of the "modest" yokel turning into a politically conscious worker. It once again goes to show the correctness of the laws of social development discovered by Marxism.

Novoye Vremya helped the government to spread the notion, convenient and profitable to it, that capitalism in Russia was so feeble that the government was capable of keeping it under control, as if "the government stands above classes, that it does not serve the interests of the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie, but those of justice, that it is concerned with protecting the weak and the poor against the rich and the powerful" (ibid., p. 82). It was therefore sufficient for the government to issue "protective laws", requiring the factory-owners to improve conditions for their workers—and all would be fine; that was the hypocritical notion that the reactionary paper was trying to persuade its readers to accept. Lenin denounced these ideas very convincingly for his worker readers. He reminds them that even the "modest" instructions which prescribed the building of hospitals at factories "have been ignored by the capitalists for whole decades", that the government itself, when it acts as factory-owner "underpays and oppresses" the workers, that it will never encroach upon the hallowed right of private property.

"Our police wisecracks" was how Lenin describes a paper which offered such prescriptions for curing the "labour question". He explained to his readers that the various protective measures and petty handouts to the workers had only temporary effect. Just a little while will go by and the government will be obliged to think up a new "protective" law.

Lenin assessed *Novoye Vremya*'s reports and comments, therefore, as new "police speeches about 'state protection'" (ibid., p. 84). He saw in them a routine deceitful manoeuvre by the government press and certain high-ranking circles that stand behind it. "Gentlemen! Will you never tire of scooping up water with a sieve?", Lenin asked the *Novoye Vremya* editors, the whole reactionary, loyal press and, in turn, the government as well (ibid.).

Lenin's polemical attack on the *Novoye Vremya* article thus effectively turned into pamphleteering against the tsarist government and the "servile press" loyal to it.

In 1913, Lenin drew the attention of *Pravda* readers to one of the tricks used by the reactionary press to the benefit of the government, tricks which pursued far-reaching objectives. Flying in the face of the facts, newspapers connected with the government, "headed by the sycophantic *Novoye Vremya*", had been lauding the government for its economical and zealous handling of the state economy, for the fact that it was supposed to have saved the treasury 450 million rubles in "spare cash". "Bringing money into the house and not taking it out – that, please note, is how 'we' manage our household" is Lenin's ironic comment on this report in the reactionary papers. Using statistical data he showed that the "spare cash" came from three dubious sources: from borrowing, from higher vodka prices and from the income of the state railways. But at the same time the Finance Ministry had concealed the fact that, over the same period, the treasury had paid out 500 million rubles interest and amortisation on its investments in the railway system. It was on the basis of such arithmetical "juggling" that "*Novoye Vremya*, newspaper of the Black-Hundred landlords and Octobrist merchants, comes to the conclusion that there is no risk at all even in waging war when you have such a nest-egg as 450 million rubles".¹ Exposure of this official optimism in an official newspaper turned out to be prophetic: World War I, which Russia entered a little over a year later, revealed the utter unpreparedness of the country.

Lenin underlined *Novoye Vremya*'s servility to the tsarist government every time he had cause to mention the paper to his readers. He wrote of it as a servile paper that "fawns on

¹ V. I. Lenin, "Spare Cash", Vol. 18, p. 601.

the government”¹ and acts as a lickspittle before it, “loyally serving the government” and “sincerely devoted to the government”.² Frequently he reminds his readers of the nickname “At Your Service, Sir” given it by Saltykov-Shchedrin for its boot-licking servility.

Lenin emphasised the very same trait, but even more vividly and ridiculously expressed, in regard to the newspaper *Moskovskiye Vedomosti* whenever he had cause to refer to it, and then ironically commented on extracts from it. The paper’s assiduity in ingratiating itself before the government often took the form of denunciation to the police. By contrast with *Novoye Vremya*, it did not react so swiftly to all the shifts in the autocracy’s domestic and foreign policy and sometimes found itself more to the right than the government. This gave Lenin cause to call the paper “that organ of conservative opposition to the government”.³

As supporter of crude police force, the paper, as Lenin observed, did not simply attack any manifestation of the people’s revolutionary mood, the “revolutionary opposition” and “revolutionary press”,⁴ it also indicated to the government and the police various social dangers, and sometimes displayed suppressed discontent with their lack of resolution in coping with all manner of sedition.

In the spring of 1905, Moscow was the venue for a meeting of Russia’s Zemstvo officials. The “Gentlemen liberal landowners”, as Lenin dubbed them, adopted an agrarian programme which clearly expressed their fear of impending revolution: “Seeing that their lands are in danger of being taken away for nothing, they magnanimously consent to *sell* them—at a suitable price, of course”, was Lenin’s comment.⁵ Yet even this cowardly and, essentially, counter-revolutionary step by the liberal landowners provoked the ire of *Moskovskiye Vedomosti*. Lenin depicts the editors of the paper in sarcastic tone: “*Moskovskiye Vedomosti* even sought to give the alarm, shouting that the government was allowing revo-

¹ V. I. Lenin, “Draft for a Speech on the Agrarian Question in the Second State Duma”, Vol. 12, p. 270.

² V. I. Lenin, “‘Freedom of Speech’ in Russia”, Vol. 18, p. 173.

³ V. I. Lenin, “The First Results of the Political Alignment”, Vol. 9, p. 400.

⁴ V. I. Lenin, “They Are Nervous about the Army”, Vol. 16, p. 183.

⁵ V. I. Lenin, “The Agrarian Programme of the Liberals”, Vol. 8, p. 322.

lutionary assemblies to be held in Russia, and that it was necessary to call a congress of the monarchist party, etc.; but no one paid serious attention to these outcries, since the police these days have their hands full with affairs of a much more disturbing nature” (ibid., p. 315). Lenin, of course, mentioned the police on purpose. More than once articles in that paper had incited the police to take action of one sort or another. The informer activity of the paper was well known to people at the time; which is why Lenin’s ironic remark was particularly to the point.

Lenin’s interest in the rather squalid journal of Prince V. P. Meshchersky, *Grazhdanin*, was also clearly determined by its closeness to government circles. Its columns helped him to explain to his readers the inner springs of government policy and to uncover its anti-popular nature. Lenin provided a more or less exhaustive assessment of the journal in an article published in the paper *Pravda Truda (Labour Truth)* in September 1913. He explained why reading this journal might be useful for a Marxist Party member. “The magazine is interesting primarily because in it the talkative Prince is continually divulging the secrets of the higher administration of Russia. For Russia is actually administered by those landowner dignitaries in whose society Prince Meshchersky moved and is still moving. And they actually do administer Russia in exactly the way, in exactly the spirit, by exactly the means advised, assumed and suggested by Prince Meshchersky.”¹ The thin, insignificant gazette-journal which had a circulation of no more than a thousand copies and was compiled, in effect, by a single person—the Prince himself, was of interest primarily because Prince Meshchersky was a very well-informed man in regard to government politics and very talkative in his journal. As a publicist, Lenin saw particular value in this for obtaining more reliable information about the secrets concerning the administration of Russia and about government intentions.

“In the second place”, Lenin goes on to say, “the magazine is interesting because its courtly editor, confident that it will never *reach the people*, often exposes the Russian administration in the most ruthless manner” (ibid.). It goes without saying that Meshchersky had no knowledge that he

¹ V. I. Lenin, “Russian Government and Russian Reforms”, Vol. 19, p. 392.

himself was “exposing” the autocracy nor any desire to do so. Lenin referred in his article to two such “exposures”. He saw the first in the Prince’s protests against the over-energetic incursion of foreign concessionaires into the Russian economy. Official sources had kept a shameful silence about this fact. Lenin therefore compliments Meshchersky for “spilling the beans”: “That is what Prince Meshchersky writes. By way of exception he writes the truth” (ibid.). Lenin perceived the second “exposure” in his displeasure with Russia’s press which, in the Prince’s opinion, was writing too much about reforms, by contrast with the Western press. In connection with this “evidence”, Lenin once again notes with some irony: “Correctly observed. The bourgeoisie does not need reforms in Europe. In Russia they are necessary” (ibid., p. 393).

Meshchersky’s expression of praise of anyone is a fact of great revelatory force for Lenin. In June 1905 Lenin responded in the following way in the paper *Proletary* to the loyal conduct of the liberals at a reception by Tsar Nicholas II: “Prince Meshchersky’s opinion of the reception, published in *Grazhdanin*, proved to be right. Nicholas knew how to *donner le change* to the Zemstvo men and the liberals, he wrote. Nicholas knew how to *lead them by the nose!*”¹ Meshchersky’s delight with the monarch’s “sagacity” sounds here like a strict censure of the political cowardice of the bourgeois liberals. In the autumn of 1905, Lenin again uses Meshchersky’s journal to express his attitude to the liberals who were already displaying signs of fear at the mounting popular movement, were “already trying to extinguish the fire and bring about tranquillity, thereby earning well-merited insults in the form of praise from the Princes Meshchersky”.²

Lenin’s main weapon of polemic with the reactionary press is thus his critical and more often than not, satirical comments on its admissions. The “talkative” Prince certainly provided Lenin with plenty of ammunition.

In his satirical descriptions of the reactionary papers, Lenin indicated not only their ideological association with the government, but also the purely material association – the

¹ V. I. Lenin, “The Struggle of the Proletariat and the Servility of the Bourgeoisie”, Vol. 8, p. 542.

² V. I. Lenin, “The Political Strike and the Street Fighting in Moscow”, Vol. 9, pp. 353-54.

bribery of many bourgeois press organs by the government. "The press long ago became a power in our country, otherwise the government would not spend tens of thousands of rubles to bribe it and to subsidise the Katkovs and Meshcherskys".¹ Here Lenin denounces both the bribe-makers and the bribe-takers—the government and editors of the two reactionary publications.

In exposing the reactionary paper *Rossiya*, which was published from November 1905 until April 1914, Lenin remarks that it "is subsidised by the pogrom-mongers' government as a vehicle for the views of this government".² He also dubs it "the government sheet" (*ibid.*), "the police rag *Rossiya*",³ "the rag called *Rossiya*",⁴ and "the official *Rossiya*".⁵

In showing up the reactionary press Lenin never tired of stressing that it predominantly expressed the interests of the class of nobles who were leaving the economic and political arena; and, what is more, of the most conservatively-minded among them, "*the extreme Rights*".⁶ He recommends a *Novoye Vremya* article to his *Pravda* readers in the spring of 1913 because it clearly and truly demonstrated the position of "a feudal-minded landlord".⁷ The "landowners' call" for "pacifying the countryside" is how he characterises another article from *Novoye Vremya*, at the same time describing it as "one of the most dishonest newspapers, which adapts itself to profitable business interests, to the government, and to the ruling class of landowners".⁸

Lenin brands the newspaper *Moskovskiye Vedomosti* as an even more consistent upholder of the interests of the landlord class. In the article "Political Agitation and 'The Class Point of View'" published in *Iskra* he draws the attention of his readers to a very instructive episode in the paper's work. Mikhail Stakhovich, Marshal of the Nobility of Orel Gubernia, had advocated at a missionary congress the proclama-

¹ V. I. Lenin, "What Is to Be Done?", Vol. 5, p. 431.

² V. I. Lenin, "Conspiracies of Reaction and Threats of the Pogrom-Mongers", Vol. 11, p. 105.

³ V. I. Lenin, "The Tsar Visits Europe and Members of the Black-Hundred Duma Visit England", Vol. 15, p. 464.

⁴ V. I. Lenin, "Three Questions", Vol. 17, p. 433.

⁵ V. I. Lenin, "Truly Russian Morals", Vol. 18, p. 376.

⁶ V. I. Lenin, "The Cuckoo Praises the Rooster", Vol. 12, p. 313.

⁷ V. I. Lenin, "Thank You for Your Frankness", Vol. 18, p. 551.

⁸ V. I. Lenin, "Landowners' Call for 'Pacifying' the Countryside", Vol. 36, p. 232.

tion in Russia of "freedom of conscience". Such a "liberal" gesture from a high dignitary among the nobility had shocked the editors of *Moskovskiye Vedomosti* and made it experience a sense of unease that the man was one of theirs. The paper decided to smooth over the ruinous effect that this statement from one of the pillars of the autocracy might have. It presented it as some comic turn from the well-known joker and raconteur "Misha" Stakhovich. But it could not keep up the pretence and almost at once flew off the handle at Stakhovich and anyone else who had applauded his stand. The paper's fury was caused by the indifference of some noblemen to religion, to all that was holy, that taught them to fear their "sins", taught them to carry out meekly "our duties", no matter how heavy they might be, to buckle under and carry the cross of grief and deprivation. It reminded all Stakhoviches that thanks to the religious misconceptions of common folk "they, the Stakhoviches, eat well, sleep peacefully and live merrily".

The comment made by Lenin on this excerpt from the paper is intended to underline the class nature of its sermon, the close link with the interests of the noble estate. "The sacred truth!" Lenin exclaims at the cynical discoveries of the newspaper. "This is precisely the case. It is because religious 'delusions' are so widespread among the masses that the Stakhoviches, ... and all our capitalists who live by the labour of the masses, and even *Moskovskiye Vedomosti* itself 'sleep peacefully'".¹ As regards the Stakhovich's speech itself which had so upset the editors, Lenin gives the following comment: so much the worse for you, "Gentlemen, defenders of the bludgeon", if even "jovial landlords" are talking about freedom of conscience and the need to proclaim it in Russia. For Lenin this fact is yet another piece of evidence of the dead-end into which police autocracy had led the country.

Commenting on articles in the reactionary press, Lenin frequently drew the attention of his readers to the crude tone used in cases when it was writing of various popular revolutionary protests. An almost animal-like hatred seized the editors and publicists when they dealt with this material.

The assessments which the servile *Novoye Vremya* gave of

¹ V. I. Lenin, "Political Agitation and 'The Class Point of View'", Vol. 5, p. 338.

revolutionary protests by workers, peasants and soldiers were always equally abusive, malicious calls upon the authorities to take ruthless action. In 1906 Lenin talks of the language which *Novoye Vremya* used to express its ire at the revolutionary outbursts in Latvia. Its usual terminology included "anarchism, plunder", and so on. In January 1907 Lenin drew attention to the fact that *Novoye Vremya* "in moving unity" with the Octobrist and Cadet press was launching "a crusade against the red spectre of Bolshevism".¹ In the same way the paper also reacted to popular revolutionary actions beyond the Russian empire. Lenin noted, for example, in 1908 that the triumph of revolution over the Shah's troops in Persia "has immediately aroused the fury of the semi-official Russian journal".²

The year 1917 was truly a tormenting and unbearable time for *Novoye Vremya*. Each day brought some new cause for fury. Once the paper came down hard on the one person who seemed to it the personification of all the "woes" afflicting Russia—Lenin. In a "Note" published in *Pravda* in June 1917, Lenin fully quotes the passage from *Novoye Vremya* aimed at him: "Why is it that in these days of freedom this black hand has reached out from somewhere and is moving the puppets of Russian democracy? Lenin! But his name is legion. At all cross-roads, a Lenin pops up. And it is quite obvious that strength lies not in Lenin himself but in the receptiveness of the soil to the seeds of anarchy and madness."³ In an extremely brief reply to this tirade, Lenin explained that in the existing circumstances the Bolsheviks understood the word anarchy to refer to the uncontrolled and scandalous profits received by the capitalists from war orders, that by madness they meant the waging of war in order to share out annexed territories and profits. "And if these views find sympathy 'at all cross-roads', it is because they properly express the interests of the proletariat, the interests of all working people and all the exploited" (*ibid.*). The louder the abuse of the hostile press, the more calmly, more reasonably, more logically and ironically Lenin replied to it. This was an invariable law of his polemical skill.

¹ V. I. Lenin, "The St. Petersburg Elections and the Crisis of Opportunism", Vol. 12, p. 60.

² V. I. Lenin, "Events in the Balkans and in Persia", Vol. 15, p. 225.

³ V. I. Lenin, "Note", Vol. 25, p. 59.

A specific trait of Lenin's polemic with the reactionary press is his wide use of the satirical portrait, a pamphleteering description of various figures in that press. It was necessary to create such cartoon characters because of the odiousness of these personalities and their immensely inflated reputation.

The reactionary press was unparalleled in its hypocrisy. It propagated love for the homeland, Christian self-denial for the sake of love for one's neighbour, patronage, philanthropy, charity, reverence for God, for the authorities and for law and order. In lampooning style, Lenin wanted to show a wide readership the paradox involved—namely, that these values were being preached by political cynics, unprincipled hacks, blackmailers, extortionists and bribe-takers. The contrast between word and deed was particularly characteristic of the reactionary press, and Lenin wanted the mass reader, the people, to notice it.

In characterising the editor of *Novoye Vremya*, and his successors—sons and colleagues, Lenin depicted the atmosphere of an editorial office in which pervasive venality prospers, with all manner of blackmail and envy.

