Marx-Engels and Democracy (Part One)

The issue of the communist movement's attitude toward democracy is made all the more important because:

1 – it has usually been pushed back behind analyses that display more ideology than truly scientific thought (we are thinking particularly of Bordiguism's theorization of anti-democratism)

2 – contrary to what we, among others, had thought, the democratic movement has, over the last two decades, shown itself capable of historic initiative. We are thinking of the German reunifications, the creation of new national entities in Europe, etc.

As often happens, an issue that had seemed finished has blown up in the face of revolutionary militants.

As always, we are following here the method of the return to Marx. As communism after 1917 has generally failed, we have to go back to the sources. This is not a purely academic exercise. Who would dare deny, for example, that the issue of democracy in China, affecting a third of humanity, is not of pressing currency and of immense revolutionary importance?

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We will begin here with a work by a bourgeois scholar published in 1998: *Révolution et démocratie chez Marx et Engels*, by Jean Texier (published by PUF). As counter-revolutionary as this book might be, it still has numerous merits:

- It is a very serious work of research and compilation about the texts themselves.
- It has unearthed texts still unpublished in French.
- It does important work in restoring the context in which certain texts were published and the conditions in which they were revealed (particularly in the context of Marx and Engels' struggle within German social-democracy).
- It proves (despite the fact that this is exactly what Texier does not want to show) that there was an absolute continuity in Marx and Engels' politics from the 1843 writings to Engels' death, on the following principles:

    - The refusal of legalism at all cost.
    - The rejection of pacifism.

On the other hand, Texier remains criminally silent about the passages where Marx and Engels are explicitly critical of democracy, which is called a "lie" (Engels).

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Two theses confront each other at the very heart of Texier's work, and he himself writes that he hesitates between these two understandings of Marx and Engels. The first is a "right-wing"

critique of Marxism, seeking to show that Marx and Engels were anti-democratic, and that as such they were the direct origin of phenomena like Stalinism. The other is the "left-wing" apology for Marxism, seeking to show that Marx and Engels were democrats *in spite of everything*. We will show that both of these arguments are equally counter-revolutionary, since they both depend on an apology for bourgeois democracy as being the best possible form of government, and therefore unsurpassable.

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Looking today at the pitiful arguments of these CNRS gentlemen,[1] Engels would shout louder than ever, "What these Gentlemen are missing is the dialectic!" Unfortunately, the dialectic is equally missing in the revolutionary current itself, on this question as on many others.

So here is the position that we will defend regarding Marx and Engels' dialectics of democracy: just as the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* is an "apology for the bourgeoisie," Marx and Engels develop, in their theoretical work, both a defense of democracy *as the most favorable terrain* for the decisive class conflict between bourgeoisie and proletariat, **AND** a critique of democracy as "lie" – both as a contradiction in terms and as a synonym of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. This can be summed up in the phrase: no proletarian revolution without democracy, but the proletarian revolution is the destruction of democracy. In this text, we will not take on tactical issues, only theoretical basics. It will be useful to subsequently contrast these positions with their interpretations by Lenin, Bordiga, Trotsky, etc., and if need be, to criticize them.

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SUMMARY OF TEXIER'S ARGUMENT

You can't help feeling a little pity for Jacques Texier. Reading him makes you think of those little children playing hide-and-seek, who, after having mobilized the riches of their imaginations to make themselves invisible, are so proud of their feat, so eager to prove their ingenuity, that they shout out "Hey! I'm hiding over here!" The result of this, of course, is that the patiently constructed structure suddenly collapses, and the goal sought turns immediately into its opposite. This is exactly what happens when you read Jacques Texier's book: patient scholar that he is, he goes over the writings of Marx and Engels with a fine-toothed comb, analyzes the differences between published editions, devotes himself to a rather patient reconstruction of the texts, which is quite a praiseworthy effort, and from this, he draws conclusions… that are immediately demolished by his own reconstruction effort. Does he collect quotations from Marx and Engels in order to prove they were fervent democrats? Alas… the same quotations indisputably show that Marx and Engels were always irredeemably critical of democracy. Is he seeking an ultimate revision by the "late Engels" that would transform the work of two lives into its logical opposite? Alas… for that he is relying solely on a translation of a German phrase, and the translation's erroneous character soon completely destroys his argument.

