

**Resistance Marxist Library**

**The Birth of Bolshevism  
Volume 1**

**Lenin's Struggle  
Against  
Economism**

**V.I. Lenin**

Resistance Books 2005

ISBN 1-876646-14-4

Published by Resistance Books: [resistancebooks.com](http://resistancebooks.com)

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# Introduction

*By Doug Lorimer*

Vladimir Ilyich Lenin was the founder and, until his death in January 1924, the central leader of the Bolshevik Party. Without the leadership of the Bolshevik Party, the Russian workers would not have been able to conquer power in November (October in the Julian calendar then still in effect in Russia) 1917 and create the world's first workers' state. The world historic significance of the October 1917 Revolution is that for the first time it proved that it was possible for the working class to take power and replace capitalism with a new social order, and that the workers could forge out of their ranks a political party that was capable of leading that revolutionary struggle to victory.

This is the first of two volumes published by Resistance Books providing a selection of the key political writings of Lenin leading up to the birth of Bolshevism as a political trend and a party organisation.

Lenin (born in April 1870) became active in a revolutionary student circle in 1887 while studying law at Kazan University. The following year he joined a Marxist circle organised by Nikolai Fedoseyev. After Lenin arrived in St. Petersburg in 1893 to work as a junior barrister he joined a Marxist circle of students at the Technological Institute. The following year he wrote his first major political work, the book *What the 'Friends of the People' Are and How They Fight the Social-Democrats*, a polemic against the then-dominant current within the Russian revolutionary movement — the Populists (or Narodniks).

The Populist movement had emerged in the early 1870s as a result of widespread disillusionment among liberal-minded university students at the results of the Tsar Alexander II's "great reforms" of the early 1860s.

The centrepiece of these reforms was the 1861 Emancipation Act, which abolished "the serfdom of peasants settled on estate owners' landed properties, and of household

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*Doug Lorimer* (1953-2013) was a longtime leader of the Democratic Socialist Party.

serfs”.

The tsarist autocracy had legally abolished serfdom principally in order to modernise the imperial army, transforming it from a large standing army of poorly equipped serfs commanded by poorly trained aristocratic officers into a smaller and much less expensive standing army of well-trained, paid soldiers, equipped with industrially produced weapons.

The failures of the Russian army during the Crimean war of 1854-55 had also driven home to the tsarist government the need to create an extensive network of railways to quickly supply Russian armies in the field with food, munitions and troop reinforcements. At the end of the 1850s though, the tsarist government did not have the revenue income to fund a large-scale program of railway construction. Indeed, not only was the government bankrupt but the old army was absorbing up to half its expenditures.

The tsar's economic advisers believed that the abolition of serfdom would stimulate peasant production of commodities for an expanding market and generate a new class of rich peasant farmers, who would provide a new base for government revenue. The poorer peasants would be free to migrate to the cities and towns, thus providing an expanding pool of wage workers for the emerging class of capitalist factory-owners.

While formally ending 1000 years of feudalism in Russia and legally opening the way for 23 million serfs to own land, in practice the Emancipation Act changed little. It declared that all land on landlords' estates belonged legally to the hereditary nobility, other than the land on which the peasants' households were situated. To become legal owners of the farm land, including land they had previously used to support themselves, the peasants — who at that time made up 94% of Russia's population — had to purchase it from the landlords, under the supervision of new local government bodies.

Prior to the 1861 reform, all local government powers had been exercised by the landowners over their serfs. The Emancipation Act granted certain powers of self-government to the peasant village associations — the peasant communes, but subordinated these powers to local government officials who, under an 1864 law, were to be selected by district and provincial assemblies (*zemstvo*), made up of delegates elected from different social classes. Up to 1906 these were the only elected government bodies. They tended to be overwhelmingly dominated by the hereditary, landowning, nobility.

At the end of the 1850s, there were about one million nobles in the Russian Empire, of whom 250,000 belonged to the Russian hereditary nobility, and of these only 90,000 owned serfs. Most of these nobles were so poor that they lived like peasants alongside their serfs. About 18,000 nobles owned a hundred or more serfs and it was

from this small group of nobles — constituting, with their families, about 0.5% of the total population — that the government ministers, provincial governors and the top echelons of the civil and military bureaucracy were drawn.

The nobles themselves wanted to abolish serfdom, in order to rid themselves of their debts to the government. By 1858, around 60% of landlords had mortgaged their serfs to the government to cover their tax bills. The Emancipation Act transferred these mortgages from the landlords to the newly freed serfs, giving them a period of 49 years to pay off these mortgage debts (called “redemption payments”).

The “great reforms” left the peasantry in possession of about three-quarters of the land they had previously regarded as theirs. Population growth during the next half century further reduced the average landholdings of the peasantry, making land-hunger a problem serious enough to turn the peasants into a potentially powerful force for revolutionary change.

The Narodniks held out the hope that capitalist development could be bypassed in Russia through a peasant revolution that would not only overthrow the tsarist autocracy but create a “socialist” society based upon the peasants’ communal landholdings. This perspective was rejected by the founders of Marxism who argued that without the assistance of a proletarian revolution in the much more industrially developed West, a process of capitalist development in Russia and the breaking up of peasants’ commune (*mir*) was inevitable. In their jointly authored 1882 preface to the Russian edition of the *Communist Manifesto*, for example, Marx and Engels argued that: “If the Russian Revolution becomes the signal for a proletarian revolution in the West, so that both compliment each other, the present Russian common ownership of land may serve as a starting point for a communist development.”

In 1879 the principal Narodnik organisation, *Zemlya i Volya* (Land and Liberty), split into two rival organisations. The majority formed the *Narodnaya Volya* (People’s Will), while the leaders of the minority — Georgy Plekhanov, Vera Zasulich and Pavel Axelrod — evolved toward Marxism, founding the first Russian Marxist organisation, the Emancipation of Labour group, in exile in 1883. In opposition to the Narodniks, they argued that Russia had already entered onto the road of capitalist development, and that the principal task of Russian socialists was to organise the emerging urban working class as the leading force in the struggle against the despotic tsarist regime. In his speech to the 1889 Paris international meeting of socialist parties, for example, Plekhanov argued:

In order to overthrow and finally destroy tsarism, we must rely on a more revolutionary element than student youth [the real social base of Narodism — DL], and this element, which exists in Russia, is the class of proletarians, a class which is revolutionary by

reason of its distressing economic situation, revolutionary in its very essence ...

In conclusion I repeat — and I insist on this important point — the revolutionary movement in Russia will triumph only as a *working-class movement* or else it will never triumph!<sup>1</sup>

When Lenin became a Marxist in the early 1890s Russia was undergoing a rapid process of capitalist industrialisation. The number of industrial workers — wage-workers employed in mills, mines and factories — had increased from 860,000 in 1860 to 1.4 million in 1890. By 1897 the number of industrial workers had increased to about 2.8 million. In his 1899 work *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*, Lenin calculated from the 1897 census that about 17% of Russia's 125 million inhabitants were employed in mills, mines, factories, on the railways and waterways, in construction work, lumbering, etc.

The employment conditions for Russian workers were among the worst in Europe. The working day in the textile factories, for example, was 14-15 hours, while even in the metal factories it was not less than 12½ hours. Wages were exceedingly low. Most workers were paid less than 8 rubles a month. The most highly paid workers in the metal factories were paid no more than 35 rubles a month. Housing conditions were appalling. In the factory-owned dormitories, workers were crowded as many as 10 or 12 to a small room. Furthermore, strikes and trade unions were illegal.

Like Plekhanov's Emancipation of Labour group, Lenin saw the principal task of Russian Marxists as building a revolutionary socialist party capable of leading the Russian working class in the struggle for democracy and socialism. But more than any other Russian Marxist he emphasised the enormous importance of the struggle for democracy — including the agrarian question — and its relationship to the struggle for socialism.

In Russia [Lenin wrote in his 1894 polemic against Narodism] the relics of medievalism are still so enormously strong (as compared with Western Europe), they are such an oppressive yoke upon the proletariat and the people generally, retarding the growth of political thought in all estates and classes, that one cannot but insist on the tremendous importance which the struggle against all feudal institutions, absolutism, the social estate system, and the bureaucracy has for the workers.

The workers must be shown in the greatest detail what a terribly reactionary force these institutions are, how they intensify the oppression of labour by capital, what a degrading pressure they exert on the working people, how they keep capital in its medieval forms, which, while not falling short of the modern industrial forms in respect of the exploitation of labour, add to that exploitation by placing terrible difficulties in the way of the fight for emancipation. The workers must know that

unless these pillars of reaction are overthrown, it will be utterly impossible for them to wage a successful struggle against the bourgeoisie because so long as they exist, the Russian rural proletariat, whose support is an essential condition for the victory of the working class, will never cease to be downtrodden and cowed, capable only of sullen desperation and not of intelligent and persistent protest and struggle. And that is why it is the direct duty of the working class to fight side by side with the radical democracy against absolutism and the reactionary social estates and institutions — a duty which the social-democrats must impress upon the workers, while not for a moment ceasing also to impress upon them that the struggle against all these institutions is necessary only as a means of facilitating the struggle against the bourgeoisie, that the worker needs the achievement of the general democratic demands only to clear the road to victory over the working people's chief enemy, over an institution that is purely democratic by nature, *capital*, which here in Russia is particularly inclined to sacrifice its democracy and to enter into alliance with the reactionaries in order to suppress the workers, to still further impede the emergence of a working-class movement.

Lenin concluded the polemic by summarising the perspective that was to guide his work for the next three decades:

The political activity of the social-democrats lies in promoting the development and organisation of the working-class movement in Russia, in transforming this movement from its present state of sporadic attempts at protest, “riots” and strikes devoid of a guiding idea, into an organised struggle of the *whole* Russian working *class* directed against the bourgeois regime and working for the expropriation of the expropriators and the abolition of the social system based on the oppression of the working people. Underlying these activities is the common conviction of Marxists that the Russian worker is the sole and natural representative of Russia's entire working and exploited population.

Natural because the exploitation of the working people in Russia *is everywhere capitalist in nature*, if we leave out of account the moribund remnants of serf economy; but the exploitation of the mass of producers is on a small scale, scattered and undeveloped, while the exploitation of the factory proletariat is on a large scale, socialised and concentrated ...

Accordingly, it is on the working class that the social-democrats concentrate all their attention and all their activities. When its advanced representatives have mastered the ideas of scientific socialism, the idea of the historical role of the Russian worker, when these ideas become widespread, and when stable organisations are formed among the worker to transform the workers' present sporadic economic war into conscious class struggle — then the Russian *worker* rising at the head of all the democratic

elements, will overthrow absolutism and lead *the Russian proletariat* (side by side with the proletariat of *all countries* along the straight road of open political struggle to *the victorious communist revolution*.<sup>2</sup>

The idea that only a party of class-conscious workers could provide consistent leadership to the working masses in the struggle to overthrow the tsarist autocracy and secure political liberty was in no way particular to Lenin. As the manifesto adopted by the first congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party in 1898 demonstrated, this was the commonly held view at the time among the Russian Marxists. The manifesto observed:

The further to the east of Europe (and Russia, as we know, is the east of Europe) the weaker, more cowardly and baser in its political attitude is the bourgeoisie, and the greater the cultural and political tasks that fall to the proletariat. The Russian working class must and will take upon its strong shoulders the task of winning political freedom. This is a vital, but merely an initial step towards realising the great historical mission of the proletariat: namely, the creation of a social system in which there will be no exploitation of man by man. The Russian proletariat will cast off the yoke of autocracy in order to pursue more energetically the struggle against capitalism and the bourgeoisie until the total victory of socialism.<sup>3</sup>

The 1898 founding congress of the RSDLP, held in Minsk, was attended by nine delegates, representing local Marxist groups in Petersburg, Moscow, Kiev and Yekaterinoslav. However, the central committee elected at the congress was soon arrested by the police. The local organisations of the Russian Marxists therefore remained without a unifying political centre or common line of political work.

