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Many fall into the error of believing that there is no other way to be revolutionary, to prepare for the revolution, other than to prepare materially for the upheaval of the foundations of bourgeois society, or to stubbornly and deliberately clash with individual or collective acts of revolt against the current legal order—believing that this is the only practical mode of agitation and struggle.

It is quite true that the one should not be neglected and the other can be usefully implemented in more than one circumstance; but these are exceptional forms of activity, limited in scope, and cannot constitute a lasting rule of conduct that is equal in time and space, nor a normal program of action.

The material preparation for the struggle can be nothing more than the occupation of limited groups of individuals; and this task, exhaustible in a relatively short time, can only be initiated at special moments, when there is a serious and feasible intention to engage in the struggle or the possibility of revolutionary situations is glimpsed in the near future. To resort to it out of time or in a way that requires a very long-term outcome would be useless, too costly, and dangerous at the same time. As for acts of revolt, individual or collective, which for a time were called “propaganda

by deed," they depend solely on the will of the person carrying them out; they erupt in an instant and suddenly exhaust their function without specific and precise ties to organized and mass movements. In short, they fall outside the realm of normality, which only encompasses collective and permanent action, such as that of the trade union movement.

But can we therefore say that it is impossible to be revolutionary in the practical life of agitation and struggle, even in normal times, within large organizations and the broadest mass movements? Certainly not. While it is true that, for the time being, the largest, most solid, and oldest organizations have less revolutionary and more accommodating and reformist tendencies, it is also true that it is always possible to act within them, to exert influence in a revolutionary sense. And this is the task of those organized and those who are animated by a faith in an idea of the future. They, even in practical, everyday life, in times of peace, can develop revolutionary activity and give revolutionary content even to the most outwardly peaceful struggles of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie.

There are acts, forms of activity that, even without leaving the legal orbit, can be revolutionary. Publishing a newspaper, organizing and sustaining a strike, promoting popular meetings, street demonstrations, etc., all of this can be contained in the most orthodox forms. Such demonstrations, even if organized by revolutionaries and anarchists, do not cross the boundaries of legality; they only become illegal in exceptional cases. And even in such cases, these are minor infractions that add little or nothing concrete to the desired results. And yet, there are acts of this kind that, without violating the formal law sanctioned in the codes for the benefit of the ruling classes, deeply impress the spirit; and are therefore revolutionary.

This is so true that the ruling classes themselves feel the need from time to time to violate their own laws: "to restore balance," they say; that is, to consolidate their domination, with the slow,

though legal, infiltration of revolutionary activity already shaking them to the core. This organization is not enough, of course—and ultimately, the decisive blow of the true revolution is indispensable—but it is necessary and retains all its revolutionary value in the preceding, more or less long, period of evolution.

It is necessary, however, not to fall into the simplistic error of attributing a revolutionary value to every form of class or party activity, solely because of the label it may take or simply because of the revolutionary affirmation of the final objective. There are also many reformists who do not deny that the solution to the social problem ultimately requires the violent overthrow of the last obstacles to the complete emancipation of the working class; but then, in practical, everyday life, they act in ways that distance the revolution and consolidate rather than weaken the pillars of capitalism and the state.

The proletariat, or rather its revolutionary fractions, are not strong enough to move and act outside the laws, which they nevertheless do not recognize. Consequently, they are forced to suffer them. But even in this sphere, the proletariat could give its activity an effectively revolutionary orientation, that is, in radical opposition; it is intransigent toward all institutions considered evil and unjust. It cannot, it is true, free itself from capitalist exploitation; but in its struggle against it, it is always possible to give it an irreducible character of negation, even when what it proposes to wrest from it is too little in comparison to its comprehensive emancipation.

It is above all in struggles in the economic arena that the revolutionary method can develop, distinguishing itself from the reformist method—which tends to obtain improvements as in a contract between equals—while the former tends to conquer and wrest from the capitalists everything that the proletarian forces allow, as one would act against a thief who had stolen all our assets.

That is why the revolutionary method consists above all in the way in which certain conquests are achieved. And these conquests

have value only insofar as they are obtained in this way, and not after reformist negotiations, which recognize, in deeds if not in words, the boss's right to withhold.

The "way" of the reformists also consists, yes, in organization, taken as a starting point; but then, the path is not the one suggested by the idea that the proletarian class and the boss class are irreconcilably hostile, but rather the other, in which there can always be a way to resolve the two classes. Reformism therefore tends to transform class conflicts into contracts, equal to any contract between buyer and seller.

From which this consequence arises: that the ultimate goal of the proletarian movement is forgotten, and the greatest importance is attributed to immediate improvements, which precisely for this reason lose all significance. Considering every economic and class dispute from this single, limited perspective, one ends up employing all means that can serve the immediate objective: even those that jeopardize the future, even those that constitute an obstacle to future achievements.

It is the policy of Jacob, who sells his birthright for a mess of pottage; and the entire philosophy of this policy seems to be enclosed in the flat, comfortable, and lazy popular saying: "Better an egg today than a chicken tomorrow."

The revolutionary method, on the other hand, consists in not renouncing anything of the future, even taking everything that is possible in the present, and taking great care not to compromise the achievements of tomorrow in exchange for the meager, though not inconsiderable, achievements of the present.