In the latter years of his life A. S. Suvorin, the *Novoye Vremya* editor, did not himself write articles for his paper. He was widely known to his contemporaries as an organiser-editor who could find the people he needed on the newspaper job market.

M. O. Menshikov, for instance, was found by Suvorin working on the liberal *Nedelya* (*The Week*), but he finally came into his own as a journalist working for *Novoye Vremya*. When Lenin wrote "the professional *Novoye Vremya* traitors" he had Menshikov in mind as well as the editor.¹ Even when he was working on *Nedelya* he combined his creed of love for one's neighbour with extreme political moderation. Once he had joined the *Novoye Vremya* staff Menshikov went into action. Almost every issue contained his verbose articles in which his unctious tone alternated with a vicious hatred for democracy and the revolutionary movement. The homily on "the wisdom of the meek" did not prevent him from gnashing his teeth every time someone mentioned the revolutionary events of 1905-1907, nor from

¹ V. I. Lenin, "A Replete Bourgeoisie and a Craving Bourgeoisie", Vol. 9, p. 321.

justifying the punitive expeditions with their military courts and executions. In the article "The Lessons of the Moscow Events" devoted to the powerful revolutionary actions of the Moscow workers in the autumn of 1905, Lenin remarked on the fear that had gripped the "lackeys of the autocracy" during those tempestuous days and referred to Menshikov's outbursts in *Novoye Vremya*. In particular, Lenin quoted the following words by Menshikov, full of fear and hatred for revolution: "...It is not yet a conflagration, but that it is arson is already beyond question", "it is not yet a revolution ... but it is already the prologue to a revolution". Menshikov delighted in his own perspicacity: "'It is on the move,' I argued in April. And what frightful strides it has since made!"

It was in reference to this publicist that Lenin uttered what are probably his sharpest words of reproach to any reactionary journalist: "that faithful watchdog of the tsar's Black Hundreds".¹ Lenin created this image in "Comments" published in the legal Bolshevik paper *Zvezda* in February 1911. He analysed Menshikov's ideas on the wave of student "disorders" that was rolling over the country, on the statement by sixty-six representatives of Moscow commerce and industry in *Ruskiye Vedomosti*, in which they expressed their disapproval of the extremely repressive measures against the students. Lenin drew a portrait of Menshikov using quotations from Menshikov's own articles. Readers were thus given the picture of a publicist "setting forth the views of the Right parties and of the government",² remonstrating with the Moscow moneybags for their incautious statements, since "should there be a revolution they will all be hanged or, at best, become paupers", for the fact that they "are extremely hazy about the impending catastrophe". Menshikov accused the liberals and their press of being "instigators of revolution" and, as Lenin underlined, warned them "in the name of the old state power" that they would also be hauled off to the gallows in the event of an insurrection.

When Lenin wrote his article "The Landowners' Call for 'Pacifying' the Countryside", he had in mind not only

¹ V. I. Lenin, "The Fiftieth Anniversary of the Fall of Serfdom", Vol. 17, p. 90.

² V. I. Lenin, "Comments (Menshikov, Gromoboi, Izgoyev)", Vol. 17, p. 96.

Novoye Vremya, but also Menshikov, and his article in *Novoye Vremya* of 25 April 1913. "Menshikov's articles frequently allow readers to make a sure guess as to which 'circles' in official, capitalist, or aristocratic St. Petersburg had *ordered* this or that statement by him."¹ This particular article of Menshikov's had been inspired by "high ranking official landowner circles". Referring to information received from provincial landowners who had visited him, Menshikov had come to the conclusion that the revolutionary protests of the peasants against cruel exploitation and their beggarly existence had not subsided and qualified them, in landowner language, as the plunder of estates, thoughtless arson, stupid damage and village anarchy. During the cruelest reaction he was still dissatisfied with the measures being taken by the government to "pacify" the countryside. "During the seven years of our parliamentary era, no headway at all has been made in the fight against village anarchy," he concluded. Lenin turned Menshikov's article into a pamphlet against him, showing the reader how "the landowners' lackey blurts out the landowners' true state of mind and the true causes of their alarm" (*ibid.*, p. 233).

Lenin's rejoinder to Gringmut, the editor of *Moskovskiye Vedomosti*, is made with great satirical force: "His extremely useful activity in obtaining (and featuring) material for revolutionary agitation has somehow fallen off ... faded..."² He crowned his reply with the sarcastic comment: "You must try harder, colleague!" (*ibid.*). The lines that Lenin devoted to Prince Meshchersky and his journal *Grazhdanin* also carry their quota of satirical force: "The Prince, who has been through fire and water in the various higher civil service 'spheres' of St. Petersburg, usually preaches in this magazine the most reactionary things."³ He is here alluding to the tempestuous career of the "prince by dignitary", and mocking his uncommonly consistent reactionary nature as an editor, publisher and publicist.

The reactionary press, with its frankly anti-democratic and blatantly counter-revolutionary views, provided Lenin with

¹ V. I. Lenin, "Landowners' Call for 'Pacifying' the Countryside", Vol. 36, p. 232.

² V. I. Lenin, "Moscow Zubatovists in St. Petersburg", Vol. 6, p. 301.

³ V. I. Lenin, "Russian Government and Russian Reforms", Vol. 19, p. 392.

the material he needed for fighting the press of other tendencies—the bourgeois-liberal, petty-bourgeois and opportunist press. Using undeniable references he demonstrated the ideological influence of the reactionary press on various other periodicals claiming to belong to the opposition and to favour democracy and even socialism. He revealed and demonstrated publicly the similarity between them and the reactionary press in their work methods and polemical devices. He also used for this purpose the praise which they sometimes received from the reactionary press. A comparison with the reactionary press, which had discredited itself amongst wide sections of the public, brought the required results by the shortest route, without extra commentary.

To give one example, in the notorious collection *Vekhi*, published in 1909 by liberal professors and publicists, Lenin saw not only an encyclopaedia of liberal apostasy, a manifestation of fear by the liberal bourgeoisie in the face of revolution and concealed hatred for the democratic masses, but also traces of the influence of such publications as *Moskovskiye Vedomosti* and *Novoye Vremya*. This influence was evident, in particular, in an attempt by the *Vekhi* writers to decry as “intellectualism” the democratic tradition in the history of Russia’s social thought. “Of course,” he writes, “the publicists of *Novoye Vremya*—Rozanov, Menshikov and A. Stolyпин—have hastened to salute *Vekhi* with their kisses.”¹

In such a situation Lenin assessed praise for a liberal publication from the reactionary press as nothing more than an insult, and a fully deserved insult at that. He told the authors of liberal, pseudo-democratic and pseudo-socialist publications that they had plumbed the depths if they ever found themselves in the embrace of *Novoye Vremya*, *Moskovskiye Vedomosti*, *Grazhdanin*, *Zemshchina* or *Russkaya Volya*.

Pointing to the cowardly, double-dealing behaviour of the liberal bourgeoisie in the period of the first Russian revolution, Lenin addressed its representatives in the following words: “It is quite natural for the tsar to despise you. It is quite natural for his contempt to be conveyed to you by his lackeys, the Suvorins, who patronisingly pat your Mr.

¹ V. I. Lenin, “Concerning *Vekhi*”, Vol. 16, p. 129.

Petrunkovich on the back.”¹ Lenin viewed this back-slapping of the liberal press (Petrunkovich was publisher of *Rech*) as a natural phenomenon. The vacillation of the liberal bourgeoisie, its drift towards reaction at a time of the greatest revolutionary activity by the common people found expression in the liberal press, and this was picked up at once by the monarchist press, which straightaway showered it with praise.

Sometimes the effect of the reactionary on the liberal press became simply comical. In 1906, in connection with the Cadet draft appeal of the State Duma to the people on the question of land, the *Rossiia* newspaper addressed the Cadets in menacing tones, warning them of the illegality, irrationality and “revolutionariness” of such a step. The threats produced the desired effect. Lenin immediately noted this shameful retreat by the liberal press under pressure from a reactionary newspaper and wrote in *Ekho*: “Today the Cadet *Rech* has completely changed front and is pronouncing against the appeal, obviously frightened by the threats emanating from the press that cringes before the government.”²

Under Lenin’s pen, a comparison of the *modus operandi* of some of the bourgeois-liberal publications that claimed respectability with the base devices of *Novoye Vremya* acquired great revelatory force. In many situations, such comparisons told the reader more than lengthy descriptions of the reactionary nature of various articles in liberal and opportunist publications.

Thus we see that Lenin’s polemic with the reactionary press possessed its own particular style, which resulted from the open hostility of the reactionary press to any manifestations of democratic and revolutionary movement in the country; from its open defence of the most outdated forms of state administration, and from the unpopularity of these papers among democratic sections of the Russian public. Lenin’s principal means of combating this press was his extensive and multifaceted use of its own self-revelations coupled with his ironic, sarcastic commentaries to them.

¹ V. I. Lenin, “While the Proletariat Is Doing the Fighting the Bourgeoisie Is Stealing Towards Power”, Vol. 9, p. 176.

² V. I. Lenin, “Conspiracies of Reaction and Threats of the Pogrom-Mongers”, Vol. 11, p. 105.

What is more, these self-revelations were most striking in articles with “sharply condemnatory statements” and “accompanied by the crudest invective”,¹ presented as furious “exposures” of liberals, troublemakers and socialists. As Lenin emphasised in this connection, “The bitterest enemies of socialism sometimes do it a service by the excessive zeal of their ‘exposures’. They bear down on the very things that deserve sympathy and emulation. They open the people’s eyes to the infamy of the bourgeoisie by the very nature of their attacks”.² Naturally, they did not “open the people’s eyes” without a certain help from Lenin’s polemical skill, which he demonstrated time and again in contention with the reactionary press.

¹ V. I. Lenin, “Word and Deed”, Vol. 19, p. 262.

² V. I. Lenin, “From a Publicist’s Diary”, Vol. 25, p. 298.

Lenin always assessed the bourgeois-liberal press as a more dangerous foe than the reactionary press. He felt that it was impossible to find examples of the Black Hundred press corrupting and winning over "any considerable section of the population".¹ At the same time he noted very definitely that "our legal, liberal, and 'democratic' press" was exerting such an influence on the common people (ibid.).

The reasons for this influence come out most fully in Lenin's works. In contrast to the reactionary press, the bourgeois-liberal papers endeavoured not to demonstrate openly their anti-democratic and counter-revolutionary nature. Furthermore, they agitated under the false slogan of fighting for "people's freedom". They did not condemn the popular movement while it was helping bourgeois parties to secure their power. Any victory over the autocracy gained through the people's revolutionary onslaught, they attributed to the bourgeois parties and to their own efforts.

This press spread the illusion that "people's freedom" can be attained and ensured by peaceful, constitutional means. On the one hand, the bourgeois-liberal press vigorously sowed constitutional illusions among the people, particularly among the peasants; on the other, it no less energetically exploited them, profiting from the fruits of those illusions.

Lenin regarded as one of the main tasks of the Bolshevik Party and its press to tear off the bourgeois parties and their press organs the disguise of "freedom fighters" and the mask of "love of the people and of liberty"; to scatter to the wind their aspirations of attaining their objectives by reformist rather than revolutionary means. In 1907, when summing up the first Russian revolution, Lenin declared firmly: "The Social-Democrats will see to it that, when the democratic struggle inevitably breaks out with new force, the band of

¹ V. I. Lenin, "In Memory of Count Heyden", Vol. 13, p. 51.

liberal careerists called the Cadet Party does not once again divide the democratic ranks and spread discord among them.”¹ In fact, at the start of a fresh revolutionary upsurge in October 1910, when once again analysing the lessons of the 1905-1907 revolution, Lenin felt it necessary to remind people of this very important task of the Party and its press. He wrote: “There will be no freedom in Russia as long as the broad masses of the people believe in the liberals, believe in the possibility of ‘peace’ with the tsarist regime and stand aloof from the revolutionary struggle of the workers.”² As a publicist Lenin worked tirelessly to carry out this paramount task right up to October 1917.

The popularity of the bourgeois-liberal press among certain democratic sections of the public was also in part due to the criticism it expressed within certain limits and in certain doses. The columns of individual bourgeois-liberal papers sometimes contained fairly sharp criticism of individual instances of autocratic despotism and police tyranny, and in particular of abuses by the local authorities. The critical tone of the bourgeois-liberal press invariably increased in volume in proportion to the development of the constitutional movement; but when the revolutionary struggle became acute it always faded noticeably. Writing in December 1904 about one such period of feverish criticism in the bourgeois-liberal press on the eve of the first Russian revolution, Lenin declared: “Russia is experiencing a resurgence of the constitutional movement... Legal newspapers are attacking the bureaucracy, demanding participation of the people’s representatives in the state administration, and pressing for liberal reforms.”³

The frequent contributions to these newspapers and magazines by well-known Russian men of letters also helped in no small way to make them popular. Such writers as Leonid Andreyev, Ivan Bunin, Vikenty Veressayev, Alexander Kuprin, Vladimir Korolenko and Alexei Tolstoi enhanced the interest of democratic sections of the public in bourgeois-liberal publications through their talented artistic style.

All this, together with fully up-to-date printing machinery, ensured the bourgeois-liberal periodicals quite a high circula-

¹ V. I. Lenin, “Revolution and Counter-Revolution”, Vol. 13, p. 122.

² V. I. Lenin, “The Lessons of the Revolution”, Vol. 16, p. 303.

³ V. I. Lenin, “The Autocracy and the Proletariat”, Vol. 8, p. 21.

tion and, consequently, plenty of advertisements. In turn, the substantial profit from advertisements enabled them to constantly modernise their printing equipment, to acquire high-quality paper and in sufficient quantities, and to spend considerable sums of money on maintaining reporters. Thus, the subsidies coming into these periodicals from lucrative advertisements, were, as Lenin noted, yet another reason for their quantitative predominance over the working-class press, being at the same time both cause and effect.¹

In replying to accusations that he was a “Cadet-eater”, Lenin explained: “In reality there is hardly one Marxist newspaper for every hundred liberal papers in Russia, so that it is simply ridiculous to talk about our ‘exaggerated’ criticism of the Cadets: we are not yet doing even one-hundredth of what is necessary in order that the sentiment of ‘general opposition’ prevailing in society and among the people may be replaced by an anti-liberal, definitely and consciously democratic sentiment.”² Only when both presses were more or less equal in quantity, Lenin told his detractors, could one seriously talk about “Cadet-eating”, about exposing liberal sermons. The Bolshevik press, however, had to persistently tackle this important task even while it remained in a clear minority—that was how Lenin put the issue to all the Party publicists.

The bourgeois-liberal press masked its class and partisan affiliations with abstract slogans on fighting for popular freedom, social progress, human rights, and with slogans based on abstract humanism. Therefore, in his polemic with it, Lenin concentrated on characterising the exact social and partisan audience of the various publications, uncovering not only their general bourgeois class selfishness, but also their specific social and political interests. He revealed to wide sections of the public those hidden aspects of each bourgeois-liberal publication that defined its position.

Part of these exposé assessments related to the “old” liberal journals that had existed from the late nineteenth century, such as *Russkaya Mysl* and *Severny Vestnik*, and the newspaper *Russkiye Vedomosti*. Here Lenin showed the evolution of these publications, their political and partisan affil-

¹ See V. I. Lenin, “How to Guarantee the Success of the Constituent Assembly”, Vol. 25, p. 376.

² V. I. Lenin, “A Talk on ‘Cadet-Eating’”, Vol. 18, p. 295.

iations in the new circumstances. A considerable number of these evaluations concerned the new magazines of the liberal press, such as *Osvobozhdeniye* (*Liberation*), *Polyarnaya Zvezda* (*Polar Star*), *Sovremennik* (*Contemporary*), and the newspapers *Rech* (*Speech*), *Nasha Zhizn* (*Our Life*), *Rus* (*Russia*) and *Dyen* (*Day*). His assessments were based on objective analysis but, at the same time, carried a polemical charge of considerable power, frequently being of a pamphleteering nature. Bourgeois-liberal publishers and editors were furious that their periodicals should be given a Marxist assessment "according to ... scientific, economic and political features", and they were all the more offended by the sarcasm and irony.¹

Let us take the journal *Russkaya Mysl* which first appeared in 1880 and entitled itself "a literary and political publication". For some time, from 1885 until 1905, while under the publisher and editor V. M. Lavrov, its real editor-in-chief was the well-known liberal publicist V. A. Goltsev. Later on the editors were F. K. Arnold and A. A. Kizeveter, and then from 1911 to 1918 in Russia and subsequently, following White emigration, first in Prague and then in Paris, it was edited by P. B. Struve, "that arch-renegade", as Lenin called him.²

Lenin described the editors of this magazine as people who "took their own line and, far from adhering to strict discipline, ... destroyed all discipline in the Cadet Party".³ Lenin saw the difference between *Russkaya Mysl* and other Cadet journals in that its counter-revolutionary nature was more blatant.