It was in this context that an opportunist current emerged in 1899 within the ranks of those claiming adherence to the RSDLP. One-sidedly exaggerating the work of agitation around essentially trade-union demands among the broad mass of workers, this current argued that Russian socialists should restrict their activity to assisting the economic struggles of the workers and not strive to lead the political struggle for democracy in Russia, but should simply assist the bourgeoisie in its attempts to pressure the tsarist autocracy to grant a liberal-democratic constitution.

The factional battle against this opportunist current (known as the “Economists”), which Lenin initiated from his exile in Siberia in 1899 and which was waged in the years 1900-03 by the illegal monthly paper *Iskra*, was to lay the theoretical and organisational foundations for the creation of the Bolshevik party. This volume gathers together the key works in which Lenin polemicised against the views of the Economists and, in the process, developed many of the conceptions that were to become central to the theory and practice of the party that led the October Revolution.

In opposition to the Economists, who implicitly assumed that through their spontaneous day-to-day struggles the working-class masses would draw revolutionary socialist conclusions, Lenin argued that, in the context of capitalist rule where bourgeois ideas were dominant, the spontaneous activity of the working-class masses could at best only give rise to trade-union consciousness, i.e., the recognition of the need to unite with workers of the same trade or industry to fight for economic and political reforms within the framework of the capitalist system. By contrast, proletarian class consciousness, i.e., the recognition that the proletariat is a class with interests fundamentally opposed to those of the capitalist class and that these interests can only be fully realised through the organisation of the proletariat into the ruling class, requires scientific, i.e., theoretical, knowledge of the structure and dynamics of capitalist society. But such knowledge does not arise out of the spontaneous activity of the working-class masses. This is because the spontaneous activity of the working-class masses always revolves around immediate problems which in normal times are concerned with aspects of socioeconomic and political reality that do not directly challenge the very nature of the capitalist system.

Lenin pointed out that proletarian class consciousness, i.e., scientific socialism, was developed by bourgeois intellectuals, i.e., by Marx and Engels, and had to be introduced by them into the working-class movement through the recruitment of workers to a revolutionary socialist party.

Again, in opposition to the Economists, who argued that the Russian socialist intelligentsia should orient in an undifferentiated way to the entire mass of the working class, Lenin argued that the Marxist intellectuals had to understand that the working class was not an homogeneous, undifferentiated mass, but was stratified in its conditions of life and experience and therefore in its potential to be won to revolutionary socialist politics. He pointed out that in all countries it was the better situated strata of workers who spontaneously organised themselves to fight for their immediate interests and among whom there spontaneously arose workers who can win the confidence of the broad masses of workers, who devote themselves to the education and organisation of the working class, and who respond to the ideas of socialism more rapidly and easily than the broad mass of workers. These advanced workers, Lenin noted, “study, study, study” and turn themselves into conscious socialists, becoming the working-class intelligentsia. The key task of the Russian Marxist intellectuals. Lenin argued, was to give special attention to organising and training these workers so as to create an organisation of working-class revolutionaries. The central means to accomplish this task was a frequently published all-Russia political newspaper, which as Lenin argued in his article “Where to Begin?” would provide the Russian Marxists with a collective

propagandist, collective agitator and collective organiser.

In the early chapters of his 1902 booklet *What is To Be Done?* Lenin recapitulated and elaborated on these arguments. Beginning with Section C of Chapter IV of this booklet, Lenin takes up the question of what sort of party organisation the Russian Marxists needed, and it was here that Lenin first projected the concept of the Marxist party of a new type, radically different from the ostensibly Marxist parties that existed in Western Europe — a party of professional revolutionaries.

Lenin first outlines his opposition under the then prevailing Russian conditions to the kind of “broad” organisation called for by the Economists. He notes that such a call could only be demagogic, since in police-state conditions even trade-union type associations of workers were illegal. Later he also ridicules the Economists’ call for “broad” democracy within the organisation of Russian socialists as demagogic since party members had to try to keep their activities and their identities hidden from the tsarist political police (the Okhrana) — and this obviously made complete democracy in decision-making or selection of leadership impossible. The need to safeguard the party from the disruption caused by police repression was one of the reasons favoured by Lenin for restricting its membership to those professionally training in the techniques of clandestine political activity. However, he also set out another reason for a party of professional revolutionaries — one that did not depend upon the prevailing police-state conditions in Russia, but which logically flowed from his previous arguments about the need to create a party of working-class revolutionaries. The central task of the Russian Marxists was to help train working-class revolutionaries who, Lenin argued, must be on the same level in regard to party activities as the revolutionaries from among the intellectuals. This required a party organisation made up of people who, regardless of their class origin, made revolutionary political activity their profession — who were trained by the party to be professional Marxist propagandists, agitators and organisers. It was this conception of revolutionary party organisation that was to prove spectacularly successful in 1917 and was later generalised by Lenin as a goal of Marxist revolutionary parties everywhere. ■

# A Protest by Russian Social-Democrats<sup>1</sup>

*A meeting of social-democrats, 17 in number, held at a certain place (in Russia), adopted unanimously the following resolution and resolved to publish it and to submit it to all comrades for their consideration.*

A tendency has been observed among Russian social-democrats recently to depart from the fundamental principles of Russian social-democracy that were proclaimed by its founders and foremost fighters, members of the Emancipation of Labour group<sup>3</sup> as well as by the social-democratic publications of the Russian workers' organisations of the '90s. The *Credo* reproduced below, which is presumed to express the fundamental views of certain ("young") Russian social-democrats, represents an attempt at a systematic and definite exposition of the "new views". The following is its full text:

The guild and manufacture period in the West laid a sharp impress on all subsequent history and particularly on the history of social-democracy. The fact that the bourgeoisie had to fight for free forms, that it strove to release itself from the guild regulations fettering production, made the bourgeoisie a revolutionary element; everywhere in the West it began with *liberté, fraternité, égalité* (liberty, fraternity, equality), with the achievement of free political forms. By these gains, however, as Bismarck expressed it, it drew a bill on the future payable to its antipode— the working class. Hardly anywhere in the West did the working class, as a class, win the democratic institutions — it made use of them. Against this it may be argued that the working class took part in revolutions. A reference to history will refute this opinion, for, precisely in 1848, when the consolidation of constitutions took place in the West, the working class represented the urban artisan element, the petty-bourgeois democracy; a factory proletariat hardly

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Written at the end of August-beginning of September 1899. First published abroad in December 1899 as separate reprints from No. 4-5 of the magazine *Rabocheye Dyelo*.<sup>2</sup> Text taken from Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4 (Progress Publishers: Moscow, 1977).

existed, while the proletariat employed in large-scale industry (the German weavers depicted by Hauptmann, the weavers of Lyons) represented a wild mass capable only of rioting, but not of advancing any political demands. It can be definitely stated that the constitutions of 1848 were won by the bourgeoisie and the small urban artisans. On the other hand, the working class (artisans, manufactory workers, printers, weavers, watchmakers, etc.) have been accustomed since the Middle Ages to membership in organisations, mutual benefit societies, religious societies, etc. This spirit of organisation is still alive among the skilled workers in the West, sharply distinguishing them from the factory proletariat, which submits to organisation badly and slowly and is capable only of *lose-organisation* (temporary organisations) and not of permanent organisations with rules and regulations. It was these manufactory skilled workers that comprised the core of the social-democratic parties. Thus, we get the picture: on the one hand, the relative ease of political struggle and every possibility for it; on the other hand, the possibility for the systematic organisation of this struggle with the aid of the workers trained in the manufacturing period. It was on this basis that theoretical and practical Marxism grew up in the West. The starting-point was the parliamentary political struggle with the prospect — only superficially resembling Blanquism, but of totally different origin — of capturing power, on the one hand, and of a *Zusammenbruch* (collapse), on the other, Marxism was the theoretical expression of the prevailing practice: of the political struggle predominating over the economic. In Belgium, in France, and particularly in Germany, the workers organised the political struggle with incredible ease; but it was with enormous difficulty and tremendous friction that they organised the economic struggle. Even to this day the economic organisations as compared with the political organisations (leaving aside England) are extraordinarily weak and unstable, and everywhere *laissent à désirer quelque chose* (leave something to be desired). So long as the energy in the political struggle had not been completely exhausted, *Zusammenbruch* was an essential organisational *Schlagwort* (slogan) destined to play an extremely important historical role. The fundamental law that can be discerned by studying the working-class movement is that of the line of least resistance. In the West, this line was political activity, and Marxism, as formulated in the *Communist Manifesto*, was the best possible form the movement could assume. But when all energy in political activity had been exhausted, when the political movement had reached a point of intensity difficult and almost impossible to surpass (the slow increase in votes in the recent period, the apathy of the public at meetings, the note of despondency in literature), this, in conjunction with the ineffectiveness of parliamentary action and the entry into the arena of the ignorant masses, of the unorganised and almost unorganisable factory proletariat, gave rise in the West to what is now called

Bernsteinism,<sup>4</sup> the crisis of Marxism. It is difficult to imagine a more logical course than the period of development of the labour movement from the *Communist Manifesto* to Bernsteinism, and a careful study of this whole process can determine with astronomical exactitude the outcome of this “crisis”. Here, of course, the issue is not the defeat or victory of Bernsteinism — that is of little interest; it is the radical change in practical activity that has been gradually taking place for a long time within the party.

The change will not only be towards a more energetic prosecution of the economic struggle and consolidation of the economic organisations, but also, and most importantly, towards a change in the party’s attitude to other opposition parties. Intolerant Marxism, negative Marxism, primitive Marxism (whose conception of the class division of society is too schematic) will give way to democratic Marxism, and the social position of the party within modern society must undergo a sharp change. The party *will recognise* society; its narrow corporative and, in the majority of cases, sectarian tasks will be widened to social tasks, and its striving to seize power will be transformed into a striving for change, a striving to reform present-day society on democratic lines adapted to the present state of affairs, with the object of protecting the rights (all rights) of the labouring classes in the most effective and fullest way. The concept “politics” will be enlarged and will acquire a truly social meaning and the practical demands of the moment will acquire greater weight and will be able to count on receiving greater attention than they have been getting up to now.