[1] Translator's note: CNRS is the French acronym for the French National Center for Scientific Research, which, according to its web site, is a state-run "basic-research organization that defines its mission as producing knowledge and making it available to society."

All of this is due to the fact that Texier, who certainly does his reading, is cruelly lacking in one important area: political sense. The writings of Marx and Engels cannot be made the object of a pure and cold academic study. Where Texier reveals contradictions, revolutionaries see dialectics at work in the elaboration of tactical considerations, all turned toward a single goal: the proletarian revolution. Opposing two apparently contradictory positions in an abstract way makes no sense. Examining these positions in relation to the moment in which they were developed, in the political and revolutionary context – that is the really constructive and instructive work for the future of the revolution. That is the basis on which we will study Texier's nonetheless useful systematic cataloguing of texts on this question.

So, however indecisive he might be between two positions,[2] for our man Texier, Marx and Engels are democrats.[3] It is understandable for our scholar to try to save the baby with the bathwater. This is a time when all anti-communists, delighted by the failure of Stalinism in the East, are seeking to push back the chain of responsibility in order to pin the "crimes of communism" on Lenin – whom they have always held responsible – but also on Marx. Our man sees no other means of defense but to cling to the line that Marx and Engels were sincere and authentic democrats,[4] certainly led astray at times, but nonetheless loyal to that ideal. That said – and because we are magnanimous – we should recognize that Texier's continual emphasis on the continuity of Marx and Engels' positions is not the least of his merits... except when he denies it, of course. But let's first frame the issue in these terms, before judging whether Marx and Engels were in fact democrats:

What does it mean "to be a democrat" ?

To be a democrat is to seek democracy as an end in itself, as the final goal of the evolution of the political forms of society. Once democracy has been obtained, the aim becomes a matter of vigilantly ensuring that it is completely respected, of working toward its defense and permanent enlargement.

Yet – and a large number of passages attest to this – when Marx and Engels speak of the "conquest of democracy" (*Manifesto*), they only ever do so when at the same time considering democracy as a necessary stage on the path to the proletarian revolution. It is a **means**, and a **necessary moment**, but in no case a definitive, immutable goal of human history. That is what differentiates a democrat from a communist on the issue of democracy, and it is an essential, fundamental difference, which allows that in certain quite limited historical circumstances,

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[2] "Nonetheless, it seems to me equally possible to argue seriously in support of the opposite position, that Marx and Engels' thinking was fundamentally antidemocratic." (Texier, 13)

[3] "In my opinion, Marx and Engels' thought was essentially, fundamentally democratic." (Texier, 296)

[4] One could see a complete misinterpretation, for example in the following commentary: "The preface that he [Engels] wrote that year for the German edition of *The Civil War in France* by K. Marx emphasizes the fact that the Commune was a "true democracy" and ends with an exclamation that says more or less that: the idea of a proletarian dictatorship scares you! Do you want to know what it is? Look at the Paris Commune (<u>and don't be afraid, because these revolutionaries were democrats</u>), that was the dictatorship of the proletariat." (p. 344) One can't help being confused when reading the passage between parentheses, that we have underlined: as if it would have been in Engels' psychology to seek to reassure the bourgeoisie! As if Engels didn't cite, through this passage, the Commune's measures, which, despite their timidity were measures that expropriated the bourgeoisie and measures seeking to destroy the bourgeoisie's interests, and as if they hadn't been accomplished by **armed** proletarians.

communists march alongside democrats, but it also implies, with equal certainty, that there are other historical periods when communists have an absolute duty to directly attack democrats, if they don't want to be eliminated by them. We should remember here, before going any further, that in 1848, 1871, and 1918 – in short, in every defeat of the proletarian revolution, it was democrats who were the first to wield the rifle, the cannon, and the shovel for the common graves and the massacres.