A pamphleteering description of *Russkaya Mysl* was given in the article "Yet Another Anti-Democratic Campaign" published in the legal Bolshevik paper *Nevskaya Zvezda* in September 1912. With various minor modifications this description is repeated every time Lenin refers to the magazine.

"A literary and political publication" was all that could be read on the cover. Not a word about the interests of the editorial board, that they were the interests of the liberal bour-

¹ V. I. Lenin, "A Little Explanation", Vol. 18, p. 255.

² V. I. Lenin, "An Estimate of Marx by International Liberalism", Vol. 13, p. 491.

³ V. I. Lenin, "Political Parties in the Five Years of the Third Duma", Vol. 17, p. 498.

geoisie, the interests of the Cadet Party, its Right, most counter-revolutionary wing. But by reading the journal carefully and analysing its articles, Lenin managed to say precisely that, to reveal the essence of the journal's political line. Hatred of revolution "is proved monthly by *Russkaya Mysl*", he stresses, indicating the journal's ideological and theoretical link with the counter-revolutionary *Vekhi* and the overlapping of their staffs.¹ And he adds in a bibliographical note published in the journal *Prosveshcheniye* that *Russkaya Mysl* is a boring magazine. "There is only one interesting thing about it. Among its writers there are liberals, who contribute to and support *Vekhi*, the notorious renegade book." Going on to reveal the ideological significance of this overlapping of authors, he reminds his readers that *Vekhi* was a book "in which yesterday's champions of liberty poured mud and filth on *the struggle of the masses for liberty*, a book in which, furthermore, the democratic masses of workers and peasants were depicted as a herd led by 'intellectuals'—an old trick used by all Black-Hundred supporters".²

Lenin's descriptions of this magazine always provide a similar assessment, yet vary in their angle of approach. They enrich each other, show up almost every time from a new viewpoint its extreme Right-wing position in the world of bourgeois-liberal journalism. Thus, in the article published in *Pravda* in April 1914, he wrote that the journal "which is noted for its preaching of *respect* for landed property..." is "a journal of the counter-revolutionary liberals".³ In another article from the same period he once again returned to an evaluation of the magazine, adding these new aspects: "It is a journal run by people who have echoed *all* the abuse and vituperation the reactionaries heap on the revolution. It is a journal which stands up stoutly for clericalism and the sanctity of landlord property."⁴ The distinction between this journal and the other bourgeois-liberal periodicals is seen by Lenin also in that it has a clearly expressed trend—"an

¹ V. I. Lenin, "The Unity of the Cadets and *Novoye Vremya*", Vol. 18, p. 325.

² V. I. Lenin, "*Vekhi* Contributors and Nationalism", Vol. 19, p. 72.

³ V. I. Lenin, "Serf Economy in the Rural Areas", Vol. 20, p. 242.

⁴ V. I. Lenin, "The Estimates of the Ministry of Agriculture", Vol. 20, p. 314.

odious trend, but one which performs a very good service for the counter-revolutionary liberal bourgeoisie".¹

Lenin's descriptions of the socio-political paper *Ruskiye Vedomosti* (1863-1918) are similarly of immense interest. At the turn of the century this paper was edited by the renowned liberal professor V. M. Sobolevsky with the assistance of Narodnik-minded writers and publicists who created for the paper a reputation of being the most critical and liberal among St Petersburg newspapers. The paper, naturally, never proclaimed its class or party affiliations.

Nonetheless, the paper itself and other bourgeois-liberal periodicals did all they could to give it the appearance of being a super-liberal and even democratic publication. This was particularly so on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of *Ruskiye Vedomosti* when the "rhetoricians of liberalism", speaking without any justification "on behalf of democracy", lauded the paper as a democratic periodical. They solemnly marked the paper's anniversary as the "jubilee of the Russian intelligentsia". In his article "On the 'Jubilee of the Russian Intelligentsia'", Lenin mercilessly flayed the mendacious character of these compliments paid to *Ruskiye Vedomosti*. He reminded *Pravda* readers how, in 1905, the paper's articles had tried "to trip up the first serious and deep-going mass movement in Russia, whose aim was to attain political freedom".² He reminded them, too, how Professor Vinogradov's articles had glorified the reactionary course being pursued in the country's agricultural development. Lenin perceived in the artificially-created reputation of the paper as a democratic publication a great danger for the revolutionary movement in Russia. He expressed the degree of that danger with great clarity in the concluding lines of his response to the paper's anniversary: "There can be *no* political freedom in Russia until she has (or because she lacks) mass democracy with a clear understanding of the total short-sightedness, absurdity and vileness of the 'Vinogradov'-type liberalism of *Ruskiye Vedomosti*" (ibid., p. 296). Lenin not only denied the paper's right to call itself a democratic publication, but he also qualified its liberalism as the worst form possible.

¹ V. I. Lenin, "To Maxim Gorky, November 22, 1910", Vol. 34, p. 434.

² V. I. Lenin, "On the 'Jubilee of the Russian Intelligentsia'", Vol. 41, p. 295.

Thus, Lenin's assessments clearly defined the paper's class and partisan tendency. On the occasion of the death in 1913 of the paper's editor Sobolevsky, Lenin wrote with indignation in *Pravda* about the attempts by liberal-bourgeois publicists to laud him as a "staunch progressive figure". Lenin's anger was aroused not only by such empty-sounding epithets as "oppositionism" and "progressism" used by the bourgeois-liberal press and which attested to its "ancient, colourless, general haziness",¹ but also, and mainly by the failure to evaluate the paper's political orientation. "They spoke and wrote of his personal qualities. They avoided the question of the political trend followed by *Russkiye Vedomosti*" (ibid.). And "if you really want to teach politics to the people", that has to be done (ibid.). In characterising the paper as one combining "*Right Cadetism and Narodnik overtones*" (ibid.), Lenin was politically educating *Pravda* readers.

It was not easy to enlighten the people politically and expose the anti-popular essence of bourgeois-liberal publications. Among the democratic sections of the reading public, particularly among the intellectuals, these publications often enjoyed a certain amount of sympathy because of their critical material, so criticism of them from a Marxist position by no means always met with support. "People in Russia are too ready to give credence to any protest against the autocracy and frown upon any criticism of the character and substance of that protest, regarding such criticism as something that maliciously disunites the movement for emancipation."² Lenin saw this as the reason for the success of the illegal bourgeois-liberal journal *Osvobozhdeniye* (1902-05), father of the Cadet press, set up by Struve. The journal "has a wide circulation among all and sundry free-thinking intellectuals who resent any analysis of the class content of *Osvobozhdeniye* liberalism" (ibid.).

The difficulty also lay in the fact that the bourgeois-liberal papers and journals began to grow like mushrooms after the rain at the time of the first Russian revolution, after the tsarist autocracy had proclaimed bourgeois "freedom of the press". In October 1905, the principal political party of the liberal bourgeoisie, the Constitutional Democrats (Cadets),

¹ V. I. Lenin, "Frank Speeches by a Liberal", Vol. 19, p. 135.

² V. I. Lenin, "What Our Liberal Bourgeois Want, and What They Fear", Vol. 9, p. 240.

came into existence. Having gained the majority of seats in the First State Duma, at the elections which had taken place in February and March that year, the Cadet Party began swiftly to bring under its influence the liberal periodicals that sympathised with it. "The Cadets' victories have turned the head of our liberal press. In the course of the election campaign the Cadets succeeded in rallying all, or nearly all, the liberals. Newspapers which hitherto had not been associated with the Cadet Party have in effect become the organs of that party. The liberal press is overjoyed."¹ That was Lenin's assessment of the situation. He noted that the Cadet press represented "nearly nine-tenths of the whole of the political press in Russia at the present time" (ibid., p. 270). A little later, in early 1907, Lenin was once again writing about "the tremendous power of the Cadet daily press".²

None of these publications called themselves either bourgeois-liberal or bourgeois or liberal within their own circle. Nor did they call themselves organs of the Cadet Party. To the outside world they were free of any party affiliation; they simply came out under the flag of "the freedom of the people", "constitution and democracy". This was convenient for political manoeuvring, since the Cadet Party did not formally take responsibility for the content of articles published in the innumerable "democratic"—actually Cadet—publications. In a united chorus they all carried out the major task of the Cadets, energetically sowing among the people constitutional illusions, extinguishing the flame of revolutionary struggle. As Lenin put it, "constitutional illusions are a politically opportunist and bourgeois poison, which the Cadet press, taking advantage of the enforced silence of the socialist newspapers, is pouring into the brains of the people through its millions of copies".³ Let us note that Lenin deliberately refers here to the enforced silence of the socialist papers. After the authorities had closed down in early December 1905 the month-long first legal Bolshevik paper *Novaya Zhizn*, the Party managed to arrange for the publishing of a new legal paper in St Petersburg under the name of

¹ V. I. Lenin, "The Victory of the Cadets and the Tasks of the Workers' Party", Vol. 10, p. 201.

² V. I. Lenin, "The Opening of the Second State Duma", Vol. 12, p. 154.

³ V. I. Lenin, "The Victory of the Cadets and the Tasks of the Workers' Party", Vol. 10, p. 271.

Volna (Wave) only at the end of April 1906. "The Victory of the Cadets and the Tasks of the Workers' Party" quoted here was brought out in the capital as a separate pamphlet in April 1906.

During this period Lenin directed his polemical blows with particular force at the covert Cadet affiliation of the majority of bourgeois-liberal periodicals. The Cadet Party wished to mask the scope of its propagandist capacity and camouflage the fact that almost all the bourgeois press echoed its line. Lenin not only disclosed this fact, but each time also revealed the specific purpose of a particular Cadet or pro-Cadet periodical. Having shown the nuances, he repeatedly reminded his readers that they were all in the main allies and constituted a united front. He taught his readers to recognise the typical reasoning of a Cadet, which was particularly comprehensible to anyone "who has carefully read Mr. Struve's *Osvobozhdeniye* and the later legal Cadet publications" (ibid., p. 241).

Even the central press organs of the Cadet Party came out without any indication of their political affiliation. And this was not because the Cadets did not have formal legality—for the government well appreciated that the Party existed, since the whole press was writing openly about it. But rather because they wished to influence the ordinary people unnoticed, without revealing all the forces at their disposal in the press.

Rech, which was in fact the central press organ of the Cadet Party between 1906 and 1918, was a notable case in point. Right from the outset Lenin had to show the paper in its true colours and reveal its partisanship to the readers. The leader in *Rech* of 28 May 1906 caught Lenin's eye as "a most instructive sign of the times".¹ The article expressed disagreement with the Bolshevik attitude to the Cadet Ministry, for the creation of which the Cadets had demanded "unanimity" within the liberation movement "without distinction of shades" of political opinion expressed by the parties making up that movement. Commenting on this leading article, Lenin noted: "We can say that the bourgeois *Rech* wants to convert the proletariat into a blind accessory to the deal that the liberals want to make with the old authority.

¹ V. I. Lenin, "The Tactics of the Proletariat and the Tasks of the Moment", Vol. 10, p. 490.

But the main target against which this deal will be directed will be the proletariat, and the next, of course, the revolutionary peasantry” (ibid., p. 491). However, before commenting on the leader, Lenin depicts the paper for his readers as follows: “It is significant that *Rech*, the chief organ of the Cadet Party, devoted the leading article in its last issue to the question of the Social-Democrats’ attitude towards the idea of a Cadet Ministry” (ibid., p. 490).

Subsequently, Lenin frequently returned to depicting *Rech* in its full dress uniform. Less than a month later he not only mentioned once again that *Rech* was the chief organ of the Cadets,¹ but also asked its editors: “Is it not high time it was said that *Rech* is the official and chief organ of that party?” (ibid.). Concealment of this fact helped the Cadet leaders to delude readers about their activity behind the scenes, about the various deals and compromises the Party was making with the authorities, which could well compromise the Cadet Party in the eyes of the broad democratic public.

Rus was yet another newspaper that hid its affiliation to the Cadet Party; it was edited from 1903 onwards by A. A. Suvorin, the son of A. S. Suvorin. Yet the entire pattern of thought in the paper, all its policy objectives were obviously Cadet. In the brochure “The Victory of the Cadets and the Tasks of the Workers’ Party”, Lenin notes yet again that “nearly all the liberal newspapers, including *Rus*, ... have *virtually* gone over to that party”.² He characterises *Rus* as the actual organ of the Cadet Party: “The Cadet newspaper *Rus*, welcoming the victory of the party of ‘people’s freedom’ in St. Petersburg, publishes in its issue of March 22 an impassioned article entitled ‘With the People or Against It?’” (ibid., p. 225).

“*Rus* writes well,” says Lenin. “The Cadets speak well; they speak wonderfully well” (ibid.). This graphic, sarcastic description helped the readers of Lenin’s works not simply to penetrate to the essence of individual publications, but also to see the political face of a paper, better to understand the alignment of class forces in the country.

The Cadet tendency of the paper *Tovarishch* (*Comrade*)

¹ V. I. Lenin, “Negotiations about the Cabinet”, Vol. 11, p. 48.

² V. I. Lenin, “The Victory of the Cadets and the Tasks of the Workers’ Party”. Vol. 10, p. 224.

was masked with extreme care. The editors even used a name that somehow marked it off from the Cadet Party and brought it closer to the Social-Democrats. They declared that the paper was not an organ of any party, and the paper was edited by people who formally did not belong to the Cadet Party, although it was in this paper that they had finally become Cadet or pro-Cadet publicists. While V. V. Portugalov had previously worked on the bourgeois-liberal *Saratovsky Listok* and had quite logically then advanced on to the path of Cadetism, V. M. Chernov had been a leader of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party, and leading staff members of the paper Yekaterina Kuskova and Sergei Prokopovich had been well known as representatives of opportunism within Social-Democracy. All these "socialists" emigrated after October 1917 and conducted anti-Soviet activity in the White émigré press from abroad. But during their work on *Tovarishch* they were still writing as "fighters" for noble popular interests and ideals. True, they did so by deliberately not tying themselves to any party affiliation.

However, in the very first issue their partisanship emerged, like a cat out of the bag. The paper openly associated the hopes of implementing its ideals with the activity of the Cadet Party. It lauded the Cadet programme in which the Cadets were allegedly acting in defence of the interests of the peasants, workers, all the citizens of the country. It called upon people to vote for the Cadets in the Duma elections, in so far as, according to the paper, "the Cadets will heed the voice of the people". The paper's propaganda immediately gave Lenin the chance to remark with irony: "How beautifully those Cadets write!" (ibid., p. 272). He defined the paper as a Cadet organ, as if especially designed to promote the penetration of Cadet ideology among the people and the working class. Lenin was angry at "this shameless bourgeois lie" by the paper and called upon his readers to do all they could to oppose and expose it. He stressed firmly that "it is absolutely necessary to combat this bourgeois corruption of the working class with the utmost vigour, a corruption which is all the more dangerous because the Cadets have heaps of newspapers, whereas we have not a single one, in spite of our innumerable attempts to start a most moderate, most restrained and most modest socialist newspaper" (ibid.). The bootlicking attitude of the *Tovarishch* publicists towards the main party of the counter-revolutionary Russian bourgeoisie

obliged Lenin to return time and again to a characterisation of their activity, moreover often in sarcastic pamphleteering tones. "The slave who drools when smugly describing the delights of slavish existence and who goes into ecstasies over his good and kind master is a grovelling boor. And you, gentlemen of *Tovarishch*, are just such boors."¹

Lenin paid particular attention to exposing the counter-revolutionary and anti-democratic nature of the bourgeois-liberal papers and journals. They did not display these qualities as openly and frankly as the reactionary press, but by virtue of belonging to a class whose interests were diametrically opposed to those of the workers and peasants, of belonging to the camp of the liberal bourgeoisie, this press was democratic only in words, in its high-flown, strident and empty phrases. When the popular revolutionary struggle began to spread, that press started to speak in the language of the reactionary papers and journals.

Lenin locked horns with the bourgeois-liberal press much more frequently than he did with the reactionary press. And this was understandable, since its impact on the people was more extensive and, at the same time, potentially more damaging for the revolutionary movement, in so far as this damaging effect was not obvious; it required exposure. Because he knew that the liberals were more dangerous opponents, Lenin reckoned that polemic with them had to be more substantial.²

In one article he showed, for example, that "it is doubly useful for the workers to look closely into Cadet policy: first of all, they will get to know the liberal bourgeois very well and, secondly, they will learn to see more clearly the mistakes made by certain supporters of the working class".³

The hostile press tried to speculate on the enhanced critical interest that the Bolshevik press and its publicists took in the bourgeois-liberal papers. They made provocative hints that the propaganda of the reactionary press was more to the liking of Bolshevik publicists than the content of liberal publications. Lenin firmly rebuffed these notions. He explained to anyone who was genuinely, and not deliberately, confused on this count that criticism of the liberal press on the most

¹ V. I. Lenin, "In Memory of Count Heyden", Vol. 13, p. 53.