It is not difficult to draw conclusions for Russia from this brief description of the course of development taken by the working-class movement in the West. In Russia, the line of least resistance will never tend towards political activity. The incredible political oppression will prompt much talk about it and cause attention to be concentrated precisely on this question, but it will never prompt practical action. While in the West the fact that the workers were drawn into political activity served to strengthen and crystallise their weak forces, in Russia, on the contrary, these weak forces are confronted with a wall of political oppression. Not only do they lack practical ways of struggle against this oppression, and hence, also for their own development, but they are systematic stifled and cannot give forth even weak shoots. If to this we add that the working class in our country has not inherited the spirit of organisation which distinguished the fighters in the West, we get a gloomy picture, one that is likely to drive into despondency the most optimistic Marxist who believes that an extra factory chimney stack will by the very fact of its existence bring great welfare. The economic struggle too is hard, infinitely hard, but it is possible to wage it, and it is in fact being waged by the masses themselves. By learning in this struggle to organise, and coming into constant conflict with the political regime in the course of it, the Russian worker

will at last create what may be called a form of the labour movement, the organisation or organisations best conforming to Russian conditions. At the present, it can be said with certainty that the Russian working-class movement is still in the amoeba state and has not yet acquired any form. The strike movement, which goes on with any form of organisation, cannot yet be described as the crystallised form of the Russian movement, while the illegal organisations are not worth consideration even from the mere quantitative point of view (quite apart from the question of their usefulness under present conditions).

Such is the situation. If to this we add the famine and the process of ruination of the countryside, which facilitate *Streikbrecher*-ism,\* and, consequently, the even greater difficulty of raising the masses of the workers to a more tolerable cultural level, then ... well, what is there for the Russian Marxist to do?! The talk about an independent workers' political party merely results from the transplantation of alien aims and alien achievements to our soil. The Russian Marxist, so far, is a sad spectacle. His practical tasks at the present time are paltry, his theoretical knowledge, insofar as he utilises it *not as an instrument for research* but as a schema for activity, is worthless for the purpose of fulfilling even these paltry practical tasks. Moreover these borrowed patterns are harmful from the practical point of view. Our Marxists, forgetting that the working class in the West entered into political activity after that field had already been cleared, are much too contemptuous of the radical or liberal opposition activity of all other nonworker strata of society. The slightest attempt to concentrate attention on public manifestations of a liberal political character rouses the protest of the orthodox Marxists, who forget that a number of historical conditions prevent us from being Western Marxists and demand of us a different Marxism, suited to, and necessary in, Russian conditions. Obviously, the lack in every Russian citizen of political feeling and sense cannot be compensated by talk about politics or by appeals to a nonexistent force. This political sense can only be acquired through education, i.e., through participation in that life (however un-Marxian it may be) which is offered by Russian conditions. "Negation" is as harmful in Russia as it was appropriate (temporarily) in the West, because negation proceeding from something organised and possessing real power is one thing, while negation proceeding from an amorphous mass of scattered individuals is another.

For the Russian Marxist there is only one course: participation in, i.e., assistance to, the economic struggle of the proletariat, and participation in liberal opposition activity. As a "negator", the Russian Marxist came on the scene very early, and this negation has

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\* Strikebreaking. — *Ed.*

weakened the share of his energy that should be turned in the direction of political radicalism. For the time being, this is not terrible; but if the class schema prevents the Russian intellectual from taking an active part in life and keeps him too far removed from opposition circles, it will be a serious loss to all who are compelled to fight for legal forms separately from the working class, which has not yet put forward political aims. The political innocence concealed behind the celebrations of the Russian Marxist intellectual on political topics may play mischief with him.

We do not know whether there are many Russian social-democrats who share these views. But there is no doubt that ideas of this kind have their adherents, and we therefore feel obliged to protest categorically against such views and to warn all comrades against the menacing deflection of Russian social-democracy from the path it has already marked out — the formation of an independent political working-class party which is inseparable from the class struggle of the proletariat and which has for its immediate aim the winning of political freedom.

The above-quoted *Credo* represents, first, “a brief description of the course of development taken by the working-class movement in the West”, and, secondly, “conclusions for Russia”.

First of all, the authors of the *Credo* have an entirely false conception of the history of the West-European working-class movement. It is not true to say that the working class in the West did not take part in the struggle for political liberty and in political revolutions. The history of the Chartist movement and the revolutions of 1848 in France, Germany, and Austria prove the opposite. It is absolutely untrue to say that “Marxism was the theoretical expression of the prevailing practice: of the political struggle predominating over the economic”. On the contrary, “Marxism” appeared at a time when nonpolitical socialism prevailed (Owenism, “Fourierism”, “true socialism”) and the *Communist Manifesto* took up the cudgels at once against nonpolitical socialism. Even when Marxism came out fully armed with theory (*Capital*) and organised the celebrated International Working Men’s Association,<sup>5</sup> the political struggle was by no means the prevailing practice (narrow trade-unionism in England, anarchism and Proudhonism in the Romance countries). In Germany the great historic service performed by Lassalle was the transformation of the working class from an appendage of the liberal bourgeoisie into an independent political party. Marxism linked up the economic and the political struggle of the working class into a single inseparable whole; and the effort of the authors of the *Credo* to separate these forms of struggle is one of their most clumsy and deplorable departures from Marxism.

Further, the authors of the *Credo* also have an entirely wrong conception of the present state of the West-European working-class movement and of the theory of

Marxism, under the banner of which that movement is marching.

To talk about a “crisis of Marxism” is merely to repeat the nonsense of the bourgeois hacks who are doing all they can to exacerbate every disagreement among the socialists and turn it into a split in the socialist parties. The notorious Bernsteinism — in the sense in which it is commonly understood by the general public, and by the authors of the *Credo* in particular — is an attempt to narrow the theory of Marxism, to convert the revolutionary workers’ party into a reformist party. As was to be expected, this attempt has been strongly condemned by the majority of the German social-democrats. Opportunist trends have repeatedly manifested themselves in the ranks of German social-democracy, and on every occasion they have been repudiated by the party, which loyally guards the principles of revolutionary international social-democracy. We are convinced that every attempt to transplant opportunist views to Russia will encounter equally determined resistance on the part of the overwhelming majority of Russian social-democrats.

Similarly, there can be no suggestion of a “radical change in the practical activity” of the West-European workers’ parties, in spite of what the authors of the *Credo* say: the tremendous importance of the economic struggle of the proletariat, and the necessity for such a struggle, were recognised by Marxism from the very outset. As early as the '40s Marx and Engels conducted a polemic against the utopian socialists who denied the importance of this struggle.<sup>6</sup>

When the International Working Men’s Association was formed about 20 years later, the question of the importance of trade unions and of the economic struggle was raised at its very first congress, in Geneva, in 1866. The resolution adopted at that congress spoke explicitly of the importance of the economic struggle and warned the socialists and the workers, on the one hand, against exaggerating its importance (which the English workers were inclined to do at that time) and, on the other, against underestimating its importance (which the French and the Germans, particularly the Lassalleans, were inclined to do). The resolution recognised that the trade unions were not only a natural, but also an essential phenomenon under capitalism and considered them an extremely important means for organising the working class in its daily struggle against capital and for the abolition of wage-labour. The resolution declared that the trade unions must not devote attention exclusively to the “immediate struggle against capital”, must not remain aloof from the general political and social movement of the working class; they must not pursue “narrow” aims, but must strive for the general emancipation of the millions of oppressed workers. Since then the workers’ parties in the various countries have discussed the question many times and, of course, will discuss it again and again — whether to devote more or less attention at

any given moment to the economic or to the political struggle of the proletariat; but the general question, or the question in principle, today remains as it was presented by Marxism. The conviction that the class struggle must necessarily combine the political and the economic struggle into one integral whole has entered into the flesh and blood of international social-democracy. The experience of history has, furthermore, incontrovertibly proved that absence of freedom, or restriction of the political rights of the proletariat, always make it necessary to put the political struggle in the forefront.

Still less can there be any suggestion of a serious change in the attitude of the workers' party towards the other opposition parties. In this respect, too, Marxism has mapped out the correct line, which is equally remote from exaggerating the importance of politics, from conspiracy (Blanquism, etc.), and from decrying politics or reducing it to opportunist, reformist social tinkering (anarchism, utopian and petty-bourgeois socialism, state socialism, professorial socialism, etc.). The proletariat must strive to form independent political workers' parties, the main aim of which must be the capture of political power by the proletariat for the purpose of organising socialist society. The proletariat must not regard the other classes and parties as "one reactionary mass";<sup>7</sup> on the contrary, it must take part in all political and social life, support the progressive classes and parties against the reactionary classes and parties, support every revolutionary movement against the existing system, champion the interests of every oppressed nationality or race, of every persecuted religion, of the disfranchised sex, etc. The arguments the *Credo* authors advance on this subject merely reveal a desire to obscure the class character of the struggle of the proletariat, weaken this struggle by a meaningless "recognition of society", and reduce revolutionary Marxism to a trivial reformist trend. We are convinced that the overwhelming majority of Russian social-democrats will resolutely reject this distortion of the fundamental principles of social-democracy. Their erroneous premises regarding the West-European working-class movement led the authors of the *Credo* to draw still more erroneous "conclusions for Russia".

The assertion that the Russian working class "has not yet put forward political aims" simply reveals ignorance of the Russian revolutionary movement. The North-Russian Workers' Union<sup>8</sup> formed in 1878 and the South-Russian Workers' Union<sup>9</sup> formed in 1875 put forward even then the demand for political liberty in their programs. After the reaction of the '80s, the working class repeatedly put forward the same demand in the '90s. The assertion that "the talk about an independent workers' political party merely results from the transplantation of alien aims and alien achievements to our soil" reveals a complete failure to understand the historical role of the Russian working class and the most vital tasks of Russian social-democracy. Apparently, the

program of the authors of the *Credo* inclines to the idea that the working class, following “the line of least resistance”, should confine itself to the economic struggle, while the “liberal opposition elements” fight, with the “participation” of the Marxists, for “legal forms”. The application of such a program would be tantamount to the political suicide of Russian social-democracy, it would greatly retard and debase the Russian working-class movement and the Russian revolutionary movement (for us the two concepts coincide). The mere fact that it was possible for a program like this to appear shows how well grounded were the fears expressed by one of the foremost champions of Russian social-democracy, P.B. Axelrod, when, at the end of 1897, he wrote of the possibility of the following prospect:

The working-class movement keeps to the narrow rut of purely economic conflicts between the workers and employers and, in itself, taken as a whole, is not of a political character, while in the struggle for political freedom the advanced strata of the proletariat follow the revolutionary circles and groups of the so-called intelligentsia. [Axelrod, *Present Tasks and Tactics of the Russian Social-Democrats*, Geneva, 1898, p. 19.]

Russian social-democrats must declare determined war upon the whole body of ideas expressed in the *Credo*, for these ideas lead straight to the realisation of this prospect. Russian social-democrats must bend every effort to translate into reality another prospect, outlined by P.B. Axelrod in the following words:

The other prospect: social-democracy organises the Russian proletariat into an independent political party which fights for liberty, *partly side by side and in alliance with* the bourgeois revolutionary groups (if such should exist), and partly by recruiting directly into its ranks or securing the following of the most democratic-minded and revolutionary elements from among the intelligentsia. [*Ibid.*, p. 20.]

