

UPRISING AND UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE

“The highest form of the state, the democratic republic, which under our modern conditions of society is more and more becoming an inevitable necessity, and is the form of state in which alone the last decisive struggle between proletariat and bourgeoisie can be fought out - the democratic republic officially knows nothing any more of property distinctions. In it wealth exercises its power indirectly, but all the more surely. ... the possessing class rules directly through the medium of universal suffrage. As long as the oppressed class, in our case, therefore, the proletariat, is not yet ripe to emancipate itself, it will in its majority regard the existing order of society as the only one possible and, politically, will form the tail of the capitalist class, its extreme Left wing. To the extent, however, that this class matures for its self-emancipation, it constitutes itself as its own party and elects its own representatives, and not those of the capitalists. Thus, universal suffrage is the gauge of the maturity of the working class. It cannot and never will be anything more, in the present-day state; but that is sufficient. On the day the thermometer of universal suffrage registers boiling point among the workers, both they and the capitalists will know what to do.” Engels

[<http://www.panarchy.org/engels/eng.1884.html>]

In 1881, Engels had upheld the Paris Commune Principle – election of delegates via universal suffrage revocable at short notice – as “... a new prospect ... The new weapon ... scarcely ever unsheathed ... For the full representation of labour in Parliament, as well as for the preparation of the abolition of the wages system, organization will become necessary not of separate trades, but of the working class as a body. And the sooner this is done the better.”

[<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1881/05/28.htm#p2>]

PEACEFUL AND LEGAL REVOLUTION

ciro wrote:

From your link and text, I understand that Marx like us wanted direct democracy. But: what about our idea that we should take power with elections where this is possible and the underlying idea that to establish socialism we need that a vast majority of people wants this? Are those ideas also in Marx?

Reply: Yes, Marx did argue that under certain conditions (control of the government by an elected parliament) a socialist-minded working class would be able to gain control of political power peaceably via elections. As he said in a [speech](#) in The Hague in Holland in 1872:

Quote:

"You know that the institutions, mores, and traditions of various countries must be taken into consideration, and we do not deny that there are countries -- such as America, England, and if I were more familiar with your institutions, I would perhaps also add Holland -- where the workers can attain their goal by peaceful means. This being the case, we must also recognize the fact that in most countries on the Continent the lever of our revolution must be force; it is force to which we must some day appeal in order to erect the rule of labour."

It is a measure of the extent of Leninist and insurrectionary ideas in Italy that it is not easy to find an Italian version of this on the internet, but [this](#) might work. At the end of

the more readily available Preface that Engels wrote to the English translation of *Capital* that came out in 1886 Engels confirmed this when he wrote that Quote:

"the voice ought to be heard of a man whose whole theory is the result of a lifelong study of the economic history and condition of England, and whom that study led to the conclusion that, at least in Europe, England is the only country where the inevitable social revolution might be effected entirely by peaceful and legal means. He certainly never forgot to add that he hardly expected the English ruling classes to submit, without a "pro-slavery rebellion," to this peaceful and legal revolution"

This is more easily available in Italian and can be found [here](#). Having said this, our position does not rest on what Marx said (we don't slavishly accept him as an infallible authority) but on our own analysis of the facts which in our view confirm Marx's point of view.

Lenin argued that since 1872 conditions in England and America had become more like what they were in Europe in 1872 (where Marx saw insurrection as the only way) and so a peaceful winning of political power had become impossible in England and America too. We argue that, on the contrary, today conditions in Europe and many other parts of the world have become more like conditions in England and America in 1872 and so a peaceful revolution is possible in them too. [*This is from message No 6 on this thread:* <http://www.worldsocialism.org/spgb/forum/general-discussion/marx-socialism-and-democracy>]