² See V. I. Lenin, "A Talk on 'Cadet-Eating'", Vol. 18, p. 295.

³ V. I. Lenin, "The Elections and the Opposition", Vol. 18, p. 132.

substantial issues of socio-political life bore, naturally, a double polemical, critical charge against the reactionary press: "You will find that always and everywhere, without any exception, the working-class democrats accuse the liberals exclusively for being close to the Rights, for the irresolute and *fictitious* nature of their fight against the Rights, for their halfheartedness, *thereby* accusing the Rights, not merely of 'half a sin', but of a 'whole sin'".¹

Lenin directed the brunt of attack against the most influential and, from the bourgeois standpoint, the most authoritative periodicals. Those that most artfully concealed their counter-revolutionary and anti-democratic essence by liberal and democratic phrase-mongering, those that combined "the possibility of influencing the masses of readers with the right to speak on behalf of official, titular professional scholarship"² were especially difficult to expose and, therefore, it was especially important to do so. Lenin had to show that behind the scientific-sounding and extremely complex phraseology lay the usual crude material selfishness of the class of capitalists, shallowness, and insubstantial and limited political programmes.

Lenin persistently and consistently exposed the class selfishness of the bourgeoisie in the writings of the liberal press. In 1905 he wrote an article to draw the attention of his readers to its delight over the agrarian programme proposed by Zemstvo officials. This programme, in the opinion of, for example, *Ekonomicheskaya Gazeta*, was drawn up with "political tact and a deep understanding of what is taking place about us". Lenin's comment on this cleverly composed phrase is ironical and wholly aimed at exposing the self-seeking considerations that were concealed within it. He writes, translating the paper's language into that of the class that is using it as its mouthpiece: "The tact and the understanding of the landlords consist in the fact that when the peasants themselves began to intervene actively and definitely in agrarian relations, these landlords began to speak of the necessity of state interference."³ Lenin does not talk of the

¹ V. I. Lenin, "The Nature and Significance of Our Polemics against the Liberals", Vol. 18, p. 125.

² V. I. Lenin, "An Estimate of Marx by International Liberalism", Vol. 13, p. 490.

³ V. I. Lenin, "The Agrarian Programme of the Liberals", Vol. 8, p. 317.

tact and understanding of a certain author on *Ekonomicheskaya Gazeta*; he fully identifies the paper's voice with that of the landlords. Lenin used this device particularly often in polemic with the liberal press, since its class position was not always clear to the readers; it had to be extracted from under a pile of devious and weighty phrases.

In May 1912, *Russkiye Vedomosti* published an article whose author was expressing disapproval of the strike workers had organised for May Day; more often than not the workers use the occasion to demand wage rises, as a ten per cent wage rise for certain grades of calico. The article was clearly to the liking of the liberal journalists; *Rech* published it in full. Passing comment on it in the illegal central Party paper *Sotsial-Demokrat*, Lenin assessed it as very instructive, in the sense that "the crudest self-interest of a bourgeois, the vilest cowardice of a counter-revolutionary—that is what lies behind the florid phrases of the liberal".¹

It was this class self-interest that gave rise to the concealed counter-revolutionary nature of the bourgeois-liberal press, which Lenin disclosed consistently.

Fear and cowardice by the liberal press stemmed not from concern over censorship, but concern over revolution as an imminent reality. This was noticeable even in the uncensored liberal press which came out abroad and was illegally distributed in the country before the first Russian revolution. In his work "Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution", Lenin noted that this fear was based on the historical experience of the bourgeoisie generally, on the experience of Western bourgeois revolutions in particular, and on the political instability of the Russian bourgeoisie, its traditional belief in the eternity of autocratic principle in Russia, on its desire to possess the power necessary to bridle the "anarchic" and "insurrectionist passions" of the mob. "So it is not only because of the censorship," wrote Lenin, "not only 'for fear of the Jews' that our bourgeois-liberal press deplures the possibility of the revolutionary path, fears the revolution, tries to frighten the tsar with the bogey of revolution, seeks to avoid revolution, and grovels and toadies for the sake of miserable reforms as the foundation of the reformist path."²

¹ V. I. Lenin, "The Revolutionary Upswing", Vol. 18, p. 106.

² V. I. Lenin, "Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution", Vol. 9, p. 51.

After studying the Russian liberal press, Lenin came to the conclusion that this was the viewpoint both of such legal Russian liberal publications as *Russkiye Vedomosti*, *Syn Otechestva* (*Son of the Fatherland*), *Nasha Zhizn*, *Nashi Dni*, and the illegal journal *Osvobozhdeniye* which came out abroad and thus escaped censorship. He called the ideas advanced by *Osvobozhdeniye* a justification of the autocracy, and a justification frequently reiterated. "And the counter-revolutionary tone never left the pages of *Osvobozhdeniye*, the illegal '*Osvobozhdeniye*'." ¹ Lenin accused this journal and the other "innumerable vassal organs of Russian liberalism" on the ground that they "cannot bear the socialist party principle and will not hear of class struggle". ²

He did what he could to publicise as broadly as possible frank, even if involuntary, counter-revolutionary statement made by a liberal paper. Thus, in 1905, Lenin referred to an article written by the liberal publicist Yollos in *Russkiye Vedomosti* which graphically demonstrated that the author feared the decisive victory of revolution in Russia, saying that "'uninterrupted revolution' is 'uninterrupted anarchy'". ³ Lenin sharply rebuked the liberal journal *Polyarnaya Zvezda* (*Polar Star*) which had raised the alarm about "force by the Lefts" and strike committees at a time when "the military and police dictatorship was indulging in its savage orgies" ⁴ throughout Russia. In this connection Lenin wondered how the editors would behave if, for example, the peasants decided to take all land into their hands by force. "*Polyarnaya Zvezda*, with an unctuous excuse, will send the Kaufmans into the field to prove that the landlords haven't very much land: that, strictly speaking, it is not the land that is the cause of the trouble, and that everything can be settled peacefully" (*ibid.*, p. 217). Alexander Kaufman naturally served Lenin as a prime source for a generalised picture of a bourgeois, liberal journalist ready in any circumstances to find a compromise in the interests of coun-

¹ V. I. Lenin, "The Victory of the Cadets and the Tasks of the Workers' Party", Vol. 10, p. 265.

² V. I. Lenin, "The Socialist Party and Non-Party Revolutionism", Vol. 10, p. 80.

³ V. I. Lenin, "A Replete Bourgeoisie and a Craving Bourgeoisie", Vol. 9, p. 320.

⁴ V. I. Lenin, "The Victory of the Cadets and the Tasks of the Workers' Party", Vol. 10, p. 216.

ter-revolution. He was a very typical figure for the bourgeois-liberal press, being a professor, economist and statistician, one of the organisers and leaders of the Cadet Party, an eminent publicist in its periodicals.

Lenin regarded the negative attitude of the liberal press to popular revolutionary protest as a typical manifestation of the Russian bourgeoisie's counter-revolutionary nature, and he often underlined this view. "The bourgeois always and everywhere remains true to himself; whether you take *Polyarnaya Zvezda* or *Nasha Zhizn*, whether you read Struve or Blank, you will always find this same narrow-minded, professorially pedantic and bureaucratically lifeless appraisal of periods of revolution and periods of reform" (ibid., p. 253). The liberal press usually classified popular revolutionary struggle at moments of its greatest intensity as a time of "madness", "anarchy", the reign of "base passions and mob instincts" and the play of "destructive forces". At that moment it fully merged with the position of the reactionary press, which invariably spoke about popular revolutionary action in precisely the same terms.

Even when reaction had triumphed the liberal press discussed popular revolutionary struggle in the same terms. It tried to accommodate itself to the new "hard order", to expiate its "sin" before the reactionary forces, to force them to forget about how it had made menacing noises about bureaucracy when the constitutional movement was on the upswing. "Contrasting 'errors of the revolution' or 'revolutionary illusions' with 'positive constitutional work' is the keynote of present-day political literature."¹ That was Lenin writing in 1907, when the reaction had come into its own. And who was it that was singing the main tune? Perhaps merely the reactionary publicists? Not at all! Lenin had more than them in mind. He added: "The liberal press chants, howls, and rants about it" (ibid.). It was a single, general, all-embracing tune that was taken up by the whole orchestra, including the liberal press.

Thanks to this blatantly ingratiating manner towards reaction, the Cadets retained all their periodicals during the police terror and stringent censorship of the reaction. Inasmuch as the legal Social-Democratic press was closed down everywhere, the "enemies on the left" ceased to appear on

¹ V. I. Lenin, "Revolution and Counter-Revolution", Vol. 13, p. 114.

the pages of the legal newspapers and magazines, and the liberal press flourished, trying to step up its influence on "public opinion". At the height of political reaction in 1909, Lenin wrote as follows about it: "Look at our Cadet press: with what amazing effrontery it uses its monopoly, earned by the accommodatingness of Milyukov and protected by Stolypin."¹

The counter-revolutionary nature of the liberal press was particularly evident in the period from February to October 1917, when the mass of advanced workers led by the Bolshevik Party had made the transition from a bourgeois-democratic revolution to a socialist revolution a central issue of the day. The bourgeois-liberal press now led a "universal howl of anger and fury against the Bolsheviks",² which found expression in the most cynical utterances published by the bourgeois-liberal papers.

With the same consistency and insistence with which he flayed the false revolutionariness of the bourgeois-liberal press Lenin also exposed its fictitious democracy. That press noisily and extensively proclaimed its democracy and its devotion to the interests of the people, as long as they did not rise up, weapons in hand, in defence of their rights. As soon as they did, the bourgeois-liberal press abandoned all pretence of democracy.

Lenin frequently showed up the falsity of the democratic slogans of the liberals. He noted on more than one occasion that, while noisily proclaiming the interests of the people and proposing various projects to satisfy their demands, the press of the bourgeois liberals was presenting those interests in a truncated, scanty and deliberately restricted fashion. Of course, it could then write of their complete satisfaction. This sophistic method of demonstrating the "democracy" used by the bourgeois press was clearly revealed by Lenin on the example of the bourgeois-liberal paper *Kievskaya Mysl* (*Kiev Thought*), in his article "The Liberals and Freedom for the Unions" published in *Pravda* in May 1913. At the end of April the paper had noted with satisfaction that the mining congress had apparently given moral support to the working-class demand for freedom of coalition. Lenin perceived in

¹ V. I. Lenin, "The Election in St. Petersburg", Vol. 16, p. 25.

² V. I. Lenin, "A Disorderly Revolution", Vol. 25, p. 128.

this article a vivid instance of how “the liberals are employing their widely circulated, profit-making press to curtail the demands and slogans of the working class”.¹ He could not directly enumerate in the legal Bolshevik newspaper the revolutionary slogans which at that time the Russian working class was putting forward in the widely-developing strike struggle. But he made no bones about the fact that this was not a “freedom of coalition” slogan; other slogans were being advanced. He contrasted the action of the liberal press in trying to impose “its own liberal narrow-mindedness” on the workers to “the method employed by the ‘liberal’ serf-owners who, half a century ago, said that the abolition of *all* landowner privileges was *not* ‘a slogan of the day’ for ‘the masses’” (ibid.).

The open anti-democracy of Struve’s *Russkaya Mysl* or the masked version in Milyukov’s *Rech* which, by Lenin’s definition, wanted to “trick” democracy and “keep it in leading strings”, was equally apparent in the frankly adverse attitude of all bourgeois-liberal periodicals to the first paper addressed to the working masses – *Pravda*. The bourgeois-liberal press saw in *Pravda* that very danger which it also saw in independent popular revolutionary action. When at the beginning of 1912, *Pravda* launched an election campaign for the Fourth State Duma, the bourgeois-liberal periodicals, as Lenin remarked, began “to get busy” and “brought concerted pressure to bear on *Pravda*” and “opened fire on the workers’ newspaper”.² Initially they tried to ignore the paper, and then, when that failed and *Pravda* had shaken them out of their silence by its polemic, they burst into crude abuse against the workers’ paper. Such was the real value of their democracy.

Fear of revolutionary “violence”, a poorly-disguised contempt for the interests of the people and a haughty, lordly attitude towards them, all engendered the servile attitude of the bourgeois-liberal press towards the autocratic-police state machine. Slight concessions by the authorities to the revolutionary people evoked in its columns immoderate excitement and torrents of gratitude. It expressed the same emotions at a time when the authorities were dealing ferociously

¹ V. I. Lenin, “The Liberals and Freedom for the Unions”, Vol. 19, p. 74.

² V. I. Lenin, “The Liberal Campaign”, Vol. 18, p. 231.

with those whose interests it claimed to be expressing.

“As usual, the bourgeois press fawns, waxing sentimental over the tsar’s amenability and the reasonableness of the Zemstvo representatives, though certain doubts creep in as to the value of promises given in so vague a form.”¹ So wrote Lenin, his “as usual” making it clear that he considered servility to be a stable trait of the bourgeois-liberal press. In his articles he constantly chides at the liberal and especially the Cadet press for servility.

In 1906, Lenin subjected the Left-wing Cadet newspaper *Nasha Zhizn* to mocking sarcasm for an article written in the spirit of political compromise, for its satisfaction with what had been won in the course of revolutionary struggle, and for its “calls for the organisation of all sorts of clubs and meetings for the purpose of establishing living contacts between the Duma and the people”.² At that time, in order to justify their rapture at working in the Duma, the Cadets were trying to prove in the press that Russia was already a constitutional monarchy and, therefore, had attained the desired objective of the liberation movement. In this connection Lenin underlined that this line taken up by the Cadets and their press suited the interests of the autocracy more than the line taken by the blatantly reactionary *Moskovskiye Vedomosti*, since the Cadet press, by putting about a false version, was helping the autocracy to extinguish the flame of revolutionary struggle. At the same time, the paper *Moskovskiye Vedomosti* and other similar periodicals were maintaining that the autocracy had succeeded in leading the liberals by the nose, that the tsarist system would remain intact; they were therefore helping the people to evaluate correctly the situation that had developed. “In this controversy,” wrote Lenin, “*Moskovskiye Vedomosti* is progressive and the Cadet newspapers are reactionary; for *Moskovskiye Vedomosti* is telling the truth, exposing illusions, *aussprechen was ist* [Speaks out about what is], whereas the Cadets are telling a lie—a well-meaning, benevolent, sincerely-conscientious, beautiful, graceful, scientifically-smooth, Kiesewetter-varnished, drawing-room polite lie: but a lie nevertheless. And there is nothing more dangerous, nothing more harmful, in

¹ V. I. Lenin, “‘Revolutionaries’ in Kid Gloves”, Vol. 8, p. 526.

² V. I. Lenin, “The Duma and the People”, Vol. 10, p. 396.

the present period of the struggle—considering the present objective conditions—than such a lie.”¹

The ecstasy of the liberal press at the peaceful “constitutional” activity around the “parliament” which the tsar had granted reminded Lenin of the similar rapture of the liberal press in the 1880s over Zemstvo activity. He wrote that the liberals and their press “are now actually capable of doing nothing more than *protect* (by means of genuflexion, in the same way as *Russkiye Vedomosti* ‘protected’ the Zemstvos in the eighties!) the existing Duma and the existing (pardon the word) ‘constitution’ of ours”.²

On more than one occasion Lenin showed his readers by concrete example from the Cadet and other liberal publications that such “protective” activity was frequently more effective and useful for the autocracy than the protective activity of the reactionary press.

Thus in 1908, he drew attention to the fact that some liberal periodicals such as *Russkiye Vedomosti*, were still advocating the retention of a patriarchal way of life in the countryside, were drawing the recipes of “old-fashioned Narodism” to oppose the class stratification of the countryside. Comparing their stance to the policy of the tsarist ministers, of all Black-Hundred landowners and their press, Lenin came to the conclusion that the latter though openly selfish, were at least aware that “unless they create new class supports for themselves they cannot remain in power”.³ They were at least more realistic. “Hence their policy of utterly ruining the peasants and forcibly breaking up the village communes in order to clear the way for capitalism in agriculture *at all costs*” (ibid., pp. 441-42). Lenin was a long way from sympathising with this policy, but he argued that it was based on the real interests of definite classes.

In his article “From Whom Does Support Come?” printed in *Pravda* in June 1913 Lenin commented with great sarcasm on the limited and short-sighted nature of the liberal press. He branded articles appearing in the liberal press (*Russkiye Vedomosti* and *Rech*) to the effect that the government was completely isolated, had no support, and was acting as if in a void as a sign of parliamentary cretinism. He reminded

¹ V. I. Lenin, “The Victory of the Cadets and the Tasks of the Workers’ Party”, Vol. 10, p. 233.