At the time P.B. Axelrod wrote the above lines the declarations made by social-democrats in Russia showed clearly that the overwhelming majority of them adhered to the same point of view. It is true that one St. Petersburg workers' paper, *Rabochaya Mysl*,<sup>10</sup> seemed to incline toward the ideas of the authors of the *Credo*. In a leading article setting forth its program (No. 1, October 1897) it expressed, regrettably, the utterly erroneous idea, an idea running counter to social-democracy, that the “economic basis of the movement” may be “obscured by the effort to keep the political ideal constantly in mind”. At the same time, however, another St. Petersburg workers' newspaper, *S. Peterburgskiy Rabochiy Listok*<sup>11</sup> (No. 2, September 1897), emphatically expressed the opinion that “the overthrow of the autocracy ... can be achieved only by a well-organised and numerically strong, working-class party” and that “organised in a strong party” the workers will “emancipate themselves, and the whole of Russia, from all political and economic oppression”. A third newspaper, *Rabochaya Gazeta*,<sup>12</sup>

in its leading article in issue No. 2 (November 1897), wrote: “The fight against the autocratic government for political liberty is the immediate task of the Russian working-class movement.” “The Russian working-class movement will increase its forces 10-fold if it comes out as a single harmonious whole, with a common name and a well-knit organisation ...” “The separate workers’ circles should combine into one common party.” “The Russian workers’ party will be a social-democratic party.”

That precisely these views of *Rabochaya Gazeta* were fully shared by the vast majority of Russian social-democrats is seen, furthermore, from the fact that the Congress of Russian Social-Democrats<sup>13</sup> in the spring of 1898 formed the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, published its manifesto and recognised *Rabochaya Gazeta* as the official party organ. Thus, the *Credo* authors are taking an enormous step backward from the stage of development which Russian social-democracy has already achieved and which it has recorded in the *Manifesto of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party*. Since the frenzied persecution by the Russian government has led to the present situation in which the party’s activity has temporarily subsided and its official organ has ceased publication, it is the task of all Russian social-democrats to exert every effort for the utmost consolidation of the party, to draw up a party program and revive its official organ. In view of the ideological vacillations evidenced by the fact that programs like the above-examined *Credo* can appear, we think it particularly necessary to emphasise the following fundamental principles that were expounded in the *Manifesto* and that are of enormous importance to Russian social-democracy. First, Russian social-democracy “desires to be and to remain the class movement of the organised working masses”. Hence it follows that the motto of social-democracy must be: aid to the workers, not only in their economic, but also in their political struggle; agitation, not only in connection with immediate economic needs, but also in connection with all manifestations of political oppression; propaganda, not only of the ideas of scientific socialism, but also of democratic ideas. Only the theory of revolutionary Marxism can be the banner of the class movement of the workers, and Russian social-democracy must concern itself with the further development and implementation of this theory and must safeguard it against the distortions and vulgarisations to which “fashionable theories” are so often subjected (and the successes of revolutionary social-democracy in Russia have already made Marxism a “fashionable” theory). While concentrating all their present efforts on activity among factory and mine workers, social-democrats must not forget that with the expansion of the movement home workers, handicraftsmen, agricultural labourers, and the millions of ruined and starving peasants must be drawn into the ranks of the labouring masses they organise.

Secondly: "On his strong shoulders the Russian worker must and will carry to a finish the cause of winning political liberty." Since its immediate task is the overthrow of the autocracy, social-democracy must act as the vanguard in the fight for democracy, and consequently, if for no other reason, must give every support to all democratic elements of the population of Russia and win them as allies. Only an independent working-class party can serve as a strong bulwark in the fight against the autocracy, and only in alliance with such a party, only by supporting it, can all the other fighters for political liberty play an effective part.

Thirdly and finally: "As a socialist movement and trend, the Russian Social-Democratic Party carries on the cause and the traditions of the whole preceding revolutionary movement in Russia; considering the winning of political liberty to be the most important of the immediate tasks of the party as a whole, social-democracy marches towards the goal that was already clearly indicated by the glorious representatives of the old Narodnaya Volya."<sup>14</sup> The traditions of the whole preceding revolutionary movement demand that the social-democrats shall at the present time concentrate all their efforts on organising the party, on strengthening its internal discipline, and on developing the technique for illegal work. If the members of the old Narodnaya Volya managed to play an enormous role in the history of Russia, despite the fact that only narrow social strata supported the few heroes, and despite the fact that it was by no means a revolutionary theory which served as the banner of the movement, then social-democracy, relying on the class struggle of the proletariat, will be able to render itself invincible. "The Russian proletariat will throw off the yoke of autocracy in order to continue the struggle against capital and the bourgeoisie for the complete victory of socialism with still greater energy."

We invite all groups of social-democrats and all workers' circles in Russia to discuss the above-quoted *Credo* and our resolution, and to express a definite opinion on the question raised, in order that all differences may be removed and the work of organising and strengthening the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party may be accelerated.

Groups and circles may send their resolutions to the Union of Russian Social-Democrats Abroad which, by Point 10 of the decision of the 1898 Congress of Russian Social-Democrats, is a part of the Russian Social-Democratic Party and its representative abroad. ■

# Articles for *Rabochaya Gazeta*<sup>1</sup>

## Letter to the Editorial Group

Dear Comrades!

In response to your request I am sending three articles for the newspaper and deem it essential to say a few words about my collaboration in general and the relations between us in particular.

From your previous communication I gathered that you wanted to found a publishing firm and give me a series of social-democratic pamphlets to edit.

Now I see that matters are different, that you have set up your editorial board, which is beginning the publication of a newspaper and invites me to collaborate.

Needless to say, I agree willingly to this proposal as well, but I must state, in doing so, that I consider successful collaboration possible *only on the following terms*: (1) *regular* relations between the editors and the collaborator, *who shall be informed* of decisions on all manuscripts (accepted, rejected, changed) and of *all publications of your firm*; (2) my articles to be signed with a special pseudonym (if the one I sent you has been lost, choose another yourselves); (3) agreement between the editors and the collaborator on fundamental views concerning theoretical questions, concerning immediate practical tasks, and concerning the desired character of the newspaper (or series of pamphlets).

I hope the editors will agree to these terms and, in order to effect the earliest possible agreement between us, I will deal in brief with the questions arising out of the third condition.

I am informed that you find that “the old current is strong” and that there is no particular need for a polemic against Bernsteinism and its Russian echoers. I consider this view to be too optimistic. Bernstein’s public announcement that the majority of the Russian social-democrats agree with him;<sup>2</sup> the split between the “young” Russian

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Written in the second half of 1899. First published in 1925. Text taken from Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4.

social-democrats abroad and the Emancipation of Labour group<sup>3</sup> which is the founder, the representative, and the most faithful custodian of the “old current”; the vain efforts of *Rabochaya Mysl* to say some new word, to revolt against the “extensive” political tasks, to raise petty matters and amateurish work to the heights of apotheosis, to wax vulgarly ironical over “revolutionary theories” (No. 7, “In Passing”); lastly, complete disorder in the legal Marxist literature and the frantic efforts on the part of the majority of its representatives to seize upon Bernsteinism, the “criticism” *à la mode* — all this, in my opinion, serves to show clearly that the re-establishment of the “old current” and its energetic defence is a matter of real urgency.

You will see from the articles what my views on the tasks of the paper and the plan of its publication are, and I should very much like to know the extent of our solidarity on this question (unfortunately the articles have been written in somewhat of a hurry: it is very important for me to know the deadline for their delivery).

I think it is *necessary to launch a direct polemic against Rabochaya Mysl*, but for this purpose I should like to receive *Nos. 1-2, 6, and those following 7*; also *Proletarskaya Borba*.<sup>4</sup> I need the last-named pamphlet also in order to review it in the paper.

As to length, you write that I am to impose no constraint on myself. I think that as long as there is a newspaper I shall give preference to newspaper articles and deal in them even with pamphlet themes, reserving for myself the right to work the articles up into pamphlets at a later date. The subjects with which I propose to deal in the immediate future are: (1) the Draft Program (I'll send it soon);<sup>5</sup> (2) questions of tactics and organisation that are to be discussed at the next congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party;<sup>6</sup> (3) a pamphlet on rules of conduct for workers and socialists at liberty, in prison, and in exile — modelled after the Polish pamphlet (on “rules of conduct” — if you can, I should like you to obtain it for me); (4) strikes (I — their significance; II — laws on strikes; III — a review of some of the strikes of recent years); (5) the pamphlet, *Woman and the Working-Class Cause*, and others.

I should like to know approximately what material the editorial board has in hand, so as to avoid repetition and the tackling of questions that have already been “exhausted”.

I shall await an answer from the editorial board through the same channels. (*Apart from this way I have not had nor have I any other means of communicating with your group.*)

F.P.<sup>7</sup>

## Our Program

International social-democracy is at present in a state of ideological wavering. Hitherto the doctrines of Marx and Engels were considered to be the firm foundation of revolutionary theory, but voices are now being raised everywhere to proclaim these doctrines inadequate and obsolete. Whoever declares himself to be a social-democrat and intends to publish a social-democratic organ must define precisely his attitude to a question that is preoccupying the attention of the German social-democrats and not of them alone.

We take our stand entirely on the Marxist theoretical position: Marxism was the first to transform socialism from a utopia into a science, to lay a firm foundation for this science, and to indicate the path that must be followed in further developing and elaborating it in all its parts. It disclosed the nature of modern capitalist economy by explaining how the hire of the labourer, the purchase of labour-power, conceals the enslavement of millions of propertyless people by a handful of capitalists, the owners of the land, factories, mines, and so forth. It showed that all modern capitalist development displays the tendency of large-scale production to eliminate petty production and creates conditions that make a socialist system of society possible and necessary. It taught us how to discern, beneath the pall of rooted customs, political intrigues, abstruse laws, and intricate doctrines — the *class struggle*, the struggle between the propertied classes in all their variety and the propertyless mass, the *proletariat*, which is at the head of all the propertyless. It made clear the real task of a revolutionary socialist party: not to draw up plans for refashioning society, not to preach to the capitalists and their hangers-on about improving the lot of the workers, not to hatch conspiracies, *but to organise the class struggle of the proletariat and to lead this struggle, the ultimate aim of which is the conquest of political power by the proletariat and the organisation of a socialist society.*

And we now ask: Has anything new been introduced into this theory by its loud-voiced “renovators” who are raising so much noise in our day and have grouped themselves around the German socialist Bernstein? *Absolutely nothing.* Not by a single step have they advanced the science which Marx and Engels enjoined us to develop;

they have not taught the proletariat any new methods of struggle; they have only retreated, borrowing fragments of backward theories and preaching to the proletariat, not the theory of struggle, but the theory of concession — concession to the most vicious enemies of the proletariat, the governments and bourgeois parties who never tire of seeking new means of baiting the socialists. Plekhanov, one of the founders and leaders of Russian social-democracy, was entirely right in ruthlessly criticising Bernstein's latest "critique";<sup>8</sup> the views of Bernstein have now been rejected by the representatives of the German workers as well (at the Hannover Congress).<sup>9</sup>

We anticipate a flood of accusations for these words; the shouts will rise that we want to convert the socialist party into an order of "true believers" that persecutes "heretics" for deviations from "dogma", for every independent opinion, and so forth. We know about all these fashionable and trenchant phrases. Only there is not a grain of truth or sense in them. There can be no strong socialist party without a revolutionary theory which unites all socialists, from which they draw all their convictions, and which they apply in their methods of struggle and means of action. To defend such a theory, which to the best of your knowledge you consider to be true, against unfounded attacks and attempts to corrupt it is not to imply that you are an enemy of *all* criticism. We do not regard Marx's theory as something completed and inviolable; on the contrary, we are convinced that it has only laid the foundation stone of the science which socialists *must* develop in all directions if they wish to keep pace with life. We think that an *independent* elaboration of Marx's theory is especially essential for Russian socialists; for this theory provides only general *guiding* principles, which, *in particular*, are applied in England differently than in France, in France differently than in Germany, and in Germany differently than in Russia. We shall therefore gladly afford space in our paper for articles on theoretical questions and we invite all comrades openly to discuss controversial points.

