The Fifth Congress of the RSDLP met in London from 13–27 May, 1907. The most contentious issues concerned the role of Social-Democratic representatives in the Duma and the related question of attitudes towards the bourgeois parties. Rosa Luxemburg’s contributions came in greetings she conveyed from the German Party and in her subsequent formal report, which is translated here.¹ Leon Trotsky also attended the congress and in a brief fifteen-minute address denounced the Menshevik view that ‘the Cadets are the symbol of bourgeois democracy, and bourgeois democracy is the natural claimant to revolutionary power’.² On all points of principle Trotsky agreed with Luxemburg:

¹ This speech is translated from RSDRP 1907b, pp. 383–92 (and pp. 432–7 for the Concluding Remarks).
² Trotsky condemned the Mensheviks in the context of a familiar summary of Russia’s historical peculiarities and the relative weakness of other parties compared to the proletariat. With the exception of short introductory comments, his speech is available as an Annex (Chapter 23) to L. Trotsky 1971a, 290–9.
I am pleased to say that the point of view presented here by comrade Luxemburg on behalf of the Polish delegation is very close to the one that I have defended and continue to defend. Any possible differences between us are more a matter of individual nuances than of political direction. Our thinking moves on one and the same track of materialistic analysis.\(^3\)

Prior to the Congress, three draft resolutions had been submitted concerning Social Democracy’s relation to the bourgeois parties: one from the Bolsheviks, another from the Mensheviks, and a third from Luxemburg and the Polish delegates. The Bolshevik draft was written by Lenin and defined the class character of non-proletarian parties, beginning with the Black Hundreds of ‘feudal-minded landowners’ and ending with ‘the Narodnik or Trudovik parties’, who came ‘more or less close to expressing the interests and the viewpoint of the broad masses of the peasantry and urban petty bourgeoisie’.\(^4\)

While the proletariat must lead ‘the bourgeois-democratic revolution’, Lenin urged every effort to free the peasant parties from liberal influences in order

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\(^3\) RSDRP 1907b, p. 397. Two years after the congress, in ‘The Aim of the Proletarian Struggle in Our Revolution’ Lenin was still complaining that ‘Trotsky’s major mistake is that he ignores the bourgeois character of the revolution and has no clear conception of the transition from this revolution to the socialist revolution’. Lenin 1909b, p. 371).

\(^4\) Lenin 1907f. Lenin claimed that ‘The Cadets stand for the preservation of landlordism and for a civilised, European, but landlord bourgeois evolution of agriculture. The Trudoviks (and the Social-Democratic workers’ deputies), i.e., the representatives of the peasantry and the representatives of the proletariat, advocate a peasant bourgeois evolution of agriculture.’ Lenin 1907e, p. 247). In 1909 Lenin remained convinced that an organised peasant party was both inevitable and imperative if the bourgeois-democratic revolution was to be completed:

The history of the Russian revolution shows that the very first wave of the upsurge, at the end of 1905, at once stimulated the peasantry to form a political organisation (the All-Russian Peasant Union) which was undoubtedly the embryo of a distinct peasant party. Both in the First and Second Dumas – in spite of the fact that the counter-revolution had wiped out the first contingents of advanced peasants – the peasantry, now for the first time acting on a nation-wide scale in the Russian general elections, immediately laid the foundations of the Trudovik group, which was undoubtedly the embryo of a distinct peasant party. In these embryos and rudiments there was much that was unstable, vague and vacillating: that is beyond doubt. But if political groups like this could spring up at the beginning of the revolution, there cannot be the slightest doubt that a revolution carried to such a ‘conclusion’, or rather, to such a high stage of development as a revolutionary dictatorship, will produce a more definitely constituted and stronger revolutionary peasant party. To think otherwise would be like supposing that some vital organs of an adult can retain the size, shape and development of infancy. (Lenin 1909b, p. 374.)