It is therefore a falsification to say that Marx and Engels "were democrats." Whenever Marx and Engels' defended democracy they did so on a contingent basis, with the proletarian revolution as the final goal, of course. Proletarian revolution was defined as the destruction of the state, whatever form it takes, **including** democracy, even if democracy is defined at the same time as the form most favorable to the success of the revolution... which must destroy it. The contradiction here is only superficial, while the argument's power is extraordinary.

As Texier has posed it[5] — were Marx and Engels democrats or not ? — this is in fact a false problem. What interests us is:

a) seeing how Marx and Engels theorized the issue of democracy, especially from the point of view of the permanent revolution.

b) analyzing how they behaved practically in regard to the various political representatives of European states, during their lifetimes, and how they expressed party positions on these issues.

Concerning the first point, Texier has a theory: revolution in France was the object of a permanent revolution, and contrary to Marx and Engels' expectations, this bourgeois revolution did not give way to a proletarian one.

We can see the maneuver behind this line of argument. Texier's work is that of a true sophist. For him, Marx and Engels are at bottom thinkers of the French revolution – in other words, the bourgeois democratic revolution. During the phase of the establishment of democracy, the concept of permanent revolution is operative, but not that of the bourgeois revolution. Texier doesn't believe, really, in the "growing over" [*transcroissance*][6] of the bourgeois and proletarian revolutions (even though he evokes that term and that hypothesis, c.f. p. 331). In these conditions, once democracy has been established it, the bourgeois **revolution** can no longer be an issue. That is why if one accepts the idea that the permanent revolution is in fact the accomplishment of the bourgeois revolution, including the "complete" implantation of

[5] And resolved by him in this way: "I think it will be possible to support the idea that, despite some problematic aspects, Marx and Engels' thought, including during the extremely difficult period (1848-1852 ***NDR***) was fundamentally democratic" (Texier, 84).

[6] Translator's note: This term was translated in the Trotsky in English (*The Permanent Revolution*). "The question of the class character of the revolution and its 'growing over' [*transcroissance*] was submitted by Lenin (after October) to an analysis in his book against Kautsky." Neither the translator nor the author of this article have located any other English translation of *transcroissance* other than "growing over." The major dictionaries we looked at did not include it. According to Robin Goodfellow, however, "the exact political meaning here is that in the SAME movement, there is first an expression of democratic power, an expression which transforms itself into another form, i.e., the socialist revolution."

democracy in the form of the democratic republic, one is obligated to grant that Marx and Engels were pushed by logic (especially Engels at the end of his life) to abandon this revolutionary project. It is for that Texier, the falsifier, feels that Engels particularly (Marx having died in 1883), "slowly" took notice, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, of a change of situation that called for a change of tactics.

> My guiding thought has been the Gramscian idea by which the political formulation of the permanent revolution that characterized French history from the Revolution to the Paris Commune was exhausted at the end of the nineteenth century and that Engels was cognizant of this.[7]

Texier starts from correct ideas, but arrives at a false conclusion. It is true that Marx and Engels envisioned the proletarian revolution in a period of rupture with the bourgeois revolution and that they theorized the permanent revolution. But it is false to believe, precisely for that reason, that the democratic revolution was the END of that permanent revolution. On the contrary, the former presents the best conditions for the realization of the latter.

Texier tries to minimize the importance of the texts where Marx-Engels talk about the dictatorship of the proletariat by balancing them with those that talk about the "peaceful transition" to socialism in certain countries (we'll come back to that issue in another article).

All of Texier's arguments are attempts to put an equals sign between *Democratic Republic* and *Dictatorship of the Proletariat.* Yet his arguments rest on a very weak foundation, since they rely on the above-mentioned error in translation. Marx and Engels always asserted that the democratic republic was the most favorable ground for the final conflict between bourgeoisie and proletariat. That is why it was considered a progressive form in relation to past forms of political domination and why communists struggle to establish it where it doesn't yet exist. Texier claims that in the 1891 text, Engels speaks of "the democratic republic as the form OF the dictatorship of the proletariat," while at the same time pointing out himself that the German text uses the preposition "für," which means "for."