What are the main questions that arise in the application to Russia of the program common to all social-democrats? We have stated that the essence of this program is to organise the class struggle of the proletariat and to lead this struggle, the ultimate aim of which is the conquest of political power by the proletariat and the establishment of a socialist society. The class struggle of the proletariat comprises the economic struggle (struggle against individual capitalists or against individual groups of capitalists for the improvement of the workers' condition) and the political struggle (struggle against the government for the broadening of the people's rights, i.e., for democracy, and for the broadening of the political power of the proletariat). Some Russian social-democrats (among them apparently those who direct *Rabochaya Mysl*) regard the economic struggle as incomparably the more important and almost go so far as to relegate the

political struggle to the more or less distant future. This standpoint is utterly false. All social-democrats are agreed that it is necessary to organise the economic struggle of the working class, that it is necessary to carry on agitation among the workers on this basis, i.e., to help the workers in their day-to-day struggle against the employers, to draw their attention to every form and every case of oppression and in this way to make clear to them the necessity for combination. But to forget the political struggle for the economic would mean to depart from the basic principle of international social-democracy, it would mean to forget what the entire history of the labour movement teaches us. The confirmed adherents of the bourgeoisie and of the government which serves it have even made repeated attempts to organise purely economic unions of workers and to divert them in this way from “politics”, from socialism. It is quite possible that the Russian government, too, may undertake something of the kind, as it has always endeavoured to throw some paltry sops or, rather, sham sops, to the people, only to turn their thoughts away from the fact that they are oppressed and without rights. No economic struggle can bring the workers any lasting improvement, or can even be conducted on a large scale, unless the workers have the right freely to organise meetings and unions, to have their own newspapers, and to send their representatives to the national assemblies, as do the workers in Germany and all other European countries (with the exception of Turkey and Russia). But in order to win these rights it is necessary to wage a *political struggle*. In Russia, not only the workers, but all citizens are deprived of political rights. Russia is an absolute and unlimited monarchy. The tsar alone promulgates laws, appoints officials and controls them. For this reason, *it seems* as though in Russia the tsar and the tsarist government are independent of all classes and accord equal treatment to all. But *in reality* all officials are chosen exclusively from the propertied class and all are subject to the influence of the big capitalists, who make the ministers dance to their tune and who achieve whatever they want. The Russian working class is burdened by a double yoke; it is robbed and plundered by the capitalists and the landlords, and to prevent it from fighting them, the police bind it hand and foot, gag it, and every attempt to defend the rights of the people is persecuted. Every strike against a capitalist results in the military and police being let loose on the workers. Every economic struggle necessarily becomes a political struggle, and social-democracy must indissolubly combine the one with the other into a *single, class struggle of the proletariat*. The first and chief aim of such a struggle must be the conquest of political rights, *the conquest of political liberty*. If the workers of St. Petersburg alone, with a little help from the socialists, have rapidly succeeded in wringing a concession from the government — the adoption of the law on the reduction of the working day<sup>10</sup> — then the Russian

working class as a whole, led by a single Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, will be able, in persistent struggle, to win incomparably more important concessions.

The Russian working class is able to wage its economic and political struggle alone, even if no other class comes to its aid. But in the political struggle the workers do not stand alone. The people's complete lack of rights and the savage lawlessness of the bashi-bazouk officials rouse the indignation of all honest educated people who cannot reconcile themselves to the persecution of free thought and free speech; they rouse the indignation of the persecuted Poles, Finns, Jews, and Russian religious sects; they rouse the indignation of the small merchants, manufacturers, and peasants, who can nowhere find protection from the persecution of officials and police. All these groups of the population are incapable, separately, of carrying on a persistent political struggle. But when the working class raises the banner of this struggle, it will receive support from all sides. Russian social-democracy will place itself at the head of all fighters for the rights of the people, of all fighters for democracy, and it will prove invincible!

These are our fundamental views, and we shall develop them systematically and from every aspect in our paper. We are convinced that in this way we shall tread the path which has been indicated by the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party in its published manifesto. ■

## Our Immediate Task

The Russian working-class movement is today going through a period of transition. The splendid beginning achieved by the social-democratic workers' organisations in the Western area, St. Petersburg, Moscow, Kiev, and other cities was consummated by the formation of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (spring 1898). Russian social-democracy seems to have exhausted, for the time being, all its strength in making this tremendous step forward and has gone back to the former isolated functioning of separate local organisations. The party has not ceased to exist, it has only withdrawn into itself in order to gather strength and put the unification of all Russian social-democrats on a sound footing. To effect this unification, to evolve a suitable form for it and to get rid completely of narrow local isolation — such is the immediate and most urgent task of the Russian social-democrats.

We are all agreed that our task is that of the organisation of the proletarian class struggle. But what is this class struggle? When the workers of a single factory or of a single branch of industry engage in struggle against their employer or employers, is this class struggle? No, this is only a weak embryo of it. The struggle of the workers becomes a class struggle only when all the foremost representatives of the entire working class of the whole country are conscious of themselves as a single working class and launch a struggle that is directed, not against individual employers, but against the *entire class* of capitalists and against the government that supports that class. Only when the individual worker realises that he is a member of the entire working class, only when he recognises the fact that his petty day-to-day struggle against individual employers and individual government officials is a struggle against the entire bourgeoisie and the entire government, does his struggle become a class struggle. “Every class struggle is a political struggle”<sup>11</sup> — these famous words of Marx are not to be understood to mean that any struggle of workers against employers must *always* be a political struggle. They must be understood to mean that the struggle of the workers against the capitalists inevitably *becomes* a political struggle *insofar* as it becomes a *class* struggle. It is the task of the social-democrats, by organising the workers, by conducting propaganda and agitation among them, to *turn* their

spontaneous struggle against their oppressors into the struggle of the whole class, into the struggle of a definite political *party* for definite political and socialist ideals. This is something that cannot be achieved by local activity alone.

Local social-democratic activity has attained a fairly high level in our country. The seeds of social-democratic ideas have been broadcast throughout Russia; workers' leaflets — the earliest form of social-democratic literature — are known to all Russian workers from St. Petersburg to Krasnoyarsk, from the Caucasus to the Urals. All that is now lacking is the unification of all this local work into the work of a single *party*. Our chief drawback, to the overcoming of which we must devote all our energy, is the narrow "amateurish" character of local work. Because of this amateurish character many manifestations of the working-class movement in Russia remain purely local events and lose a great deal of their significance as examples for the whole of Russian social-democracy, as a stage of the whole Russian working-class movement. Because of this amateurishness, the consciousness of their community of interests throughout Russia is insufficiently inculcated in the workers, they do not link up their struggle sufficiently with the idea of Russian socialism and Russian democracy. Because of this amateurishness the comrades' varying theoretical and practical problems are not openly discussed in a central newspaper, they do not serve the purpose of elaborating a common program and devising common tactics for the party, they are lost in narrow study-circle life or they lead to the inordinate exaggeration of local and chance peculiarities. Enough of our amateurishness! We have attained sufficient maturity to go over to *common action*, to the elaboration of a common party program, to the joint discussion of our party tactics and organisation.

Russian social-democracy has done a great deal in criticising old revolutionary and socialist theories; it has not limited itself to criticism and theorising alone; it has shown that its program is not hanging in the air but is meeting the extensive spontaneous movement among the people, that is, among the factory proletariat. It has now to make the following, very difficult, but very important, step — to elaborate an organisation of the movement adapted to our conditions. social-democracy is not confined to simple service to the working-class movement: it represents "*the combination of socialism and the working-class movement*" (to use Karl Kautsky's definition which repeats the basic ideas of the *Communist Manifesto*); the task of social-democracy is to bring definite socialist ideals to the spontaneous working-class movement, to connect this movement with socialist convictions that should attain the level of contemporary science, to connect it with the regular political struggle for democracy as a means of achieving socialism — in a word, to fuse this spontaneous movement into one indestructible whole with the activity of the *revolutionary party*.

The history of socialism and democracy in Western Europe, the history of the Russian revolutionary movement, the experience of our working-class movement — such is the *material* we must master to elaborate a purposeful organisation and purposeful tactics for our party. “The analysis” of this material must, however, be done independently, since there are no ready-made models to be found anywhere. On the one hand; the Russian working-class movement exists under conditions that are quite different from those of Western Europe. It would be most dangerous to have any illusions on this score. On the other hand, Russian social-democracy differs very substantially from former revolutionary parties in Russia, so that the necessity of learning revolutionary technique and secret organisation from the old Russian masters (we do not in the least hesitate to admit this necessity) does not in any way relieve us of the duty of assessing them critically and elaborating our own organisation independently.

In the presentation of such a task there are two main questions that come to the fore with particular insistence: (1) How is the need for the complete liberty of local social-democratic activity to be combined with the need for establishing a single — and, consequently, a centralist — party? social-democracy draws its strength from the spontaneous working-class movement that manifests itself differently and at different times in the various industrial centres; the activity of the local social-democratic organisations is the *basis* of all party activity. If, however, this is to be the activity of isolated “amateurs”, then it cannot, strictly speaking, be called social-democratic, since it will not be the organisation and leadership of the *class* struggle of the proletariat. (2) How can we combine the striving of social-democracy to become a revolutionary party that makes the struggle for political liberty its chief purpose with the determined refusal of social-democracy to organise political conspiracies, its emphatic refusal to “call the workers to the barricades” (as correctly noted by P.B. Axelrod), or, in general, to impose on the workers this or that “plan” for an attack on the government, which has been thought up by a company of revolutionaries?

Russian social-democracy has every right to believe that it has provided the *theoretical* solution to these questions; to dwell on this would mean to repeat what has been said in the article, “Our Program”. It is now a matter of the *practical* solution to these questions. This is not a solution that can be made by a single person or a single group; it can be provided only by the organised activity of social-democracy as a whole. We believe that the most urgent task of the moment consists in undertaking the solution of these questions for which purpose we must have as our immediate aim *the founding of a party organ that will appear regularly and be closely connected with all the local groups*. We believe that *all* the activity of the social-democrats should be

directed to this end throughout the whole of the forthcoming period. Without such an organ, local work will remain narrowly “amateurish”. The formation of the party — if the correct representation of that party in a certain newspaper is not organised — will to a considerable extent remain bare words. An economic struggle that is not united by a central organ cannot become the *class* struggle of the entire Russian proletariat. It is impossible to conduct a political struggle if the party as a whole fails to make statements on all questions of policy and to give direction to the various manifestations of the struggle. The organisation and disciplining of the revolutionary forces and the development of revolutionary technique are impossible without the discussion of all these questions in a central organ, without the collective elaboration of *certain forms and rules for the conduct of affairs*, without the establishment — through the central organ — of every party member's *responsibility* to the entire party.