² V. I. Lenin, “How Not to Write Resolutions”, Vol. 12, p. 240.

³ V. I. Lenin, “Political Notes”, Vol. 13, p. 441.

them that the tsarist autocracy had such reliable allies as the council of the united nobility, the landowners, who possessed hundreds of millions of hectares of the best lands in Russia, and occupied high-ranking positions, and the industrial and financial barons. "The government, you say, is completely isolated, it has no friends in the country?" wrote Lenin, addressing the liberals and their press, and then added in irony: "But what are you there for, gentlemen?"¹

Lenin cleverly utilised all manner of praise and compliment paid to the liberals by reactionary publications for polemical attacks on the bourgeois-liberal press. He also used just as effectively any instance of the reactionary press saying upon and exaggerating slanderous reports circulated by the liberal press.

Lenin's thoughts on the socio-political roots of the complete unity that periodically emerged between the liberal and openly reactionary press are of enormous interest. Lenin asked: "How is this inherent affinity between the arguments of *Rossiya* and *Zemshchina*, on the one hand, and those of *Rech* and *Russkiye Vedomosti*, on the other, to be accounted for?" And then he supplied the answer himself: "The reason is this: despite the differences in the classes represented by these two groups of newspapers, neither class is *any longer* capable of any material, independent, creative and decisive historical action that is *progressive*. Not merely the first but the second group of newspapers, not only the reactionaries, but the liberals, too, represent a class that *is afraid* of historical independent action on the part of other, broader, sections, groups or masses of the population, of other numerically stronger classes."² The coincidence that Lenin remarks upon is essential; it lies in the historical role of the two classes which stood behind the above-named groups of periodicals. Both the nobility and the bourgeoisie are described by Lenin as not having the power and capacity for progressive historical action. Both classes are seized by fear of the broad democratic sections of the population. Lenin could not say directly—that they were afraid of the working people, of the working class and the revolutionary peasants, since the "Comments" cited here were published in the legal Bolshevik paper *Zvezda*. But reading between the lines it was quite

¹ V. I. Lenin, "From Whom Does Support Come?", Vol. 36, p. 251.

² V. I. Lenin, "Comments (Menshikov, Gromoboi, Izgoyev)", Vol. 17, p. 101.

clear who he meant by "broader sections, groups or masses of the population" and by "numerically stronger classes".

Lenin ruthlessly exposed the phrase-mongering of the bourgeois-liberal press, its attempts to conceal thereby the "embarrassing" facts of life, its true attitude to them, its plans and the intentions and actions of liberal leaders. "False Notes", was the title Lenin gave to one of his articles devoted to exposing the verbal cover-up engaged in by the bourgeois-liberal press. He noted that *Rech* was becoming more and more addicted to the abominably unprincipled habit of disposing of Duma speeches by commenting on them in glowing or abusive terms, without ever analysing their ideological content,¹ because, if it did, it would have to say clearly and unambiguously what its position was, reveal its class and partisan colours, and this it would do anything to avoid. It was far more convenient to stay at the level of general phrases. The principal periodical of the Cadet Party displayed, in Lenin's words, particular skill in "the art of diplomatically evading direct answers to 'unpleasant' questions".² It was this paper that possessed the most refined methods of treating any political issue so as to "keep the greatest numbers of readers in the dark".³

It goes without saying that Lenin's exposures, particularly those which were published in the legal Bolshevik press, reached a wide readership, opened people's eyes to the masked counter-revolutionary and anti-democratic nature of the liberal parties and their press. They evinced the impotent and blind rage of the bourgeois-liberal publicists, who often responded with vulgar abuse. This was especially so in response to his accusations of empty words and exercises in gibberish, which Lenin often had to translate into normal Russian, to his invitations to move from word to deed, and to his indications of the deliberate and frequent solidarity between the bourgeois-liberal and the reactionary periodicals.

Of course, this abuse did not stop Lenin. He not only poured the main torrent of his polemic down on the bourgeois-liberal press and its publicists, he also persistently

¹ See V. I. Lenin, "False Notes", Vol. 18, p. 588.

² V. I. Lenin, "The Right of Nations to Self-Determination", Vol. 20, p. 416.

³ V. I. Lenin, "On the Question of National Policy", Vol. 20, p. 221.

called on his journalist colleagues to do the same. "To fight against counter-revolution with the pen, with words, would mean, first and foremost, to expose those disgusting hypocrites who, in the name of 'people's freedom', in the name of 'democracy', laud political stagnation, the silence of the people, the humiliation of the citizen turned philistine, and 'the absence of facts'." ¹

¹ V. I. Lenin, "Banality Triumphant, or S.R.'s Ape the Cadets", Vol. 12, p. 342.

“THIS APPEARED NOT IN *NOVOYE VREMYA*,
BUT IN A PAPER THAT CALLS ITSELF
A WORKERS' NEWSPAPER”

Lenin always firmly opposed any attempts to befuddle the political awareness of the working class with bourgeois or petty-bourgeois ideology. He tried also to safeguard from bourgeois ideological influence the progressive, revolutionary sections of the poor peasants. That is why he attributed a great deal of importance to exposing the petty-bourgeois and opportunist press which was a carrier of that influence, appearing under such false labels as “socialist”, “Social-Democrat”, “popular”, “worker” and “peasant”.

Lenin's irreconcilable attitude to the petty-bourgeois and opportunist press was a reflection of his irreconcilable attitude to all attempts to spread bourgeois ideology through the back door, unnoticed, by means of various subterfuges. Lenin was always particularly sharp in his attacks against attempts by these periodicals to smooth over the differences between them and the consistently Marxist, Bolshevik press, to conceal the nature and causes of these differences from the workers. He never lost an opportunity of showing “the roots of the differences, which are of interest to every class-conscious worker”,¹ between the Marxist press and the so-called socialist papers and journals.

Of course, Lenin was capable of tact, patiently explaining his position to those who were simply unable to understand it straightaway. He was capable of explaining to any of his colleagues the nature of their confusion, without offending their self-respect; and yet he did not give an inch on his principles. He invariably followed the principle which he had once clearly formulated: “It is wrong to write about Party comrades in a language that systematically spreads among the working masses hatred, aversion, contempt, etc., for

¹ V. I. Lenin, “A Talk on ‘Cadet-Eating’”, Vol. 18, p. 292.

those who hold other opinions.”¹ But once dissident voices began to invade the sphere of the fundamentals of Marxist theory and policy it was quite another matter: “To keep quiet about differences is not only unpleasant, it is *downright harmful*.”² At this point Lenin thought polemic inevitable and necessary. And if a group of “dissidents” who disagreed on questions of principle seceded from the Party and began to conduct their own anti-Party press campaign, Lenin proclaimed the right to launch a sharp, angry and ruthless polemic: “*One may and must write* in that strain about an organisation that has seceded.”³

However, such a polemic is not an end in itself. It is necessary as major and integral part of the overall struggle for the Marxist Party and socialism. After all, “the workers cannot build up *their own* party unless they ruthlessly fight every lie that is told about it”.⁴ It was therefore essential to conduct polemic together with a great deal of positive, constructive work, proving by results the veracity of the arguments. In proclaiming the right to hold a sharp polemic with all turncoats and opportunists, Lenin at once added the reservation: “Only, in order to be harsh, one must have the right to be so, and the right to be harsh is given by one’s words not differing from one’s deeds.”⁵

Lenin was constantly concerned that the Party he led should have a decisive advantage in polemic with the petty-bourgeois and opportunist press. This was the view of polemic of a consistent Marxist, a scientific materialist who well understood that ultimately the judge of the argument would be the objective rather than the subjective factor – i. e., reality itself as it developed. “Differences within or between political parties are usually resolved not only by polemics over principles, but also by the course of political developments.”⁶ Therefore, Lenin always willingly returned to

¹ V. I. Lenin, “Report to the Fifth Congress of the R.S.D.L.P.”, Vol. 12, p. 425.

² V. I. Lenin, “To His Mother and His Sister Anna, May 1, 1899”, Vol. 37, p. 261.

³ V. I. Lenin, “Report to the Fifth Congress of the R.S.D.L.P.”, Vol. 12, p. 425.

⁴ V. I. Lenin, “A Few Words on Results and Facts”, Vol. 19, p. 65.

⁵ V. I. Lenin, “Extraordinary Fourth All-Russia Congress of Soviets”, Vol. 27, p. 192.

⁶ V. I. Lenin, “Revolution Teaches”, Vol. 9, p. 146.

a particular false proposition of the petty-bourgeois and opportunist press when the turn of events started to reveal its invalidity, "clearing away the fog of empty phrases, showing the people the naked truth".¹

In any theoretical dispute he never forgot reality, always tried to reinforce his scientific conclusions by reference to it. The correlation of theoretical structures with life, with ongoing actuality strikingly confirms "the Marxist appraisal of the extremely backward and reactionary character"² of any petty-bourgeois or opportunist theoretical tenet held by a particular periodical or journalist. Reality required not only a denunciation of incorrect views about it, but also fresh theoretical recommendations that helped to promote new principles within it. And Lenin always did this successfully in the course of polemic with the petty-bourgeois and opportunist press.

In his articles, pamphlets, books, reports, speeches, theses and drafts of various works, Lenin left hundreds of succinct character sketches of various periodicals of this nature. There is no opportunity, and indeed no need, to dwell upon each of them here. It is far more important to single out those typical features which he identified in individual periodicals published by the Menshevik, Left-wing Narodnik, Socialist-Revolutionary, and other similar press.

Following its 52nd issue, *Iskra*, which had been founded by Lenin, passed into the hands of the Mensheviks and stopped being a militant periodical of revolutionary Marxism.

The characterisation of the "new" Menshevik *Iskra* which Lenin provided in *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back* is of enormous methodological importance. It concerns the most salient aspects of the paper's activity, and is given in contrast to the "old"—i. e., consistently Marxist, *Iskra*. It constitutes a whole cascade of comparisons expressed in lively publicist fashion and containing, at the same time, important theoretical propositions.

First and foremost Lenin dealt with the degree of genuine revolutionary spirit of both periodicals: "The old *Iskra* taught the truths of revolutionary struggle. The new *Iskra*

¹ V. I. Lenin, "In What Way Do You Socialist-Revolutionary and Menshevik Gentlemen Differ from Plekhanov?", Vol. 25, p. 116.

² V. I. Lenin, "The Left Narodniks", Vol. 20, p. 298.

teaches the worldly wisdom of yielding and getting on with everyone.”¹ According to Lenin, any manifestation of social life was, for a truly Marxist paper, an opportunity to teach readers the truths of the revolutionary struggle. The Lenin *Iskra* had done that in each issue, in each leader, review, critical satire, article on the economic and social life of Russia and other countries in the world. The new *Iskra* had deserted that position utterly. In its treatment of facts, phenomena and problems it had come to resemble the liberal press, in so far as the principle of “yielding and getting on with everyone” was primarily a principle of the bourgeois-liberal press.

Lenin went on to talk of the lack of consistency in the new paper, from the standpoint of theory and ideology, and here once again he examined and underlined the fundamental difference between the two: “The old *Iskra* was the organ of militant orthodoxy. The new *Iskra* treats us to a recrudescence of opportunism—chiefly on questions of organisation” (ibid.). Orthodoxy for Lenin was not synonymous with dogmatism. By this concept he meant adherence to the fundamental principles and spirit of Marxist teaching, not adherence to the letter. But as far as the principles of Marxism were concerned, Lenin was unmovable, for they were sacred. Lenin always criticised with the necessary patience, though also with a certain firmness and insistence, any temporary lapse or insignificant error that did not affect principle. But he did not permit any retreat from the principled theoretical basis on which the “old” *Iskra* had been run. And here was the new paper making an obvious departure from the basic principles of Marxism. Its new staff had brought about a situation in which “the old hidebound circle spirit overpowered the still young party spirit” (ibid.).

To define the watershed between the “old” and “new” *Iskra* Lenin takes the attitude of the hostile press organs, largely the overtly opportunist publications, to a paper that claimed to be Marxist. And here the difference is really striking. Lenin formulated it as follows: “The old *Iskra* earned the honour of being detested by the opportunists, both Russian and West-European. The new *Iskra* has ‘grown wise’ and will soon cease to be ashamed of the praises lavished on it by the extreme opportunists” (ibid., pp. 413-14). Lenin’s

¹ V. I. Lenin, “One Step Forward, Two Steps Back”, Vol. 7, p. 413.

Iskra had merited its honour of being disliked not only by the Russian opportunists—the Economists and “legal Marxists”, but also by the West European Bernsteinians. It was possible to find in Lenin’s *Iskra*, in articles on international affairs, for example, or in reports on Party congresses and conferences, principled criticism of the compromise position taken by German Social-Democrats and their periodicals on Bernsteinism. The “new” *Iskra*, however, published a great deal of praise for the Mensheviks from Kautsky, Parvus and other German opportunists who were, at the same time, editors and leading publicists working on the central press organs of German Social-Democracy.

Finally, Lenin stressed one more important difference between the “old” and “new” *Iskra*: the feigned, artificial affiliation to a Marxist worker press of an opportunist periodical that contained essential departures from Marxist ideology. As a result, its false and hypocritical position, a non-coincidence of word and deed fraught with serious consequences. In this connection, Lenin noted: “The old *Iskra* marched unswervingly towards its goal, and there was no discrepancy between its word and its deed. The inherent falsity of the new *Iskra*’s position inevitably leads—independently even of anyone’s will or intention—to political hypocrisy” (ibid., p. 414). He explained here and in other works that the paper’s hypocrisy lay above all in that it said it opposed division and clannishness, yet by its reactionary policy was taking the Party back to clannishness confirming divisions and sowing anarchy; that, while speaking in the name of the entire Party, the paper was actually representing a tiny minority.

Summing up the paper’s evolution from Marxism to opportunism, Lenin wrote with bitterness and anger: “How shameful! How they have disgraced our old *Iskra*!” (ibid.).

Polemic against the Menshevik *Iskra* fully accorded with political reality, the need to create in Russia a strong, united, militant Marxist party. But its success depended also on the subjective factor, on precisely the fact that it was being led by Lenin as a brilliant publicist, by a man who was uniting around him the best literary forces of the Bolshevik Party—Mikhail Olminsky, Vaclav Vorovsky and Anatoly Lunacharsky—and directing their talent to the fulfillment of the common task. In the final count this polemic led to the total defeat of the Menshevik *Iskra*: its readership shrunk to

a handful and its influence on the working class, which even so had been minimal, was lost utterly. In an article written in the autumn of 1905 Lenin had commented with satisfaction: "It is only the blind who can still fail to see what a swamp *Iskra* has floundered into. In the illegal press it is completely isolated, with *only Osvobozhdeniye* on its side."¹

In many ways Lenin's major drift of polemic with the petty-bourgeois opportunist press coincided with those points on which he had designated the principal difference between the "old" and "new" *Iskra*.

Let us take the lack of genuine revolutionary spirit, its replacement with the principle of the liberal press, the principle of "yielding and getting on with everyone". Lenin constantly attacked the Menshevik press on this point. "Put your cards on the table," Lenin demanded of the Menshevik journalists, who naturally did not proclaim the principle openly in the liberal press. "They keep their cards hidden because any attempt to turn them face up would reveal quite clearly to the workers that all this has nothing to do with a working-class party or a working-class policy, that it is preaching by *liberal* publicists who take a liberal's attitude to the workers, who liquidate the old and are powerless to provide anything new to replace it."² Lenin had in mind *Zhivoye Dyelo*, the paper of the liquidator Mensheviks published between January and April 1912 and whose political orientation required elucidation for the politically insufficiently educated reader, inasmuch as "it is not so easy for the general public to understand the trend followed by newspapers, particularly when the subjects in question are not theoretical principles, but current politics" (*ibid.*, p. 514). It is different, says Lenin, with "people who are experienced in literary affairs"; they can determine the orientation of a publication by its staff and even by isolated expressions. Lenin himself was precisely such a publicist "experienced in literary affairs". He could unerringly determine "even by isolated expressions" (*ibid.*) the orientation of a liquidator publication no matter how carefully it was masked.

And in the same way, by isolated expressions, Lenin could identify the dangerous similarity among the publications of

¹ V. I. Lenin, "A Replete Bourgeoisie and a Craving Bourgeoisie", Vol. 9, p. 318.