Texier's only – and rather thin – argument consequently evaporates on its own. The phrase Texier translates draws an equals sign between democratic republic, a bourgeois institution, and proletarian dictatorship. It thus makes the democratic republic the GOAL of revolutionary action. This is the semantic sleight-of-hand that allows Texier to claim that Marx and Engels are actually democrats. But Engels' real phrase read: the form FOR the dictatorship of the proletariat. In other words, the foundation, the base, the historical framework in which the proletarian revolution and the dictatorship has every chance of winning. Thus, in one case, the republic is an end in itself, and in the other, it is only one step, necessary but surpassable, in the evolution of history.

"Engels' political innovations"

[7] Texier, p. 227.

Under this modest title, Texier attributes three revisions to Engels after Marx's death. His argument tries to show that Marx and Engels abandoned their 1842-1852 idea of "permanent revolution." He claims to have located the following milestones of this abandonment:

* 1885 (Appendix to the *Revelations Concerning the Communist Trial in Cologne*)
* 1891, with the passage of the critique of the Erfurt program on the democratic republic.
* 1895, with "Engels' political last will and testament" represented by his preface to the book *Class Struggles in France*.

a) 1885.

That year, Engels published a new edition of Marx's *Revelations Concerning the Communist Trial in Cologne*[8] (published for the first time in 1853). An appendix featured an "Address of the Central Council of the Communist League" of March 1850. In this appendix, at the moment where the issue of centralization of the state is evoked, Engels expresses a changed point of view on the position in the body of the text. He explains in a footnote that their "centralizing" vision of the French Revolution was based on a "misunderstanding," and particularly on the way in which bourgeois historians ("bonapartist and liberal falsifiers") had reported that characteristic of the French revolution.

Engels continues:

> But it is now a known fact that throughout the revolution, up until the 18th Brumaire, the entire administration of the departments, arrondissements, and communes were composed of authorities elected by the citizens [*administrés*] themselves, who, within the framework of the general laws of the state, enjoyed complete freedom; that this autonomous local and provincial administration, comparable to the American system, became itself the most powerful springboard of the revolution, and this to such a point that Napoleon, directly after his 18th Brumaire coup d'etat, immediately sought to replace it with the system of prefectures that is still in place today and which was, therefore, an instrument of reaction from the beginning.[9]

There are several comments to make about this text.

We first have to put Texier in his place. He's trying to find changed positions where there are none. As with any scientific discipline, historical materialism makes advances in its comprehension of phenomena and has a perfect right to change its mind about particular points, provided that these changes stand in continuity, rather than represent revisions of, its basic principles. As it happens, there is no compromise of theory here – but let's continue on the content.

[8] Translator's note: The Marx-Engels internet archive shows the title *Karl Marx Before the Cologne Jury* as published in 1885 in the table of contents of the Collected Works, at http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/cw/volume26/index.htm.

[9] Translators note: No having access to a copy of this surely previously-translated quotation from Engels, I have translated it myself from the French in RGF's text.

Secondly, we have to define the issue that we're dealing with here. In our opinion, there is a fundamental part of the theory here that has been insufficiently discussed, and too infrequently emphasized, even by Lenin: it is the relation between the state and "civil society." Yet this issue is found throughout Marx and Engels' work, from "On the Jewish Question" to the very last writings, without there ever being a single break in their line. It is up to us to undertake the work of systematization, of development, which M & E did not have a chance to do,[10] and to juxtapose it with recent events.