In speaking of the necessity to concentrate *all* party forces — all literary forces, all organisational abilities, all material resources, etc. — on the foundation and correct conduct of the organ of the whole party, we do not for a moment think of pushing other forms of activity into the background — e.g., local agitation, demonstrations, boycott, the persecution of spies, the bitter campaigns against individual representatives of the bourgeoisie and the government, protest strikes, etc., etc. On the contrary, we are convinced that all these forms of activity constitute the *basis* of the party's activity, but, *without* their unification through an organ of the whole party, these forms of revolutionary struggle *lose nine-tenths of their significance*; they do not lead to the creation of common party experience, to the creation of party traditions and continuity. The party organ, far from competing with such activity, will exercise tremendous influence on its extension, consolidation, and systematisation.

The necessity to concentrate *all* forces on establishing a regularly appearing and regularly delivered organ arises out of the peculiar situation of Russian social-democracy as compared with that of social-democracy in other European countries and with that of the old Russian revolutionary parties. Apart from newspapers, the workers of Germany, France, etc., have numerous other means for the public manifestation of their activity, for organising the movement — parliamentary activity, election agitation, public meetings, participation in local public bodies (rural and urban), the open conduct of trade unions (professional, guild), etc., etc. *In place of all that, yes, all of that, we must be served* — until we have won political liberty — by a revolutionary newspaper, without which *no* broad organisation of the entire working-class movement is possible. We do not believe in conspiracies, we renounce individual revolutionary ventures to destroy the government; the words of Liebknecht, veteran of German social-democracy, serve as the watchword of our activities: “*Studieren, propagandieren*,”

*organisieren*” — Learn, propagandise, organise — and the pivot of this activity can and must be only the *organ of the party*.

But is the regular and more or less stable establishment of such an organ possible, and under what circumstances is it possible? We shall deal with this matter next time. ■

## An Urgent Question

In the previous article we said that our immediate task is to establish a party organ, one that appears and can be delivered regularly, and we raised the question of whether and under what circumstances it is possible to achieve this aim. Let us examine the more important aspects of this question.

The main objection that may be raised is that the achievement of this purpose *first* requires the development of local group activity. We consider this fairly widespread opinion to be fallacious. We can and must immediately act about founding the party organ — and, it follows, the party itself — and putting them on a sound footing. The conditions essential to such a step already exist: local party work is being carried on and obviously has struck deep roots; for the destructive police attacks that are growing more frequent lead to only short interruptions; fresh forces rapidly replace those that have fallen in battle. The party has resources for publishing and literary forces, not only abroad, but in Russia as well. The question, therefore, is whether the work *that is already being conducted* should be continued in “amateur” fashion or whether it should be organised into the work of one party and in such a way that it is reflected in its entirety in one common organ.

Here we come to the most urgent question of our movement, to its sore point — organisation. The improvement of revolutionary organisation and discipline, the perfection of our underground technique are an absolute necessity. We must openly admit that in this respect we are lagging behind the old Russian revolutionary parties and must bend all our efforts to overtake and surpass them. Without improved organisation there can be no progress of our working-class movement in general, and no establishment of an active party with a properly functioning organ, in particular. That is on the one hand. On the other, the existing party organs (organs in the sense of institutions and groups, as well as newspapers) must pay greater attention to questions of organisation and exert an influence in this respect on local groups.

Local, amateurish work always leads to a great excess of personal connections, to study-circle methods, and we have grown out of the study-circle stage which has become too narrow for our present-day work and which leads to an overexpenditure

of forces. Only fusion into a single party will enable us strictly to observe the principles of division of labour and economy of forces, which must be achieved in order to reduce the losses and build as reliable a bulwark as possible against the oppression of the autocratic government and against its frantic persecutions. Against us, against the tiny groups of socialists hidden in the expanses of the Russian “underground”, there stands the huge machine of a most powerful modern state that is exerting all its forces to crush socialism and democracy. We are convinced that we shall, in the end, smash that police state, because all the sound and developing sections of our society are in favour of democracy and socialism; but, in order to conduct a systematic, struggle against the government, we must raise revolutionary organisation, discipline and the technique of underground work to the highest degree of perfection. It is essential for individual party members or separate groups of members to specialise in the different aspects of party work — some in the duplication of literature, others in its transport across the frontier, a third category in its distribution inside Russia, a fourth in its distribution in the cities, a fifth in the arrangement of secret meeting places, a sixth in the collection of funds, a seventh in the delivery of correspondence and all information about the movement, an eighth in maintaining relations, etc., etc. We know that this sort of specialisation requires much greater self-restraint, much greater ability to concentrate on modest, unseen, everyday work, much greater real heroism than the usual work in study circles.

The Russian socialists and the Russian working class, however, have shown their heroic qualities and, in general, it would be a sin to complain of a shortage of people. There is to be observed among the working youth an impassioned, uncontrollable enthusiasm for the ideas of democracy and socialism, and helpers for the workers still continue to arrive from among the intellectuals, despite the fact that the prisons and places of exile are overcrowded. If the idea of the necessity for a stricter organisation is made widely known among all these recruits to the revolutionary cause, the plan for the organisation of a regularly published and delivered party newspaper will cease to be a dream. Let us take one of the conditions for the success of this plan — that the newspaper be assured a regular supply of correspondence and other material from everywhere. Has not history shown that at all times when there has been a resurgence of our revolutionary movement such a purpose has proved possible of achievement even in respect of papers published abroad? If social-democrats working in various localities come to regard the party newspaper *as their own* and consider the maintenance of regular contact with it, the discussion of their problems and the reflection of the whole movement in it to be their main task, it will be quite possible to ensure the supply to the paper of full information about the movement, provided methods of

maintaining secrecy, not very complicated ones, are observed. The other aspect of the question, that of delivering the newspaper regularly to all parts of Russia, is much more difficult, more difficult than the similar task under previous forms of revolutionary movement in Russia when newspapers were not, to such an extent, intended for the masses of the people. The purpose of social-democratic newspapers, however, facilitates their distribution. The chief places to which the newspaper must be delivered regularly and in large numbers are the industrial centres, factory villages and towns, the factory districts of big cities, etc. In such centres the population is almost entirely working class; in actual fact the worker in such places is master of the situation and has hundreds of ways of outwitting the police; relations with neighbouring factory centres are distinguished by their extraordinary activity. At the time of the Exceptional Law Against the Socialists (1878-90)<sup>12</sup> the German political police did not function worse, but probably better, than the Russian police; nevertheless, the German workers, thanks to their organisation and discipline, were able to ensure the regular transport across the frontiers of a weekly illegal newspaper and to deliver it to the houses of all subscribers, so that even the ministers could not refrain from admiring the social-democratic post ("the red mail"). We do not, of course, dream of such successes, but we can, if we bend our efforts towards it, ensure that our party newspaper appears no less than 12 times a year and is regularly delivered in all the main centres of the movement to all groups of workers that can be reached by socialism.

To return to the question of specialisation, we must also point out that its insufficiency is due partially to the dominance of "amateur" work and partially to the fact that our social-democratic newspapers usually devote far too little attention to questions of organisation.

Only the establishment of a common party organ can give the "worker in a given field" of revolutionary activity the consciousness that he is marching with the "rank and file", the consciousness that his work is directly essential to the party, that he is one of the links in the chain that will form a noose to strangle the most evil enemy of the Russian proletariat and of the whole Russian people — the Russian autocratic government. Only strict adherence to this type of specialisation can economise our forces; not only will every aspect of revolutionary work be carried out by a smaller number of people, but there will be an opportunity to make a number of aspects of present-day activities *legal* affairs. This *legalisation* of activity, its conduct within the framework of the law, has long been advised for Russian socialists by *Vorwärts* (Forward),<sup>13</sup> the chief organ of the German social-democrats. At first sight one is astonished at such advice, but in actual fact it merits careful attention. Almost everyone who has worked in a local study circle in some city will easily remember that among

the numerous and diverse affairs in which the circle engaged some were, in themselves, legal (e.g. the gathering of information on the workers' conditions; the study of legal literature on many questions; consultation and reviewing of certain types of foreign literature; maintenance of certain kinds of relations; aid to workers in obtaining a general education, in studying factory laws, etc.). Making affairs of this sort the specific function of a special contingent of people would reduce the strength of the revolutionary army "in the firing line" (without any reduction of its "fighting potential") and increase the strength of the reserve, those who replace the "killed and wounded". This will be possible only when both the active members and the reserve see their activities reflected in the common organ of the party and sense their connection with it. Local meetings of workers and local groups will, of course, always be necessary, no matter to what extent we carry out our specialisation; but, on the one hand, the number of mass revolutionary meetings (particularly dangerous from the standpoint of police action and often having results far from commensurate with the danger involved) will become considerably less and, on the other hand, the selection of various aspects of revolutionary work as special functions will provide greater opportunities to screen such meetings behind legal forms of assembly: entertainments, meetings of societies sanctioned by law, etc. Were not the French workers under Napoleon III and the German workers at the time of the Exceptional Law Against the Socialists able to devise all possible ways to cover up their political and socialist meetings? Russian workers will be able to do likewise.

Further: only by better organisation and the establishment of a common party organ will it be possible to extend *and* deepen the very content of social-democratic propaganda and agitation. We stand in great need of this. Local work must almost inevitably lead to the exaggeration of local particularities, to ...\* this is impossible without a central organ which will, at the same time, be an advanced democratic organ. Only then will our *urge* to convert social-democracy into a leading fighter for democracy become *reality*. Only then, too, shall we be able to work out definite political tactics. social-democracy has renounced the fallacious theory of the "one reactionary mass". It regards utilisation of the support of the progressive classes against the reactionary classes to be one of the most important political tasks. As long as the organisations and publications are local in character, this task can hardly be carried out at all: matters do not go farther than relations with individual "liberals" and the extraction of various "services" from them. Only a common party organ, consistently implementing the principles of political struggle and holding high the banner of

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\* Part of the manuscript is not extant. — *Ed.*

democracy will be able to win over to its side all militant democratic elements and use all Russia's progressive forces in the struggle for political freedom. Only then shall we be able to convert the workers' smouldering hatred of the police and the authorities into conscious hatred of the autocratic government and into determination to conduct a desperate struggle for the rights of the working class and of the entire Russian people! In modern Russia, a strictly organised revolutionary party built up on this foundation will prove the greatest political force!

In subsequent issues we shall publish the draft program of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party and begin a more detailed discussion of the various organisational questions. ■

# A Retrograde Trend in Russian Social-Democracy

The editorial board of *Rabochaya Mysl* has published a *Separate Supplement to Rabochaya Mysl* (September 7, 1899), for the purpose of “dispelling the mass of misunderstanding and indefiniteness that exists with regard to the trend of *Rabochaya Mysl* (such as our ‘renunciation of politics’). (From the editorial board.) We are very glad that *Rabochaya Mysl* is at last raising programmatic questions which, until now, it sought to ignore, but we emphatically protest against the statement that the “trend of *Rabochaya Mysl* is that of progressive Russian workers” (as the editorial board declares in the cited text). In fact, if the editorial board of *Rabochaya Mysl* wants to follow the path indicated (so far only *indicated*) in that publication, this means that it has falsely understood the program elaborated by the founders of Russian social-democracy, a program that has to date had the adherence of all Russian social-democrats working in Russia; it means that it is taking a *step backwards* with respect to the level of theoretical and practical development already attained by Russian social-democracy.

The *Rabochaya Mysl* trend is expounded in the leading article of the *Separate Supplement* entitled “Our Reality” (signed: R.M.), which article we must now analyse in the greatest detail.