² V. I. Lenin, "Put Your Cards on the Table", Vol. 17, p. 519.

the opportunist and liberal press on such a vital issue as the attitude to revolution. Attempts to evaluate socio-political facts and phenomena by non-class, non-partisan, universally human criteria were always to Lenin a sign of liberal thinking. In one such case, he wrote: "Boom, boom, boom... While he absorbed and embodied in a consummate form the fundamental manner of declamation characteristic of liberal-bourgeois journalism, Mr. Nevedomsky proved to be also the purest and most consummate embodiment of the ideological principle of humanity in general—the principle of rant."¹ He went on to stress that the style of "reservation" employed from "generally human positions" was a quality of both the publicist and the periodical in which he was working—the Menshevik *Nasha Zarya*—and of all its staff.

Lenin sometimes took two articles for analysis—one from a bourgeois-liberal periodical, the other from an opportunist—in order to expose the ideological similarity of the opportunist and liberal press, and then showed the reader how similar were their major propositions.

Thus, in "Notes of a Publicist" published in *Pravda* in 1913, he compared the article by Nikolai Rozhkov from the liquidator magazine *Nasha Zarya* and that by Y. Y. Polferov from the Right-wing Cadet *Russkaya Mysl*. On analysing them he came to the conclusion that "the resemblance between the two articles is astonishing".² He tells *Pravda* readers: "They both clearly demonstrate—and this gives them a special value—the kinship of the principles underlying the ideas of the liberal-labour politicians and those of the counter-revolutionary liberal bourgeoisie" (ibid.). Lenin demonstrated this "value" for what it was worth and showed it, along with everything associated with it in both articles, to the readers of the most popular workers' paper.

Lenin remarked on the ideological similarity of the liberal and opportunist press in yet another article, published in the legal Bolshevik journal *Prosveshcheniye (Enlightenment)* in 1914. While in the above-mentioned article he had told his readers to note how the opportunist paper adopts the very same position as the bourgeois, here he pointed out that the bourgeois paper publishes exactly what the opportunist

¹ V. I. Lenin, "Heroes of 'Reservation'", Vol. 16, p. 371.

² V. I. Lenin, "The Agrarian Question and the Present Situation in Russia", Vol. 19, p. 487.

paper publishes. "In *Rech* editorial articles the Cadets fully repeat in their own name the refrain that L. M [artov] sings in *Nasha Zarya*." ¹ The sum total remains the same even if the items are moved round.

Lenin attributed particularly great importance to exposing this kinship after the February 1917 revolution, when the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries had entered the bourgeois Provisional Government and became responsible for its anti-popular, counter-revolutionary policy. They were fully content with the fact that they were now sharing power in the country with the bourgeois parties. That is why they sowed illusions of the triumph of democracy, the need for support of the Provisional Government for "the cause of revolution" and they thereby helped to shore up the bourgeois order. In his article "Rumours of a Conspiracy" Lenin showed in bold relief the "foul and infamous political calculations" which prompted the Menshevik press to spread a rumour about a Bolshevik plot. The Mensheviks thereby created the impression that "the government they support is saving the revolution, while in reality it has *already formed a bloc* with the Kaledins, is *already* counter-revolutionary, has *already* taken a great many steps, and is daily taking further steps, to meet the terms of this bloc with the Kaledins". ² Giving prime importance to exposing the Mensheviks in this article, Lenin asked for it to be treated as a report to the Central Committee and proposed that it be published in several Party papers and journals.

The opportunist press imitated the worst type of bourgeois press with particular relish when it took up the cudgels with Bolshevik publicists. Drawing the attention of *Pravda* readers to one such incident, Lenin notes: "This appeared not in *Novoye Vremya* but in a paper that calls itself a workers' newspaper." ³ It was primarily to the workers that Lenin addressed remarks of this nature since his observations were a serious course of political education for the proletariat.

Another main aspect of Lenin's polemic with the opportunist press was the fight against perversions of Marxist

¹ V. I. Lenin, "The Bourgeois Intelligentsia's Methods of Struggle Against the Workers", Vol. 20, p. 468.

² V. I. Lenin, "Rumours of a Conspiracy", Vol. 25, p. 252. (A. M. Kaledin was a tsarist general who headed counter-revolutionary actions.)

³ V. I. Lenin, "For the Attention of *Luch* and *Pravda* Readers", Vol. 19, p. 78.

theory. A typical example of Lenin's sharp polemical attack on the opportunist press over a theoretical question is his article "P. Maslov in Hysterics" published in October 1908 in the illegal paper *Proletary*. He was referring to the reaction by the Menshevik Pyotr Maslov to criticism of his views on the agrarian issue, which had been made in Lenin's well-known work "The Agrarian Programme of Social-Democracy in the First Russian Revolution, 1905-1907." In response to this criticism, Maslov had published a "Letter to the Editor" in the newspaper *Golos Sotsial-Demokrata*, reiterating "his flagrant distortion of Marxism".¹ It was not only this circumstance that moved Lenin to polemicise with Maslov again, but also the fact that Maslov had demonstrated in his letter the common opportunist manoeuvre of putting forward his views through all manner of tricks and speculations rather than straightforwardly. Lenin always considered it especially important to attack those critics of Marxism who endeavoured to "reject" Marxism without saying so directly. Therefore, he once again calls upon his profound and wide-ranging knowledge of Marx's works and his own substantial logic in arguing against Maslov.

As far as Lenin was concerned, there was no question of being inactive when it was a question of the perversion of Marxism in a press which called itself "worker" and was intended for the workers. When he read in *Nasha Zhizn* the article by the Menshevik V. Bazarov with its incorrect, bourgeois interpretation of the works of Leo Tolstoy, Lenin declared: "As for ourselves, we find it difficult to point out any propositions in this article that would not arouse the indignation of anyone who has the least bit of regard for Marxism."² In such cases Lenin's articles were always full of anger and indignation, since they came from the pen of someone who not only had "the least bit of regard for Marxism", but who was directly continuing the cause of Marx and Engels, their most consistent student, a brilliant thinker and fighter for the purity of revolutionary theory. Any attempt to distort Marxism, overtly or covertly, invariably evoked his indignation, since he was alarmed not only by the fact of a perversion of theory, but also by the consequences for revolutionary practice which this perversion might have.

¹ V. I. Lenin, "P. Maslov in Hysterics", Vol. 15, p. 250.

² V. I. Lenin, "Heroes of 'Reservation'", Vol. 16, p. 368.

In such cases, Lenin did not wish and was unable to write without anger about something harmful, and he also called on all his fellow publicists to do the same.

It was this aspect of "harm" done by all revisionist and opportunist writings that Lenin singled out in polemic as the most disastrous and destructive for the revolutionary movement.

The bulk of his polemical writings against the petty-bourgeois and opportunist press were, therefore, a dispute over the significance of Marxist theory in analysing socio-political life. Lenin based his polemic on the unbroken connection between theory and practice. In pointing out theoretical errors he always noted their harmful, damaging consequences for the practice of the revolutionary movement and, conversely, always uncovered the theoretical roots of particular incorrect practical actions.

Lenin quite often noted in the petty-bourgeois and opportunist press claiming to express the interests of the working people a departure from class positions when analysing socio-political events and facts.

In 1917, during the offensive at the front undertaken by the Provisional Government, Lenin characterised the Menshevik *Rabochaya Gazeta* by noting that it was trying to link up the offensive "with the revolutionary proletarian peace struggle". "Unfortunately for the cunning editors, the only connection that can be established here is a *negative one*,"¹ he added sarcastically.

In response to attempts by opportunist publicists to cover up the class essence of political events with hysterical emotional-moral evaluations, Lenin set out a Marxist criterion: "But what about slogans and ideology?"² It was precisely to such questions that the Marxist politician ought to reply. The predilection of the petty-bourgeois and opportunist papers for dramatic posturing and abstract moral censoring was always firmly attacked by Lenin. He called on a genuinely Marxist, workers' press not to imitate such a manoeuvre.

Yet another major aspect of Lenin's publicist criticism of the opportunist press is his exposure of the inherent false-

¹ V. I. Lenin, "Just How Is It to Be Done?", Vol. 25, p. 145.

² V. I. Lenin, "Social-Chauvinist Policy Behind a Cover of Internationalist Phrases", Vol. 21, p. 430.

hood of its position, its hypocrisy. Each of its periodicals aspired to the part of unifier of all the Social-Democratic forces, yet in practice acted the part of yet another destroyer of that unity. Each one, like the Menshevik *Iskra*, clearly falsified things, trying to create the impression that its policy was a success among Social-Democrats, among the workers. Lenin was ruthless in dealing with the mendacity of opportunist publications.

Before the revolution, the opportunist press frequently had the edge in terms of numbers over the consistently Marxist press. But there was no unity among them. They represented various tendencies of petty-bourgeois ideology. Lenin always drew the attention of his readers to their diversity, and he mocked at the pretensions of each of them to measure themselves against the official organs of the Party: "We brand, as deception of the workers, a system under which a half-dozen intellectuals who have brought out two or three issues of a newspaper or journal declare themselves a 'trend', or lay claim to 'equal rights' with the Party."¹

There were plenty of such publications. They were primarily newspapers and journals of Menshevik and Trotskyist tendencies being published legally and illegally. Also fairly important in terms of circulation and just as diverse were the periodicals of the Narodniks, Socialist-Revolutionaries, and other petty-bourgeois parties and groups, although they, too, called themselves "socialist".

Lenin put the emergence of these periodicals down to the impact of bourgeois-liberal ideology on Social-Democracy and the working class. The impact often came through individual liberal publicists from among ex-Marxists who, as Lenin described them, had "for more than ten years trained hundreds and thousands of petty-bourgeois intellectuals, wrapping up their petty liberal ideas in almost Marxist words".² It was quite easy for a group of intellectuals of this type to put together an editorial staff that would begin to publish a periodical on behalf of a new strain of Social-Democracy, its non-factional elements, on behalf of a new unification Party or "extra-Party" centre. It was not that easy

¹ V. I. Lenin, "Letter from the Central Committee of the R.S.D.L.P. to the Editors of *Nashe Slovo*", Vol. 21, p. 166.

² V. I. Lenin, "How Vera Zasulich Demolishes Liquidationism", Vol. 19, p. 412.

to distinguish between all these strains of opportunism in the new publications, but it was necessary so as to arrive at "a definite, thoughtful attitude to the newspapers".¹

Lenin felt it extremely important to fight in the press against the various strains of opportunism precisely from the viewpoint of the political education of the workers. "Some controversies and conflicts of opinion in the press help the reader to obtain a better understanding of political problems, to appreciate their importance more profoundly, and to solve them more confidently."² This observation can also be seen as a polemical principle to which he personally always adhered unswervingly, and this gave his polemic, even with petty political groups and groupings, a great deal of significance and principle. One should also not forget that it was in polemic with the various opportunist periodicals that Lenin developed and advanced Marxist theory. In the Preface to the first collection of his works *Twelve Years* published in the autumn of 1907, he made the point that such theoretical problems "are being posed and dealt with all the time in the struggle against the Right wing of the Marxist trend in Russia".³

In organising all manner of factional publications, the opportunists at the same time hypocritically and extensively opposed factionalism, castigated the Bolsheviks for factional activity, even though the Bolsheviks had the greatest influence among the workers. Lenin always exposed firmly the hypocrites and their phrase-mongering about unity.

We ought to dwell particularly on Lenin's relentless criticism of the many attempts made by Trotsky to publish various "non-factional" and "super-factional" periodicals.

One of Trotsky's first steps in this direction was to publish the notorious Vienna *Pravda*, a paper which came out illegally between 1908 and 1912 first in Lvov (first three issues) and then in Vienna. It appeared irregularly—only twenty-five issues came out in five years—and it was, in Lenin's words, a private enterprise by Trotsky. Yet Trotsky himself assigned it the role of the mouthpiece of the whole Party, insisting on the possibility of the existence within a single party of consis-

¹ V. I. Lenin, "The Struggle for Marxism", Vol. 19, p. 346.

² V. I. Lenin, "Two Methods of Controversy and Struggle", Vol. 19, p. 492.

³ V. I. Lenin, "Preface to the Collection *Twelve Years*", Vol. 13, p. 94.

tent Marxists and opportunists of all colours. However, all that Trotsky managed to achieve with his paper was the creation in 1912 of the "August Bloc" out of blatantly "incompatible" elements which, naturally, quickly fell apart.

Although he held himself aloof from factions and allegedly stood above factions, Trotsky and his paper, which was named *Pravda* by mistake, created yet another, pitiful and skimpy, factional group. His paper finally turned "into a purely factional organ".¹ In his articles "The State of Affairs in the Party" and "Judas Trotsky's Blush of Shame" Lenin once again drew his readers' attention to this fact.

Lenin consigned the editors of the Vienna *Pravda* to those small groups which "vacillate now to one side, now to the other; they engage in cheap politics, but represent no definite trend and their activity expresses itself mainly in petty intrigue",² they "strove to make some little political capital by brokerage, petty diplomacy, and intrigues under the guise of 'reconciling' and 'uniting' the Party".³ Lenin never stopped exposing these obvious tactics until Trotsky's paper and the whole of his "bloc" vanished from the arena of political struggle.

Even so Trotsky did not abandon his attempts to publish "non-factional" periodicals and declaim in them in the name of the whole Party. Such was his journal *Borba* (*Struggle*), legally published in St Petersburg from February to July 1914, the papers *Nashe Slovo* (*Our Word*)—1915-16, and *Nachalo* (*Beginning*)—1916-17, which were printed in Paris during World War I.

In an article published in *Prosveshcheniye* in 1914, Lenin drew attention to the fact that Trotsky and his journal *Borba* had been trying to prey upon interest in the history of the inner-Party struggle among those young workers who "either do not remember the old conflict, or have never heard of it".⁴ Naturally, he had perverted that history, portraying the

¹ V. I. Lenin, "Letter to the Russian Collegium of the Central Committee of the R.S.D.L.P.", Vol. 17, p. 20.

² V. I. Lenin, "The Anonymous Writer in *Vorwärts* and the State of Affairs in the R.S.D.L.P.", Vol. 17, p. 541.

³ V. I. Lenin, "The Situation in the R.S.D.L.P. and the Immediate Tasks of the Party", Vol. 18, pp. 152-53.

⁴ V. I. Lenin, "Disruption of Unity under Cover of Outcries for Unity", Vol. 20, p. 327.

Bolshevik Party only as a "faction". Lenin showed that it was Trotsky and his journal that was expressing "the worst form of group-division", for there was "no ideological and political definiteness" in his position (*ibid.*, p. 331).

Trotsky concealed his anti-Bolshevik views. When he affirmed in his journal that "numerous advanced workers, in a state of utter political bewilderment, themselves often become active agents of a split", this meant that he had in mind the numerous advanced workers who followed Lenin's *Pravda*. Once again Lenin remarks with some irony: "Since 'numerous advanced workers' become 'active agents' of a political and Party line which does not conform to Trotsky's line, Trotsky settles the question unhesitatingly, out of hand: these advanced workers are 'in a state of utter political bewilderment' whereas he, Trotsky, is evidently 'in a state' of political firmness and clarity, and keeps to the right line!" (*ibid.*, p. 334).

Trotsky was trying to depict his journal as a "workers' journal". For Lenin, a "workers' paper" is above all a paper of the workers themselves, financed by them and containing their correspondence. Lenin expressed this notion on more than one occasion in his articles devoted to *Pravda's* activity between 1912 and 1914 as the first paper for the working masses. Trotsky's journal *Borba* was nothing of the kind. In fact, Trotsky was the main writer in it and articles by workers never appeared in it. "Trotsky's 'workers' journal' is Trotsky's journal *for* workers, as there is not a trace in it of either workers' initiative, or any connection with working-class organisations" (*ibid.*, p. 328).

In characterising the leading contribution of Trotsky to the newspapers *Golos* and *Nashe Slovo*, Lenin ceaselessly exposed the falsity of his position, his phrase-mongering and hypocrisy. As Lenin said, "it is no use arguing" with such a publicist as Trotsky, "the thing to do is to expose him as a diplomat of the smallest calibre".¹

Lenin also exposed the class and political roots of the "unifying" diplomacy which had grown up among the small, scattered circles and groupings which vacillated between consistent Marxism and open opportunism. "These groups have no social force behind them, and can have no mass influence

¹ V. I. Lenin, "Trotsky's Diplomacy and a Certain Party Platform", Vol. 17, p. 362.

on the workers, because politically they are mere cyphers. Instead of a firm, clear line which attracts the workers and is confirmed by living experience, *narrow circle diplomacy* reigns in such groups.”¹

Inherent falsity and mendacity were manifest also in the outrageous boasting by the editors of opportunist periodicals. Reports in the “new”—i.e., Menshevik—*Iskra*, for example, constantly falsified the state of affairs in the provinces, depicting non-existent “wide-scale” support from local organisations for the Menshevik programme and newspaper policy. Lenin demanded from *Iskra* that it “get the public *fully informed*, and make matters as clear as possible, without the least boasting and literary bombast, without falling into gossip and private allusions which cannot stand the light of publicity”.² A whole batch of articles and pamphlets written by Lenin and his colleagues Vorovsky, Olminsky and Lunacharsky helped to expose this false, affected optimism on the part of the opportunist paper.