Beginning in 1842, Marx tried, in his philosophical thinking, to rid itself of Hegelian influences. We see him taking on the problem of the reciprocal relationship between civil society and the state. The state emerges in a kind of vacuum of civil society, in an abdication by civil society of its vital, daily tasks. But where Hegel saw superiority in the separated existence of the state as Idea, Marx saw a lack in human society, and called for a reconciliation. Basically, what his previous analysis showed is that this abdication by civil society was not done in an abstract, accidental way, but depended on the division of society into classes and on the class struggle. The state is an instrument of the dominant class. What the state "steals" from civil society (i.e., control over its own life, the means of decision-making, etc.) is the same as what the bourgeoisie "steals" from the proletarian masses, the exploited class. What is expressed here in a still-philosophical language, will consequently find its political expression in texts like *The Eighteenth Brumaire* and *The Civil War in France*, and will clearly state that the proletariat is the class that "represents" civil society.

> Voting is not considered philosophically, that is, not in terms of its proper nature, if it is considered in relation to the crown or the executive. The vote is the actual relation of actual civil society to the civil society of the legislature, to the representative element. In other words, the vote is the immediate, the direct, the existing and not simply imagined relation of civil society to the political state. It therefore goes without saying that the vote is the chief political interest of actual civil society. In unrestricted suffrage, both active and passive, civil society has actually raised itself for the first time to an abstraction of itself, to political existence as its true universal and essential existence. But the full achievement of this abstraction is at once also the transcendence [*Aufhebung*] of the abstraction. In actually establishing its political existence as its true existence civil society has simultaneously established its civil existence, in distinction from its political existence, as inessential. And with the one separated, the other, its opposite, falls.[11] Within the abstract political state the reform of voting advances the dissolution

[10] As an aside, we are reaching here the limits if Texier's "philological" approach. While it is useful to systematically place the writings in their context (for example, to look at the versions that commentators really had available to them), that can not be done to the detriment of an approach that considers theory as an organic whole. If philology favorizes a fragmentary approach, then down with philology!

[11] Compare this with the following passage from Lenin:
"From the moment all members of society, or at least the vast majority, have learned to administer the state themselves, have taken this work into their own hands, have organized control over the insignificant capitalist minority, over the gentry who wish to preserve their capitalist habits and over the workers who have been thoroughly corrupted by capitalism - from this moment the need for government of any kind begins to disappear altogether. The more complete the democracy, the nearer the moment when it becomes unnecessary. The more democratic the "state" which consists of the armed workers, and which is "no longer a state in the proper sense of the word", the more rapidly every form of state begins to wither away." Lenin, *State and Revolution*, as web-published at http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/sep/staterev/ch05.htm - s4 .

> [*Auflösung*] of this political state, but also the dissolution of civil society. (Karl Marx, *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right,* 1843.[12])

Like all of Marx and Engels' "philosophical" texts, this passage is particularly difficult, especially since he is criticizing Hegel's positions largely in Hegel's own language. It is worth noting, however, that the theme of the extinction (*dissolution*) of the state dates from this period.

Here are some questions that we can ask from that starting point:

- What did Marx mean by "unrestricted suffrage, both active and passive" and by "the reform of voting"?

The reform of voting surely alluded, in that period, to the English charter and other movements. This already meant that the extension of suffrage, in relation to private property criteria, had a progressive character. At the end of this text is a table summarizing the progression of the right to vote in the French population. But this was obtained in the bourgeois framework of modern democracy (still quite late for French women in 1947 and the 1960s for American blacks, so the issue was still current in the time of the Left, for example[13]). However, it should be noted that this enfranchisement was not brought about all by itself, but at the price of major class struggles, such as the chartist movement in England, the 1848 revolution in France, etc.

- On the other hand, Marx links this thought to the issue of representation and legislative power. Yet, suffrage does not only concern the Legislature; we see this in the analysis of the Commune: the election of "elected and revocable" judges and civil servants, and thus a permanent usage of the vote as a pure mechanism, with no illusion behind it. "Unrestricted suffrage" could mean here the seeking of payment, permanent checks on the elected official, who must constantly consult his constituency, etc. (We will point out here – subject to deeper analysis – that this option of representative democracy, defended by certain Enlightenment philosophers, is not the one that ended up being retained in most modern constitutions, where the elected official becomes the representative, not of the fraction that elected him and of their interests, but of "every citizen." It is in this sense that the concept of "proletarian democracy" can be criticized, since from the moment when a class openly defends its own interests, there is no longer democracy in the strict sense.)