From the very beginning of the article we see that R.M. gives a *false* description of “our reality” in general, and of our working-class movement in particular, that he reveals an extremely narrow conception of the working-class movement and a desire to close his eyes to the higher forms of that movement which have evolved under the leadership of the Russian social-democrats. “Our working-class movement”, says R.M., indeed, at the outset of the article, “contains the germs of the most diverse forms of organisation” ranging from strike associations to legal societies (permitted by law).

“And is that all?” asks the reader, in perplexity. Surely R.M. must have noticed some *higher*, more advanced forms of organisation in the working-class movement in Russia! Apparently he is unwilling to notice them because, on the next page, he repeats his assertion in a still more emphatic manner: “The tasks of the movement at the present moment, the real working-class cause of the Russian workers”, he says, “reduce themselves to the workers’ amelioration of their condition *by all possible means*”, and yet the *only* means enumerated are strike organisations and legal societies! Thus, the Russian working-class movement *reduces itself*, it would seem, to strikes and legal societies! But this is an absolute *untruth!* As far back as 20 years ago, the Russian working-class movement founded a much broader organisation, put forward much more extensive aims (of which in detail below). The Russian working-class movement founded such organisations as the St. Petersburg<sup>1</sup> and Kiev<sup>2</sup> Leagues of Struggle, the Jewish Workers’ League,<sup>3</sup> and others. R.M. does indeed say that the Jewish working-class movement has a “specific political character” and is an exception. But this, again, is an untruth; for if the Jewish Workers’ League were something “specific”, it *would not have amalgamated* with a number of Russian organisations to form the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party. The foundation of this party is the biggest step taken by the Russian working-class movement *in its fusion* with the Russian revolutionary movement. This step shows clearly that the Russian working-class movement *does not reduce itself* to strikes and legal societies. How could it have happened that the Russian socialists writing in *Rabochaya Mysl* are unwilling to recognise this step and to grasp its significance?

It happened because R.M. does not understand the relation of the Russian working-class movement to socialism and to the revolutionary movement in Russia, because he does not understand the political aims of the Russian working class. “The most characteristic index of the trend of our movement”, writes R.M., “is, of course, the demands put forward by the workers”. We ask: why are the demands of the *social-democrats* and social-democratic organisations not included among the indices of *our movement*? On what grounds does R.M. separate the demands of the workers from the demands of the Russian social-democrats? R.M. makes this division throughout his article in the same way as the editors of *Rabochaya Mysl* make it, in general, in every issue of their paper. In order to explain this error of *Rabochaya Mysl* we must clarify the general question of the relation of *socialism* to the *working-class movement*. At first socialism and the working-class movement existed separately in all the European countries. The workers struggled against the capitalists, they organised strikes and unions, while the socialists stood aside from the working-class movement, formulated doctrines criticising the contemporary capitalist, bourgeois system of society and

demanding its replacement by another system, the higher, socialist system. The separation of the working-class movement and socialism gave rise to weakness and underdevelopment in each: the theories of the socialists, unfused with the workers' struggle, remained nothing more than utopias, good wishes that had no effect on real life; the working-class movement remained petty, fragmented, and did not acquire political significance, was not enlightened by the advanced science of its time. For this reason we see in all European countries a constantly growing urge to *fuse* socialism with the working-class movement in a single *social-democratic* movement. When this fusion takes place the class struggle of the workers becomes *the conscious struggle of the proletariat* to emancipate itself from exploitation by the propertied classes, it is evolved into a higher form of the socialist workers' movement — *the independent working-class social-democratic party*. By directing socialism towards a fusion with the working-class movement, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels did their greatest service: they created a revolutionary theory that explained the necessity for this fusion and gave socialists the task of organising the class struggle of the proletariat.

Precisely this is what happened in Russia. In Russia, too, socialism has been in existence for a long time, for many decades, *standing aside* from the struggle of the workers against the capitalists, aside from the workers' strikes, etc. On the one hand, the socialists did not understand Marx's theory, they thought it inapplicable to Russia; on the other, the Russian working-class movement remained in a purely embryonic form. When the South-Russian Workers' Union was founded in 1875 and the North-Russian Workers' Union in 1878, those workers' organisations did not take the road chosen by the Russian socialists; they demanded political rights for the people, they wanted to wage a struggle for those rights, but at that time the Russian socialists mistakenly considered the political struggle a deviation from socialism. However, the Russian socialists did not hold to their undeveloped, fallacious theory. They went forward, accepted Marx's teaching, and evolved a theory of workers' socialism applicable to Russia — the theory of the Russian social-democrats. The foundation of Russian social-democracy was the great service rendered by the Emancipation of Labour group, Plekhanov, Axelrod, and their friends.\* Since the foundation of Russian social-democracy (1883) the Russian working-class movement — in each of its broader manifestations—has been drawing closer to the Russian social-democrats in an effort to merge with them. The founding of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (in

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\* The fusion of Russian socialism with the Russian working-class movement has been analysed historically in a pamphlet by one of our comrades, *The Red Flag in Russia. A Brief History of the Russian Working-Class Movement*. The pamphlet will shortly be off the press.<sup>4</sup>

the spring of 1898) marked the biggest step forward towards this fusion. At the present time the *principal* task for all Russian socialists and all class-conscious Russian workers is to strengthen this fusion, consolidate and organise the Social-Democratic Labour Party. He who does not wish to recognise this fusion, he who tries to draw some sort of artificial line of demarcation between the working-class movement and social-democracy in Russia renders no service but does *harm* to workers' socialism and the working-class movement in Russia.

To continue. "As far as extensive demands, political demands, are concerned", writes R.M., "it is only in those of the St. Petersburg weavers ... in 1897 that we see the first and still weakly conscious case of our workers putting forward such broad political demands." We must again say that this is *beyond all doubt untrue*. In publishing such utterances, [the] editorial board of *Rabochaya Mysl* displays, first, a forgetfulness of the history of the Russian revolutionary and working-class movement that is unpardonable in a social-democrat, and, secondly, an unpardonably narrow conception of the workers' cause. The Russian workers put forward extensive political demands in the May, 1898, leaflet of the St. Petersburg League of Struggle and in the newspapers *S. Peterburgsky Rabochy Listok* and *Rabochaya Gazeta*, the latter having been recognised, in 1898, by leading Russian social-democratic organisations as the official organ of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party. *Rabochaya Mysl*, by ignoring these facts, is moving backwards and fully justifies the opinion that it is not representative of advanced workers, but of the lower, undeveloped strata of the proletariat (R.M. himself says in his article that this has already been pointed out to *Rabochaya Mysl*). The lower strata of the proletariat do not know the history of the Russian revolutionary movement, nor does R.M. know it. The lower strata of the proletariat do not understand the relationship between the working-class movement and social-democracy, nor does R.M. understand that relationship. Why was it that in the '90s the Russian workers did not form their special organisations separate and apart from the socialists as they had done in the '70s? Why did they not put forward their own political demands separate and apart from the socialists? R.M. apparently understands this to mean that "the Russian workers are still little prepared for this" (p. 5 of his article), but this explanation is only further proof that he has the right to speak only on behalf of the lower strata of the proletariat. The lower strata of the workers, during the movement of the '90s, were not conscious of its political character. Nevertheless, everyone knows (and R.M. himself speaks of it) that the working-class movement of the '90s acquired an extensive political significance. This was due to the fact that the advanced workers, as always and everywhere, determined the character of the movement, and they were followed by the working masses because they showed their readiness and their ability to serve the

cause of the working class, because they proved able to win the full confidence of the masses. Those advanced workers were social-democrats; many of them even took a personal part in the disputes between the Narodnaya Volya adherents and the social-democrats that typified the transition of the Russian revolutionary movement from peasant and conspiratorial socialism to working-class socialism. It can, therefore, be understood why these advanced workers have not alienated themselves from the socialists and revolutionaries in a separate organisation. Such an alienation had a meaning and was necessary at the time when socialism alienated itself from the working-class movement. Such alienation would have been impossible and meaningless once the advanced workers had seen before them working-class socialism and the *social-democratic* organisations. The *fusion* of the advanced workers and the social-democratic organisations was altogether natural and inevitable. It was the result of the great historical fact that in the '90s two profound social movements converged in Russia: one, a spontaneous movement, a popular movement within the working class, the other, the movement of social thought in the direction of the theory of Marx and Engels, towards the theory of social-democracy.

From the following it can be seen how extremely narrow is *Rabochaya Mysl's* conception of the political struggle. Speaking of the breadth of political demands, R.M. states: "For the workers to conduct such a political struggle consciously and independently, it is essential that it be waged by the working-class organisations themselves, that the workers' political demands should find support in the workers' consciousness of their common political requirements and the interests of the moment [note well!], that they should be the demands of the workers' [craft] organisations themselves, that they should really be drawn up by them jointly and also put forward jointly by those working-class organisations on their own initiative ..." It is further explained that the immediate common political demands of the workers are, for the time being (!), still the 10-hour working day and the restoration of holidays abolished by the law of June 2, 1897.

And after this the editors of *Rabochaya Mysl* are still surprised that they are accused of renouncing politics! Indeed, is not this reduction of politics to the struggle of craft unions for individual reforms the renunciation of politics? Is this not the rejection of the basic tenet of world social-democracy that the social-democrats must strive to organise the class struggle of the proletariat into independent political working-class parties that fight for democracy *as a means* for the proletariat to win political power and organise a socialist society? With a strangely unbounded thoughtlessness our latest distorters of social-democracy cast overboard everything dear to the social-democrats, everything that gives us the right to regard the working-class movement as

a world-historical movement. It matters little to them that the long experience of European socialism and European democracy teaches the lesson that it is essential to strive for the formation of independent working-class political parties. It matters little to them that in the course of a long and arduous historical path the Russian revolutionary movement has evolved the union of socialism and the working-class movement, the union of the great social and political ideals and the class struggle of the proletariat. It matters little to them that the advanced Russian workers have laid the foundation of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party. Down with all that! Let us liberate ourselves from a too extensive ideological equipment and from a too difficult and exacting historical experience — and let “there remain for the time being” only craft unions (the possibility of organising which in Russia has not yet been proved at all, if we leave legal societies out of the reckoning), let these craft unions, “on their own initiative”, elaborate demands, the demands of the “moment”, demands for tiny, petty reforms!! What is this, it not the preachment of a retrograde trend? What, indeed, if not propaganda for the destruction of socialism!

And please note that *Rabochaya Mysl* does not merely outline the idea that local organisations should elaborate their own local forms of struggle and specific motives for agitation, methods of agitation, etc. — nobody would object to this idea. Russian social-democrats have never laid claim to anything hampering the independence of the workers in this respect. But *Rabochaya Mysl* wants to *push aside* the great political aims of the Russian proletariat altogether and “for the time being” confine itself “exclusively” to “the interests of the moment”. Until now the Russian social-democrats have always wanted to make use of every demand of the moment and, by agitating for that demand, to organise the proletariat for the struggle against the autocracy as the immediate objective. Now *Rabochaya Mysl* wants to *limit* the struggle of the proletariat to a petty struggle for petty demands. R.M., knowing very well that he is retreating from the views of the entire Russian social-democracy, makes the following reply to those who accuse *Rabochaya Mysl*: It is said that the overthrow of tsarism is the immediate objective of the Russian working-class movement. But of which working-class movement, asks R.M., “*the strike movement? the mutual benefit societies? the workers' circles?*” (page 5 of the article). To this we reply: Speak for yourself alone, for your group, for the lower strata of the proletariat of a given locality which it represents, but do not presume to speak on behalf of the advanced Russian workers! The representatives of the lower strata of the proletariat often do not realise that the struggle for the overthrow of the autocracy can only be conducted by a revolutionary party. Nor does R.M. know this. The advanced workers, however, do. The less advanced representatives of the proletariat often do not know that the Russian working-class

movement is not limited to the strike struggle, to mutual benefit societies and workers' circles; that the Russian working-class movement has long been striving to organise itself into a revolutionary party and has demonstrated this striving by action. R.M. does not know this, either. But the advanced Russian workers know it.