The Socialist-Revolutionary press also made boastful statements about its weight and influence both at home and abroad. Lenin exposed the falsifiers and braggarts of the central S.R. periodical *Znamya Truda* (*Banner of Labour*), whose leading article on the Stuttgart Congress of the Second International was “a torrent of words and immoderate boasting, the habitual style of the S.R.s.”³

In polemic with opportunist press, Lenin widely used the praise it received from the bourgeois press. In 1906, the bourgeois-liberal press welcomed the first issues of the Menshevik weekly *Nashe Dyelo* (*Our Cause*) published in Moscow. Lenin evaluated this weekly as “an important novelty as regards the reflection of counter-revolutionary moods”. He refers to the Cadet press which “has already deafened everyone with its trumpeting about this new and important ‘progress’ of the Mensheviks”.⁴ He also refers to *Rech* which “published a special welcoming article” in honour of *Nashe*

¹ V. I. Lenin, “The Bourgeois Intelligentsia’s Methods of Struggle Against the Workers”, Vol. 20, p. 471.

² V. I. Lenin, “Keeping International Social-Democracy Informed of Our Party Affairs”, Vol. 9, p. 228.

³ V. I. Lenin, “How the Socialist-Revolutionaries Write History”, Vol. 41, p. 207.

⁴ V. I. Lenin, “Philistinism in Revolutionary Circles”, Vol. 11, p. 248.

Dyelo, and to *Tovarishch* which “delightedly repeated the main ideas contained in *Nashe Dyelo*” (ibid.).

Lenin shows how eclectically the bourgeois press treats the Menshevik press. He notes that bourgeois newspapers and journals, citing the Menshevik publications, extract only those propositions which contain concessions to the liberal bourgeoisie.¹ The rest they justifiably cast aside as meaningless, empty phrases. Lenin likens the attitude of the bourgeois-liberal press towards the Menshevik press to a social phenomenon then widespread in Russia: the unpardonable crude exploitation of small raw commodity suppliers by an unceremonious businessman and bigwig who is not very literate, yet conscious of his power and increasingly insolent.

The praise given by the Cadet Party to opportunist publications was frequently calculated to shift them even further away from the Bolsheviks and closer to the Cadet Party. Observing the antics of the Left-wing Cadet paper *Tovarishch*, Lenin came to the conclusion that it “has been constantly egging the Mensheviks on to a split, and seeking every opportunity to praise them, carefully distinguishing them from the Bolsheviks”.² In analysing such situations Lenin tried to show his readers that praise from the bourgeois press for any Social-Democrat publication was a sure sign of error in its policy, that by their compliments bourgeois ideologists were in effect, “jeering scathingly at the Mensheviks, whom they call ‘moderate socialists’ (the term *Rech* uses), who can always be depended on”.³

By using such praise to expose the opportunist press, Lenin was first and foremost endeavouring to develop political acumen among his worker readers. It was primarily to them that he addressed his words in such situations. It was the workers in whom he had to instil ideological stability in the face of the pernicious influence of the opportunist press, since the latter was addressed to the proletariat as well. “We can only recommend workers who wish to gain a full understanding of the serious problems of working-class politics to read Mr. Izgoyev’s article in the last issue of *Russkaya Mysl*

¹ See V. I. Lenin, “Blocs with the Cadets”, Vol. 11, p. 317.

² V. I. Lenin, “The Social-Democrats and the Duma Elections”, Vol. 11, p. 446.

³ V. I. Lenin, “The St. Petersburg Elections and the Crisis of Opportunism”, Vol. 12, p. 60.

for June of this year.”¹ That would enable the workers to think “again and again over the exuberant praises of liquidationist *ideology* and *tactics* (i.e., the basic principles of liquidationism) that Mr. Izgoyev so generously dispenses” (ibid.).

Lenin more than once drew his readers’ attention to the attempts by the bourgeois press to propagate views it had gleaned from the columns of opportunist or petty-bourgeois periodicals. Thus, during World War I he pointed to social-patriot views that had “been taken up and widely used by the bourgeois ‘patriotic’ press”.² In so doing Lenin indicated to his readers how the petty-bourgeois and opportunist press was aiding the bourgeois-liberal press in forming among the common people a public opinion and mood that were of benefit to the bourgeoisie.

Lenin insisted on that the content of the opportunist press be exposed, that it be countered in a politically conscious way, and also that the methods of which it made particularly frequent use in polemic with the consistently Marxist press be studied attentively. He drew attention in particular to the fact that this press and its publicists resorted to various forms of gossip, personal attacks and abuse. He perceived a certain pattern in this: “This is the gossip of an embittered renegade, that is the trouble.”³

Lenin invariably gained the upper hand in his polemic with such publicists, because his criticism of opportunism was “political, not personal”.⁴ And this was “*in spite of* the abusive character and *in spite of* the insinuations of which everybody is sick and tired”.⁵ Nevertheless, he never believed that this was a feeble opponent. What is more, by the nature of the polemical method he used Lenin judged his opponent to be a very serious adversary. “We shall always have opponents of this kind and must be triply cautious.”⁶

¹ V. I. Lenin, “Instructive Speeches”, Vol. 19, p. 252.

² V. I. Lenin, “The War and Russian Social-Democracy”, Vol. 21, p. 32.

³ V. I. Lenin, “For the Attention of *Luch* and *Pravda* Readers”, Vol. 19, p. 77.

⁴ V. I. Lenin, “An Open Letter to Boris Souvarine”, Vol. 23, p. 201.

⁵ V. I. Lenin, “Coteries Abroad and Russian Liquidators”, Vol. 19, p. 508.

⁶ V. I. Lenin, “To A. V. Lunacharsky, January 13, 1908”, Vol. 43, p. 179.

Following the October 1917 Revolution, and the liquidation throughout the Soviet Republic of both bourgeois and the petty-bourgeois periodicals, the enemy press moved beyond the borders of the Soviet state. However, despite the enormous work he had in running the Party and the state, his involvement in Party, government, economic, cultural and military affairs, Lenin continued to follow its publications. This was not easy, as he was extremely busy and the bourgeois press was quite hard to come by. Only individual issues of newspapers and magazines published abroad got through now and again to Soviet Russia, especially during the Civil War.

As Lenin wrote in February 1919: "We seldom have a chance now of receiving foreign newspapers in Russia: the blockade with which the 'democratic capitalists' of the Entente have surrounded us is apparently operating effectively. They are afraid to acquaint the educated workers of America, Britain and France with ignorant and uncivilised Bolshevism, they are afraid lest people in this land of uncivilised Bolshevism get to know of its successes in the West."¹ In fact, Lenin was here depicting something akin to the "Iron Curtain" which the capitalist world was then attempting to pull down in order, on the one hand, to stop the spread of the "revolutionary virus" to their countries and, on the other, to keep Soviet Russia in ignorance as regards revolutionary processes which, despite the thickness of the lowered curtain, were taking place as a direct result of the October Revolution.

From the very first days of Soviet Russia's existence, the bourgeois press in various capitalist countries and of various political leanings, motivated by class interests, began to dis-

¹ V. I. Lenin, "On the Appeal of the German Independents", Vol. 42, p. 126.

play an almost identical degree of hatred towards it. At the Extraordinary Sixth All-Russia Congress of Soviets, Lenin said: "It is true to say now that all the Anglo-French and American papers, with financial backing running into billions, are in capitalist hands and that they act in one syndicate to suppress the truth about Soviet Russia, to spread lies and slander about us."¹ So Lenin put his finger on the complete unity, the united hatred towards the young Soviet republic in the press of the major and most powerful capitalist powers after World War I. He also noted that this hatred was apparent in two ways—either the silence concerning the very existence of the Soviet state and its initial, truly democratic decrees, or in the spreading of lies and slander about the state of affairs in the country.

Lenin exposed the propagators of anti-Sovietism, showing the contradictory nature and mendacity of their malicious statements and reports. In the same speech, for example, he remarked that up till then the press of the countries mentioned had explained the intervention against the Soviet state by the fact that Russia had allowed itself to be seized by Germany and had effectively turned into its ally; and then some papers like *L'Echo de Paris* began to blurt out the true, namely, class aim of the intervention: "We are going into Russia to bring down Bolshevik power". Lenin tried to make note of such admissions by the bourgeois press so as later to give them wide coverage. He found this material because "the newspapers of these countries are not always very cautious, and now and again some journalist openly announces the chief aims, and discards all the false talk about a league of nations."² The comment sounded like an instruction to young Soviet journalists writing on international affairs to identify such confessions quickly and put them to work through a counter-propaganda channel.

For this purpose he also used admissions of the successes achieved by the Soviet Republic that occasionally crept into the columns of bourgeois papers. Thus, in his report to the session of the Petrograd Soviet on 12 March 1919; he cited *The Times* which had noted in an article by a military expert

¹ V. I. Lenin, "Extraordinary Sixth All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers', Peasants', Cossacks', and Red Army Deputies", Vol. 28, p. 161.

² V. I. Lenin, "Report at a Joint Session of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee, the Moscow Soviet, Factory Committees and Trade Unions, October 22, 1918", Vol. 28, p. 121.

that dissolution was taking place in the Western armies, while in Soviet Russia "the army is not falling to pieces but is being built up".¹ Lenin agreed with this affirmation, adding: "This has been one of the most important features of our development during the past year" (ibid.).

He utilised certain statements by the bourgeois papers to criticise the anti-Soviet foreign policy of individual Western states. A typical instance of this was Lenin's reaction to an article in the French *Le Temps* on the setting up in Moscow of the Third International. In an article published in May 1919 in the journal *Communist International*, Lenin disclosed its covert meaning. He said that the reason why the well-known French bourgeois periodical was giving hostile information about the Third International was that "it wanted to have a dig at Wilson, as if to say: 'Look at the people with whom you negotiate!'"² Even the very circumspect steps being taken by the British Government towards recognition of Soviet Russia as a trade partner provoked fury in French ruling circles at the time—that was the hidden thinking and objective of the French paper's article which Lenin thought necessary to extract and show to the Soviet readers.

He notes yet another facet of this information. In so far as the Western bourgeois press was trying to keep quiet on such events as the Comintern Congress, the French paper's article helped to destroy the conspiracy of silence and to acquaint the working people in the bourgeois states about facts of great revolutionary importance. "The wisecracks who write to the order of the money-bags do not see that their attempt to frighten Wilson with the Bolshevik bogey is becoming, in the eyes of the working people, an advertisement for the Bolsheviks. Once more, our most respectful thanks to the organ of the French millionaires!" (ibid.).

Lenin was writing fairly often at the time to expose the bourgeois opportunist press. Of particular importance here is his book and the article in *Pravda* of the same name: "The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky". They are both aimed at Kautsky's slanderous book *The Dictatorship of the Proletariat*. Kautsky was editor-in-chief of *Die Neue*

¹ V. I. Lenin, "Session of the Petrograd Soviet, March 12, 1919", Vol. 29, p. 23.

² V. I. Lenin, "The Third International and Its Place in History", Vol. 29, p. 306.

Zeit, the theoretical organ of German Social-Democracy. His views found expression also in the periodical of the German Social-Democratic Party. The book was a concentrated expression both of Kautsky's own anti-Soviet publicistic scribblings and of the diversions used by the entire opportunist press against the October Revolution. Lenin therefore thought it extremely necessary to respond to it by a pamphleteering book and to do so in as short a time as possible, to respond at least in an article while the book was being prepared.¹ He began to write the book on 9 October 1918, but that same day despatched an article to *Pravda* against the Kautsky's book which had only just come out in Vienna.

Comparing it to Bernstein's book *Die Voraussetzungen des Sozialismus (Premises of Socialism)*, Lenin felt that Kautsky had written a book that was "a hundred times more disgraceful, outrageous and renegade" (*ibid.*, p. 105). Since "nearly nine-tenths of Kautsky's book" had been devoted to the question of the relationship between the dictatorship of the proletariat and democracy, Lenin concentrated his polemical attention precisely on this thesis. He accused Kautsky of an elementary ignorance both of Marx's teaching on the dictatorship of the proletariat and of the uniqueness of conditions in Soviet Russia: Lenin categorically rejected Kautsky's claim that Marx meant by revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat a "state of rule", as if the Bolsheviks understand by the term a form of governing that precluded democracy. Lenin calls the dictatorship of the proletariat not a "form of governing", but a state of a different type, a machine for the suppression of the bourgeoisie by the proletariat (see *ibid.*, pp. 107-08). He showed convincingly that Kautsky had not perceived in historical reality the main function of proletarian dictatorship—to create a new, socialist society, a society of genuine democracy for millions of workers and peasants—that is, for the vast majority of the country's population.

In another article Lenin attacked the attempt by the German paper *Die Freiheit* to argue the possibility of retaining Soviet power while introducing bourgeois parliamentarism in the Soviet Republic. He launched the attack in June 1919 after having presented this newspaper to readers of *The Communist International* as "the organ of the 'Independent'

¹ See V. I. Lenin, "The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky", Vol. 28, p. 105.

(of Marxism, but absolutely dependent on petty-bourgeois democracy) Social-Democrats of Germany".¹ Lenin demolished the paper's argument by reference to historical experience: "This attempt to combine the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie with the dictatorship of the proletariat is a complete renunciation of Marxism and of socialism in general; forgotten are the experiences of the Russian Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries who from May 6, 1917 to October 25, 1917 (Old Style) made the 'experiment' of combining the Soviets as a 'state organisation' with the *bourgeois* state and failed ignominiously" (ibid., p. 394).

In the same article, Lenin again returned to a description of Kautsky, former Marxist, and subsequently vigorous revisionist, as a publicist. Lenin underlined the main stages of an evolution typical of any renegade: "All his life this Knight of the Rueful Countenance *has been writing* about the class struggle and about socialism; but when the class struggle reached maximum intensity, reached the threshold of socialism, our pundit lost his nerve, burst into tears, and turned out to be a common or garden philistine" (ibid., p. 397). Instead of analysing the actual conditions in which the October armed insurrection occurred and socialist revolution in Russia was developing, Kautsky resorted to the "usual, age-old, typical whining and snivelling of the philistine" about a "cult of violence" and "the break-down of industry".

Lenin drew attention to the common destiny of such renegades—to be pampered by the bourgeois press. In his article published in *The Communist International* in that same 1919, he indicated fresh opportunities for the bourgeoisie "to pamper" renegades both in the press and on radio. He remarked, in particular, that Kautsky's book *Terrorismus und Kommunismus (Terror and Communism)* was being given all manner of promotion by the Paris radio station. "The millionaires and multimillionaires would not use their government wireless station for nothing. They considered it necessary to publicise Kautsky's new crusade. In their attempt to stem the advancing tide of Bolshevism they have to grasp at everything—even at a straw, even at Kautsky's book."² He is sure that this premeditated act will have no

¹ V. I. Lenin, "The Heroes of the Berne International", Vol. 29, p. 393.

² V. I. Lenin, "How the Bourgeoisie Utilises Renegades", Vol. 30, p. 27.

results, that Kautsky's views will become a laughing stock, and that the bourgeois radio correspondents will thereby only help "Bolshevik propaganda so splendidly" (ibid.).

The article "How the Bourgeoisie Utilises Renegades" is a graphic example of going onto the offensive in polemic against the anti-Sovietism of the bourgeois press and radio. Lenin goes into the attack on the most acute political issues, inviting thousands and millions of people to join in an open discussion. He discloses to his reader all the arguments against revolutionary transformation in Soviet Russia being used by the enemy. And at once he opposes his own irrefutable logic to the hostile propaganda.

Lenin's interviews with various bourgeois newspapers and correspondents ought to be considered as a new form of his polemic with the bourgeois press in Soviet times. Lenin's explanations published in a variety of bourgeois papers of a number of issues related to the domestic and foreign policy of the socialist state were a unique polemical counter-blast against slanderous anti-Soviet articles. Attributing much importance to this aspect of the interviews, he exacted the condition that his "answers will be printed in full in over a hundred newspapers in the United States of America".¹

This condition, backed up by a written undertaking on the American side, was actually far from observed. The interview appeared in the American press without Lenin's reply to the final question: "What else would you care to bring to the notice of American public opinion?"² Lenin's laconic, but substantial reply to the question was a clear manifestation of Lenin's publicistic skill. It was distinguished by the force of its revolutionary articulation of political and theoretical thinking, the simple explanation it provided of very complex propositions of political economy and philosophy, its allowance for the specific nature of the readership. Lenin convincingly showed the American reader the inevitability of the replacement of the capitalist by the socialist system in the course of the world revolutionary process. The American agency left out this answer as purely communist propaganda.