But let's come back now to the issue of the relation between state and civil society. In the minds of Marx and Engels, the abolition of the state is the abolition of a dichotomy between the state and civil society. The two poles in opposition are both abolished. (This ought to be recalled in responding to other of Texier's arguments concerning the thesis of the growing autonomy of the state.) The real society "recuperates" functions that are autonomized in the state. Also, in the framework of bourgeois democracy, and in that of the revolutionary usage of democratic machinery, the degree of application of the latter is not at all trivial. One can

[12] Translator's note: Joseph O'Malley's translation, *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, Oxford University Press, 1970, as it appears on the Marx-Engels Internet Archive, at http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1843/critique-hpr/ch06.htm.

[13] Translator's note: The *Communist* Left?

conclude from this passage that the issue of the vote does not concern only the legislative and executive powers, but also all the forms linked to the management of society's affairs. Napoleon's actions really were reactionary when he organized the state seizure of all the lower levels of French society through the prefectural system. The Paris Commune, by showing how this power can be taken back, showed what form the dictatorship of the proletariat can take. Since that had been believed since 1872, we can take note of the continuity of Marx and Engels' thought on this subject.

Thirdly, on the historical level, we can note that every time democracy regressed in France, that regression was also expressed in a backward movement of local representation. In the Second Empire and in Vichy France, mayors and municipal councilors were once again appointed (by the prefects) and not elected.

To conclude on this subject: Marx and Engels critiqued abusive centralization and the bureaucracy of the different bourgeois regimes held power since the French Revolution, showing that they were not part of the initial project of bourgeois revolutionaries, but that still doesn't mean that they defended a "pure" democratic republic, one not devoured by the cancer of an overgrown state apparatus. For *even in these circumstances*, the state is in opposition to civil society. In their analysis of the Paris Commune, Marx and Engels emphasized that the "legitimate functions" of the state ought to be "given to responsible servants of society" – meaning the producers themselves and not "professional" representatives (politicians, civil servants, bureaucrats...) who should manage communal functions.

Here is what Marx says in the *Critique of the Gotha Program* regarding the functions of the state:

> The question then arises: what transformation will the state undergo in communist society? In other words, what social functions will remain in existence there that are analogous to the present functions of the state? This question can only be answered scientifically and one does not get a flea-hop nearer to the problem by a thousand-fold combination of the word people with the word state.[14]

Note that Marx said that the question can only be answered **scientifically**. That means that it is not utopian to think about this problem, and that it can help us to better understand the issue of the autonomization of the state.

We find a first general answer in *The Critique of the Gotha Program*, where Marx criticizes the Lassallian idea of the "undiminished proceeds of labor."[15] He thereby decomposes the posts to which a part of the social product must be devoted (once expenses of an "economic" nature have been deducted, which permits the renewal of the productive forces, "accumulation," and the continuity of production):

> Before this is divided among the individuals, there has to be deducted from it:

[14] Translator's note: This translation from International Publishers edition, 1938, 1966, page 18.
[15] Translator's note: Stalinist translation again.

First, the general costs of administration not belonging to production.
This part will, from the outset, be very considerably restricted in comparison with present-day society and it diminishes in proportion as the new society develops.
Secondly, that which is destined for the communal satisfaction of needs, such as schools, health services, etc.
From the outset this part is considerably increased in comparison with present-day society and it increases in proportion as the new society develops.
Thirdly, funds for those unable to work, etc., in short what is included under so-called official poor relief today. (International Publishers edition, 1938, 1966, page 7.)

It might be useful here to think about what, in the present functions of the state, ought to be "taken back" by civil society – that is, the community of associated producers – and what will be abandoned as deriving purely and simply from the current oppressive logic of the state.

b) 1891.