Lenin gave twelve more interviews to representatives of

¹ V. I. Lenin, "Answers to an American Journalist's Questions", Vol. 29, p. 515.

² See V. I. Lenin, Vol. 29, p. 585, Note 83.

major bourgeois periodicals and agencies in America, Britain, Germany and Japan. In these interviews he replied to basic questions concerning the policy of the young Soviet state on which the bourgeois press had spread a host of slanderous information. Sometimes the interviews assumed the nature of a direct denunciations of the malicious fabrications of the bourgeois press. Such is the interview given to Michael Farbman, the correspondent of the British *Observer* newspaper, on 27 October 1922. Farbman admitted that the British bourgeois press of the time was writing much and noisily about the arrests of Moscow "industrialists", about the "end" of the New Economic Policy and "reversion" to a policy of nationalisation and confiscation. Lenin explained the position: "Indeed, those arrested were exclusively profiteers on the so-called black market and our authorities are in possession of evidence establishing connection between these black-market currency profiteers and certain employees of foreign missions in Moscow. This evidence shows not only the sale of platinum and of gold bars but also the *organisation of contraband shipments of these valuables abroad.*"¹ Just as resolutely he rejected all the other false rumours put about by the British bourgeois press. He showed "how utterly false are the accusations made by the anti-Russian press in Britain, which is trying by the most unheard-of distortion and deception to present our policy in a false light" (*ibid.*, p. 389).

The lessons taught by Lenin in polemic with the White-guard émigré press are of great importance for all progressive journalists. He began his polemic with the pamphlet "In the Servants' Quarters" devoted to the Menshevik and Socialist-Revolutionary press which, during the Civil War, was "on the other side of the barricades", on the other side of the front, as one would expect from the logic of class struggle. "Educated intellectuals who imagine they are socialists and call themselves such, saturated through and through with bourgeois prejudices and fawning before the bourgeoisie—such, if we get down to brass tacks, is that entire clique of writers."² That was how Lenin referred in his pamphlet

¹ V. I. Lenin, "Interview Given to Michael Farbman, *Observer* and *Manchester Guardian* Correspondent", Vol. 33, pp. 388-89.

² V. I. Lenin, "In the Servants' Quarters", Vol. 29, p. 540.

to the editors and publicists of Menshevik and Socialist-Revolutionary publications that were then being published in the south of Russia – *Mysl*, *Gryadushchy Dyen*, *Obyedimeniye*, etc.

The Civil War eventually came to an end and colonies of Whiteguard Russian émigrés appeared in many countries of the world. Papers began to come out in Russian in several countries; they were of the most diverse political strains and tendencies – bourgeois-monarchist, bourgeois-liberal, petty-bourgeois, Menshevik and Socialist-Revolutionary. Every one of them was anti-Soviet and all now fawned on the bourgeoisie of whatever country they happened to be residing at the time. The tendency to fawn spread throughout the Russian émigré bourgeois press.

A paper or magazine could only exist initially on the funds it had brought out from Russia. But capital investors in such an enterprise were well aware from the start that they could not expect profit from their investment. Circulation was always restricted by the size of the White émigré colony in the country – that is, it was pathetically small for the bourgeois newspaper business of the time; nor could it rely on income from advertisements, since the national bourgeoisie preferred to advertise its commodities in national newspapers and journals in their own language. These were often pitiful, small, insubstantial publications which fairly quickly disappeared from the scene.

These publications could not survive on their own funds. Where did they get the cash then, for example, *Posledniye Novosti* (*Latest News*), the “richest” of the White émigré publications? One repatriate in his reminiscences *From Experiences in Other Lands* tells us: “It is hard to answer this question, but since wide émigré circles were well aware of the link between newspaper editors and the international Masons and Zionist finance circles, one can with great certainty suppose that the money for publication came precisely from this source.”¹

The one thing these White émigré papers did not lack was journalistic personnel. The émigrés included quite a few once-famous bourgeois publicists, editors, feature writers and reporters. The demand for jobs was obviously less than the

¹ B. N. Alexandrovsky, *Iz perezhitovo v chuzhikh krayakh*, *Mysl*, Moscow, 1969, p. 141.

supply, publications quickly “flopped”, and one had to have “pull” to get a job with a paper like *Posledniye Novosti*.

Despite the diversity of political hues variously depicting Russia’s future, all the White émigré periodicals portrayed Soviet reality with equal calumny. Rumours of hostile actions by various anti-Soviet groups and of kulak insurrections straightaway became in the columns of this press information about “mass” peasant uprisings, about actions against Communists “everywhere”, about the “fall” of Soviet power in various regions and even at the centre.

Lenin continued to follow attentively the evolution of the White émigré press in its new homes. He immediately drew attention to the fact that the press was financed by foreign sources, and voiced the firm conviction that “these millions will go down the drain, and they will have nothing to show for it but a lot of spoiled newsprint and wasted ink in various printing offices in Prague”.¹

He continued a dialogue with this press. He thought it necessary to deal with it and expose it at moments of particularly acute political events.

Thus, at the time of the Kronstadt mutiny,² he followed the White émigré press with rapt attention. He was appreciative of the fact that *Pravda*, *Izvestia* and other Soviet papers were acquainting readers with the responses of the White émigré press to this incident, and were commenting on their reactions. “Why have our newspapers devoted so much attention to it?” Lenin asks at the All-Russia Congress of Transport Workers. “Was it right to do so? It was, because we must have a clear view of our enemy.”³

The major objective of this attention was thus to know the enemy better. The fact that they had moved a certain distance away geographically did not remove the threat. “Abroad they are not so conspicuous, but you will find that they have not moved very far away, just a few thousand versts at most; and having moved that far, have taken cover. They are alive and kicking, and lying in wait” (ibid.). International capital was stimulating their force.

¹ V. I. Lenin, “Speech Delivered at the Fourth All-Russia Congress of Garment Workers, February 6, 1921”, Vol. 32, p. 115.

² A counter-revolutionary action by the Kronstadt garrison in the spring of 1921.

³ V. I. Lenin, “Speech Delivered at the All-Russia Congress of Transport Workers, March 27, 1921”, Vol. 32, p. 280.

In analysing the reaction of the White émigré press to the Kronstadt mutiny, Lenin led his readers to yet another important conclusion: the position of this press fully coincided with that of Western bourgeois publications. Addressing the delegates to the Transport Workers' Congress he emphasised: "You must have noticed that these extracts from the whiteguard newspapers published abroad appeared side by side with extracts from British and French newspapers. They are one chorus, one orchestra... International capital uses less conspicuous means than a conductor's baton, but that it is one orchestra should be clear from any one of these extracts" (ibid.).

At the close of the Tenth Party Congress, Lenin dwelt in particular on the campaign of lies and calumny launched by the entire bourgeois press over the anti-Soviet mutiny at Kronstadt in February and March 1921, unleashed by Socialist-Revolutionaries, monarchists and Mensheviks. In his summary of this campaign to the delegates Lenin showed that never before in the West European press had there been such a mass production of fantastic inventions about Soviet Russia. These inventions included "reports" on "insurrections" in various cities, on the victory of the mutineers, on Lenin's "flight" to the Crimea, and on the streets of Moscow and Petrograd "running with blood". The papers of Britain, Germany, France and the USA all took part in this campaign of slander. Lenin suggested that "the scope and method of the campaign betray it as a far-reaching plan adopted by all the leading governments".¹ He perceived in this malicious campaign the hand of "the world press syndicate" and a "world imperialist crusade" aimed at preventing any further breaching of the trade and economic blockade of Soviet Russia by the Soviet Government. In analysing this campaign of virulent lies and calumny, Lenin comes to the conclusion that it is an indication, on the one hand, of "how we are surrounded by enemies" and, on the other, "how much weaker they are as compared with last year" (ibid., p. 270). Lenin never tired of emphasising in polemic with hostile periodicals that malice and madness in press propaganda are not a sign of strength, but a manifestation of impotence.

The Whiteguard organisations and their centres did not confine themselves merely to press propaganda. They con-

¹ V. I. Lenin, "Tenth Congress of the R.C.P.(B.)", Vol. 32, p. 267.

ducted secret activity behind the scenes aimed at restoring the capitalist order in Soviet Russia. Lenin drew the attention of delegates attending the Tenth Party Congress to the fact that the first rumours about the Kronstadt mutiny appeared in the Whiteguard press two weeks before it had begun. "It is quite clear that it is the work of Socialist-Revolutionaries and whiteguard émigrés" (ibid., p. 184). The accusation was later, as is known, fully confirmed: the plot was proved, and its threads led back to the émigré centres.

The White émigré press responded to the Kronstadt events with as big a stream of malicious insinuations and threats as did the press of the leading capitalist states of the West. Lenin kept a watchful eye on these reactions and gave his polemical comments on some of them.

On 11 March 1921, the Milyukov paper *Posledniye Novosti* published a leader "Candidates for Power" in which it advanced a new slogan: "Down with the Bolsheviks and Long Live the Soviets". This slogan meant "that power must pass from the Bolsheviks to moderate socialists who will gain a majority in the Soviets". The editors did not conceal that they welcomed this turn of events only to the extent that it was a transitional stage on the way to the convening of a Constituent Assembly and to the further shift of power to the bourgeoisie. Commenting on this article, Lenin contrasted the position of the Cadet Milyukov with that of the Menshevik Martov and the Socialist-Revolutionary Chernov, expressed in their press responses to the Kronstadt mutiny and consisting in total conviction on the part of the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries that if power should pass to them it would remain with them. Lenin declared that "compared with the Chernovs and Martovs, Milyukov is right, for he is revealing the *true* tactics of the *real* whiteguard force, the force of the capitalists and landowners. He declares: 'It does not matter whom we support, be they anarchists or any sort of Soviet government, *as long as* the Bolsheviks are overthrown, *as long as there is a shift in power*'.¹ As always, Lenin is thinking in scientific class categories. He therefore sees "the real force" behind Milyukov and his paper and that this is the force of two classes: capitalists and landowners. These are the major force behind the White émigrés, the force behind the White armies that were

¹ V. I. Lenin, "The Tax in Kind", Vol. 32, p. 359.

still surviving on their own funds and those of capitalist governments, and the force behind their press, maintained by international capital. That force, however, did not stand behind Martov and Chernov and their press; they had to rely on intermediate petty-bourgeois sections of the White émigrés. Lenin reiterated this idea on a wider theoretical plane in the Theses for a Report on the Tactics of the R.C.P.: "Milyukov, the leader of the big bourgeoisie, has correctly appraised the lesson taught by all revolutions, namely, that the petty-bourgeois democrats are incapable of holding power, and always serve merely as a screen for the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, and a stepping stone to its undivided power."¹

How did *Sotsialistichesky Vestnik* (*Socialist Herald*), the organ of the Mensheviks, react to the Kronstadt mutiny? In the fifth issue of the journal for 1921 there was a long article entitled "Kronstadt", from which it turned out that the "masses" were seemingly going to fight to the death for the Menshevik slogans of "political freedom, freely elected Soviets, destruction of the Party dictatorship of the Communists and the Cheka terror, and agreement with the peasants on the basis of concessions to their demands for free trade". Lenin did not let this pearl of self-adulation in Menshevik propaganda pass unremarked. He underlined that "Martov showed himself to be nothing but a philistine Narcissus when he declared in his Berlin journal that Kronstadt not only adopted Menshevik slogans but also proved that there could be an anti-Bolshevik movement which did not entirely serve the interests of the whiteguards, the capitalists and the landowners".² Unfounded pretentiousness, blatant overestimation of their strength, bragging and vanity are all typical features of the petty-bourgeois and opportunist press uncovered by Lenin in this new historical material.

Lenin's close attention to the *Smena Vekh* (*Change of Landmarks*) trend in the White émigré press is also worth dwelling on. This trend emerged following the publication in Prague in July 1921 of the collection *Smena Vekh* and the appearance in Paris between October 1921 and March 1922 of a journal of the same name. The authors of the collection

¹ V. I. Lenin, "Third Congress of the Communist International", Vol. 32, p. 461.

² V. I. Lenin, "The Tax in Kind", Vol. 32, p. 359.

and editors and leading publicists of the journal, as well as the paper *Nakanune (On the Eve)*, published in Berlin in 1922–24, were professors and well-known political figures such as N. V. Ustryalov, Y. V. Klyuchnikov, A. V. Bobrishchev-Pushkin, S. S. Lukyanov, S. S. Chakhotin and Y. N. Potekhin, who sympathised with the Cadets and Octobrists.

The *Smena Vekh* periodicals clearly tended to pull their punches when it came to criticising Soviet policy and attacking the young Soviet state. On the other hand, they openly expressed their conviction that the introduction of NEP¹ would gradually bring about the internal regeneration of Soviet power. In some articles the *Smena Vekh* people also called for cooperation with the Soviet power “in the name of the Russian national cause”, clearly linking this appeal once again with the hope that capitalism would be restored. Lenin said that, on the one hand, these publications should be used to check the political compass and, on the other, the representatives of the bourgeois intellectuals who were grouped around these publications should be carefully scrutinised and attracted to Soviet work. In response to forecasts of the inevitable degeneration of Soviet power, Lenin said in an address to delegates attending the Eleventh Party Congress: “The enemy is speaking the class truth and is pointing to the danger that confronts us, and which the enemy is striving to make inevitable.”² Bearing in mind, in certain circumstances, their sincere desire to return to Soviet Russia and cooperate with Soviet power, Lenin made concrete proposals on attracting the authors of such statements to particular state work. Thus, having read Y. Klyuchnikov’s article “The Genoa Conference” in *Smena Vekh* of 21 January 1922, Lenin suggested discussing the question of attracting this eminent *Smena Vekh* man to join the Soviet delegation as an expert.

Thus, in spite of his immense preoccupation with Party and state work after the October Revolution, Lenin continued to follow attentively both the bourgeois press in the major capitalist countries and the White émigré press located

¹ New Economic Policy was introduced and pursued by the Communist Party and the Soviet State in the period of transition from capitalism to socialism.

² V. I. Lenin, “Eleventh Congress of the R.C.P.(B.)”, Vol. 33, p. 287.

on their territory. He also found time for arguing with them, exposing their hostile attacks, slander and insinuation. Lenin's polemic with that press after the October Revolution shows how to go on to the offensive, how to be quick to respond and theoretically well-grounded and flexible in contending with ideological opponents.

* * *

Lenin's polemic with the bourgeois press contains immense ideological power.

Lenin provides a lesson in reading hostile newspapers and magazines attentively, profoundly, and systematically. He is a model of how one should penetrate the "enemy camp" so as to know him better, how to spot the class and partisan position in the columns of bourgeois publications, in their articles, commentaries and simple information statements, how to determine unerringly the political line of a publication by isolated material, by the evaluation of facts and events, by their writers.

He presents a splendid lesson in criticising the capitalist press as a whole, its fundamental principles and functions, method of action, and polemic devices. Lenin's work on the theme "Capitalism and the Press" is a paramount and integral part of his teaching on the press. He provides a model of how one should move from criticising individual press organs and individual figures in the bourgeois press to broad theoretical generalisations about the laws and processes of its development.

His directives on the vital and urgent question of contributing to the bourgeois press are of great value. The propositions he worked out are part of the Leninist principle of the Party press.

Lenin's methods and polemical style with the bourgeois press are instructive, and may be widely used in polemic with the present-day reactionary bourgeois press. It is particularly worth singling out in this respect Lenin's ability to expose all manner of manipulation of the facts, which has been brought to a fine art by the present-day bourgeois press. It is worth paying particular attention, for example, to his skill in extracting facts from beneath their ideological dressing, in showing their real, essential meaning, and counterposing his own more convincing Marxist interpretation to bourgeois

press commentaries. Lenin's extensive utilisation in polemic with the bourgeois press of its involuntary self-revelations is also of immense interest. And his methodology of denouncing the bourgeois press and its slanderous, lying reports is a model of professional skill.

Also instructive is the way he deals with the hostile press of diverse political strains. In arguing with this press, Lenin taught his readership to identify the class and partisan forces that stood behind the periodicals. As for himself, he displayed considerable skill in selecting the most effective means of polemic against the various press organs by taking into account their class and partisan positions.

Every time one returns to or even simply comes across the experience of the great master of revolutionary journalism, his polemical art, one always takes one more step forward in a journalism that truly serves the people.

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Boris Baluyev

LENIN

AND THE BOURGEOIS PRESS

This book by Boris Baluyev, Doctor of Historical Sciences, is a study of the polemical writings of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin against the bourgeois press. The author analyses articles, notes and reviews written by Lenin to expose it, and examines the most salient and instructive aspects of this polemic and the devices Lenin used in his contention with bourgeois newspapers and periodicals of diverse opinion.

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