That year's "innovation," discovered by Texier, concerns the critique of plans for the Erfurt program. We can consider this "innovation" null and void, since it rests entirely on a translation error that consists in speaking of the democratic republic as an adequate form OF the dictatorship of the proletariat and not FOR the dictatorship of the proletariat. See our comments above on this.

We mentioned above the issue of the translation of one of Engels' phrases that served Texier's falsifying interests. This is an issue we'll come back to in future parts of this article, but which is useful to start dealing with now. In 1891, Engels wrote the following, in the critique of the Erfurt socialist program:

"One thing is absolutely certain, that our Party and the working class can only achieve domination under the democratic republic form. This is even the specific form [of] the dictatorship of the proletariat, as the great French Revolution has already shown." Yet, and Texier himself points this out, the German version reads: "...die spezifische Form **für** die Diktatur des Proletariats...," in other words, the specific form **FOR** the dictatorship of the dictatorship of the proletariat and not **OF** the dictatorship.[16] It is thus saying in fact that the completed form of bourgeois domination (the democratic republic) is the terrain most favorable to class struggle, but not the **GOAL** that the revolutionary proletariat gives itself.

In fact, Marx and Engels' position is the following: as long as the bourgeois revolution remains unaccomplished, as long as the political framework of the society is not the

[16] You don't need to be an expert in German in tell the difference between FOR and OF. Texier himself notes, at the bottom of the page: "All of the French versions translate "die spezifische Form für die Diktatur des Proletariats" as "the specific form of the dictatorship of the proletariat." It could also be translated as "the specific form for the dictatorship of the proletariat." Of course "it could," but the Stalinist translators didn't do it, and for good reason. We remain confused by Texier's bad faith, when he himself just afterward quotes Engels' letter to Lafargue written IN FRENCH (and Engels was perfectly competent in written French, among many other languages) "the republic is the perfect political form <u>for</u> the dictatorship of the proletariat." And he was the one who underlined it...

democratic republic, the proletariat's hands are not free to totally develop its revolutionary activity, in order to directly take on the existing state. It still has democratic tasks either to push for or to accomplish on its own. It is this analysis that is taken up by Lenin for Russia from 1905 to 1917. In his sleight-of-hand, Texier has Marx and Engels saying that achieving the bourgeois democratic revolution is the real historical task of the proletariat. If this is in fact one of its tasks, when the bourgeoisie has itself abandoned that objective, it is never more than a task that prepares the way for that other task of incomparable historical weight: the proletarian revolution. To stop reading half-way, as Texier does, is to place oneself in the counter-revolutionary camp.

Texier's analysis of Engels' final positions is as follows: the revolutionary cycle is over, because the democratic republic has been achieved. From now on, therefore, the proletariat can win state power through peaceful means and the ballot. Making Engels the father of reformism in this way is a truncated reading of the old revolutionary's final writings. Here again, in the specific circumstances of capitalism's development at the end of the nineteenth century, Engels foresaw, from a tactical point of view, methods that the proletariat might momentarily make use of. But in no case did he abandon either revolution or revolutionary violence, even when Engels expressed (in a letter to Lafargue) his doubts about the validity of the old military schemas – particularly of the outdated barricade tactic.

On the other hand, we can refer to Engels' introduction to *The Civil War in France*, dating from 1891, as a model of consistency in his critical positions toward democracy. Engels wrote, in fact:

"But, in reality, the state is nothing but a machine for the oppression of one class by another, whether in a democratic republic or in a monarchy.."[17]

c) 1895.

This was the year Engels published in one volume the articles written on the revolution of 1848, under the title *The Class Struggles in France*. The preface written for this volume has been interpreted in a way that tends to favor the idea that Engels, at the end of his life, abandoned violence and force in the revolutionary process.

This point merits close consideration, because Engels' famous introduction is considered to be, as Texier reminds us, Engels' "political last will and testament," and has served as a foundation for all the revisionist renunciation afterward. Texier's philological talents are useful here because they strengthen our argument, but they don't serve his own interests. (We have already identified this scholar as the prototypical guy who shoots himself in the foot. We will now see how he even uses his crutches to give himself a nice jab in his wound...) The 1895 introduction indeed has an important history worth remembering. Two episodes must be distinguished:

[17] Translator's note: I couldn't find the original. This is my translation from the French, which was cited as from Editions de Pékin, p. 17.

- The first is a "softening" of the text, demanded by the leaders of the social-democratic party because of Germany's domestic political situation, censorship and the futility of running certain needless risks. A series of corrections was proposed to Engels by Richard Rischer. Engels accepted most of these corrections, but only up to a certain point.

In a letter from Engels to Fischer written in London on March 8, 1895, Engels specifies:

> You wish (...) to make a temporary tactic into a permanent tactic, to make a relative tactic into a tactic valid in the absolute. I will not do it, I cannot do it without bringing eternal disgrace upon myself.
> (...)
> Yes to legality for as long and to the extent we need, but no to legality at any price, even only in words.

- The second episode concerns the posting of quotations, without Engels agreement, done by Wilhelm Liebknecht in the party press and appearing BEFORE the text as amended by Fischer and approved by Engels. Engels then expressed his fundamental disagreement directly to Liebknecht, both with the process and with the words Liebknecht wanted to put in his mouth.

Provisional conclusion.

We will come back later in this article to other issues discussed in Jacques Texier's article, particularly those having to do with universal suffrage, the permanent revolution, and the peaceful transition to socialism in certain countries. But we can already conclude here, in any case, that Jacques Texier, despite all of his efforts, fails in this main attempt: to show that between 1848 and 1895 there was a break in the continuity of Marx and Engels' revolutionary positions. Quite the contrary: he gives us all the evidence we need to demonstrate the coherence and continuity of their positions, those concerning "the conquest of democracy" (*Communist Manifesto*) as much as the proletarian revolution.

Robin Goodfellow, January 2002

APPENDIX

CHRONOLOGY OF THE RIGHT TO VOTE IN FRANCE

Period	Regime	Form

1830-1848	Constitutional monarchy (Louis-Philippe)	Proscribed vote. Restricted to males 25 years and older, paying more than 200 gold francs in taxes. The electorate was composed of 240,000 people. A partial right to vote was given to certain individuals according to their titles or former offices in certain institutions.
Decree of March 5, 1848	Democratic republic (Second Republic)	No property distinction; males 21 years and older. The electorate was 9 million.
Law of March 15, 1849	Democratic republic (Second Republic)	Established the single-vote, majority-list ballot for the election of deputies.
Law of May 31, 1850	Democratic republic (Second Republic)	Restrictive measures: requirement of 3 years residency in the commune or canton (versus 6 months previously). This measure was unfavorable to proletarians, who required mobility due to their search for work. Reestablishment of financial requirements. The voter had to be a registered tax payer. 3 million people excluded from the electorate.
1852	Second Empire	Return to the electoral law of March 15, 1848. No more property requirements. 21 years. 6 months residency. Institution of the single-nomination majority ballot in two cycles. Municipal councilors elected, but the government has the right to remove them. Mayors appointed by prefects.
1871-1940	Democratic republic (Third Republic)	Return to the 1849 law, but soldiers (including many conscripts) deprived of the right to vote. (Because of this, the electorate was smaller than in the Second Empire.)
1940-1944	French State (Vichy France)	Abolition of the Legislature. Abolition of the function of President of the Republic. The French Head of State exercises legislative power. Elimination of the election of local authorities. Mayors and councilors were appointed.

1946-1958	Democratic republic (Fourth Republic)	Direct universal suffrage. Inclusion of women in the electorate which totaled 25 million voters.
1958...	Democratic republic (Fifth Republic)	Direct universal suffrage, including for the election of the President of the Republic (referendum law of November 6, 1962).
1974	Democratic republic (Fifth Republic)	Change of age requirement from 21 to 18 years, with attendant enlargement of voting population.
???	Democratic republic (Fifth Republic)	Right to vote for (European) foreigners in local elections. The issue of the right to vote for immigrants remains undecided.