R.M. tries to represent his complete misunderstanding of social-democracy as a sort of specific understanding of "our reality". Let us look more closely at his ideas on this subject.

"As far as the concept of the autocracy itself is concerned", writes R.M., "... we shall not deal with that at length, assuming that all to whom we speak have the most precise and clear conception of such things." We shall soon see that R.M. himself has an extremely imprecise and unclear conception of such things; but first let us mention one other circumstance. Are there workers among those to whom R.M. is speaking? Of course, there are. And if so, where are they to get a precise and clear conception of the autocracy? Obviously this requires the broadest and most systematic propaganda of the ideas of political liberty in general; agitation is required to connect every individual manifestation of police violence and of oppression by officialdom with a "precise conception" (in the minds of the workers) of the autocracy. This, it would seem, is elementary. But if it is, then can purely local propaganda and agitation against the autocracy be successful? Is it not absolutely essential to *organise* such propaganda and agitation throughout Russia into a single planned activity, i.e., into the activity of a single party? Why then does R.M. not indicate that the task of organising systematic propaganda and agitation against the autocracy is one of the immediate objectives of the Russian working-class movement? Only because he has the most *imprecise* and *unclear* conception of the tasks of the Russian working-class movement and of Russian social-democracy.

R.M. proceeds to explain that the autocracy is a tremendous "personal power" (a bureaucracy drilled like soldiers) and a tremendous "economic power" (financial resources). We shall not dwell on the "*imprecise*" aspects of his explanation (and there is much that is "*imprecise*" here), but shall pass over directly to the main point:

"And so", R.M. asks of Russian social-democracy, "is it not the overthrow of this personal power and the seizure of this economic power that the Russian workers are at this very moment advised to project as the first and immediate task of their present (embryonic) organisations? (we shall not even mention the revolutionaries, who say that this task must be undertaken by the circles of advanced workers)."

In amazement we rub our eyes and read this monstrous passage over two or three times. Surely we must be mistaken! But no, we are not. *R.M. actually does not know what is meant by the overthrow of the autocracy.* Hard to believe as this is, it is a fact. But

after the confusion of ideas that R.M. has displayed, is it hard to believe after all?

R.M. confuses the seizure of power by revolutionaries with the overthrow of the autocracy by revolutionaries.

Old Russian revolutionaries (of the Narodnaya Volya) strove for the seizure of power by a revolutionary party. They thought that by the seizure of power the “party would overthrow the personal power” of the autocracy, i.e., appoint its agents in place of the government officials, “seize economic power”, i.e., all the financial means of the state and carry out the social revolution. The Narodnaya Volya members (the old ones) actually did strive to “overthrow the personal power and seize the economic power” of the autocracy, to employ R.M.’s clumsy expression. The Russian social-democrats have decidedly set themselves against this revolutionary theory. Plekhanov subjected it to trenchant criticism in his essays, *Socialism and the Political Struggle* (1883) and *Our Differences* (1885), pointing out the task of the Russian revolutionaries — the foundation of a revolutionary working-class party whose immediate aim should be the overthrow of the autocracy. What is meant by the overthrow of the autocracy? To explain this to R.M. we must answer the question: what is the autocracy? The autocracy (absolutism, unlimited monarchy) is a form of rule under which all supreme power is wielded wholly and indivisibly by an absolute monarch, the tsar. The tsar issues laws, appoints officials, collects and disburses the national revenues *without any participation by the people in legislation or in control over the administration*. The autocracy, therefore, means the absolute power of government officials and the police and the absence of rights for the people. The entire people suffers from this absence of rights, but the propertied classes (especially the rich landed proprietors and capitalists) exercise a powerful influence over the bureaucracy. The working class suffers doubly: both from the lack of rights to which the entire Russian people is subjected and from the oppression of the workers by the capitalists, who compel the government to serve their interests.

What is meant by the overthrow of the autocracy? It implies the tsar’s renunciation of absolute power; the granting to the people of the right to elect their own representatives for legislation, for supervision over the actions of the government officials, for supervision over the collection and disbursement of state revenues. This type of government in which the people participate in legislation and administration is called the *constitutional* form of government (constitution = law on the participation of people’s representatives in legislation and the administration of the state). Thus, the overthrow of the autocracy means the replacement of the autocratic form of government by the constitutional form of government. For the overthrow of the autocracy, therefore, no “overthrow of personal power or seizure of economic power”

is necessary, but it is necessary to compel the tsarist government to renounce its unlimited power and convene a Zemsky Sobor\* of representatives of the people for the elaboration of a constitution (“to win a democratic constitution” [people’s constitution, drawn up in the interests of the people], as it is put in the draft program of the Russian social-democrats published in 1885 by the Emancipation of Labour group).

Why must the overthrow of the autocracy be the first task of the Russian working class? Because under the autocracy the working class is not able to develop its struggle extensively, to gain for itself any stable positions in either the economic or political fields, to establish sound mass organisations and unfurl the banner of the social revolution before the masses of the working people and teach them to struggle for it. The decisive struggle of the entire working class against the bourgeois class is possible only under conditions of political liberty, and the final aim of that struggle is for the proletariat to win political power and organise a socialist society. The conquest of political power by an organised proletariat, that has gone through a lengthy schooling in struggle will really be “the overthrow of the personal power and the seizure of the economic power” of the bourgeois government; but the Russian social-democrats have never put forward *this* seizure of power as the immediate task of the Russian workers. Russian social-democrats have always maintained that only under conditions of political liberty, when there is an extensive mass struggle, can the Russian working class develop organisations for the final victory of socialism.

But how can the Russian working class overthrow the autocracy? The editors of *Rabochaya Mysl* make mock even of the Emancipation of Labour group which founded Russian social-democracy and stated in its program that “the struggle against the autocracy is obligatory even for those workers’ circles that now constitute the germs of the future Russian working-class party”. It seems ridiculous to *Rabochaya Mysl* (see No. 7 and the article under review): the overthrow of the autocracy — by workers’ circles! In reply, we say to the editors of *Rabochaya Mysl*: Whom are you mocking? It is yourselves you are mocking! The editors of *Rabochaya Mysl* complain that the Russian social-democrats *are not comradely* in their polemic with them. Let the readers judge on whose side the polemic is uncomradely: on the side of the old Russian social-democrats who have set forth their views clearly and who say outright which views of the “young” they consider mistaken and why; or on the side of the “young” *who do not name* their opponents but jab from behind cover, first at “the author of a German book on Chernyshevsky” (Plekhanov, whom, moreover, they groundlessly confuse

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\* A central representative assembly. — *Ed.*

with certain legal writers), then at the Emancipation of Labour group, citing *with distortions* passages from its program without putting forward anything like a definite program of their own. Yes, we recognise the duty of comradeship, the duty to support all comrades, the duty to tolerate the opinions of comrades *but as far as we are concerned, the duty of comradeship derives from our duty to Russian and international social-democracy, and not vice versa*. We recognise our comradely obligations to *Rabochaya Mysl*, not because its editors are our comrades; we consider the editors of *Rabochaya Mysl* our comrades only because and to the extent that they work in the ranks of Russian (and, consequently, of international) social-democracy. Therefore, if we are certain that the “comrades” are moving backwards, away from the social-democratic program, that the “comrades” are hemming in and distorting the aims of the working-class movement, we consider it our *duty* to give expression to our convictions with a complete certainty that leaves nothing unsaid!

We have just stated that the editors of *Rabochaya Mysl* distort the views of the Emancipation of Labour group. Let the reader judge for himself. “We are prepared not to understand those of our comrades”, writes R.M., “who consider their program for ‘the emancipation of labour’ a simple answer to the question: ‘Where are we to get the forces for the struggle against the autocracy?’” (elsewhere: “Our revolutionaries regard the workers’ movement as the best means of overthrowing the autocracy”). Open the draft program of the Russian social-democrats published by the Emancipation of Labour group in 1885 and reprinted by P.B. Axelrod in his booklet, *Present Tasks and Tactics of Russian Social-Democracy* (Geneva, 1898), and you will see that the program *is based* on the emancipation of labour from the oppression of capital, the transfer of all means of production to social ownership, the seizure of political power by the working class, and the founding of a revolutionary *working-class* party. It is clear that R.M. distorts that program and is *unwilling* to understand it. He has seized upon P.B. Axelrod’s words at the beginning of his booklet wherein it is stated that the program of the Emancipation of Labour group “was an answer” to the question: Where are we to get the forces for the struggle against absolutism? It is, however, *an historical fact* that the program of the Emancipation of Labour group was the answer to the question posed by the Russian revolutionaries and by the Russian revolutionary movement as a whole. However, because the program answered that question, does it mean that the working-class movement was only the means to an end for the Emancipation of Labour group? Such a “*misunderstanding*” on the part of R.M. merely shows that he is unacquainted with the generally-known facts of the activities of the Emancipation of Labour group.

To continue. How can the “overthrow of the autocracy” be a task for workers’

circles? R.M. does not understand. Open the program of the Emancipation of Labour group: “Russian social-democrats consider that for the workers’ circles the chief means of political struggle against the autocracy”, we read, “is agitation amongst the working class and the further spreading of socialist ideas and revolutionary organisations amongst the workers. These organisations, closely bound together in an integral whole and not content with individual clashes with the government, will lose no time in going over, at a suitable moment, to a general, decisive offensive against the government.” These were precisely the tactics followed by the Russian organisations that established the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party in the spring of 1898. And they proved that such organisations are a powerful political force in Russia. If these organisations form one single party and carry on widespread agitation against the autocratic government, using for this purpose all elements of the liberal opposition, the objective of winning political liberty will undoubtedly be one that can be attained by such a party. If the editors of *Rabochaya Mysl* are “prepared not to understand” this, we are “prepared” to advise them: learn, gentlemen, for these things are not in themselves very difficult to understand.

Let us, however, get back to R.M., whom we left arguing about the struggle against the autocracy. R.M.’s own views on this subject illustrate still more clearly the new, retrograde, trend of *Rabochaya Mysl*.

“The end of the autocracy is clear”, writes R.M. “... The struggle against the autocracy is one of the conditions for the sound development of all vital social elements.” From this the reader will probably think that the struggle against the autocracy is essential to the working class. But wait. R.M. has his own logic and his own terminology. By the word “struggle”, through the addition of the word “social” (struggle), he understands something very specific. R.M. describes the *legal opposition* of many sections of the Russian population to the government, and he draws the conclusion: “Indeed, the struggles for Zemstvo and urban public self-government, for public schools, and for public aid to the starving population, etc., constitute a struggle against the autocracy.” “The necessity to wage a social struggle against the bureaucratic autocracy is obvious to all class-conscious, progressive sections and groups of the population. More than this. This social struggle, which through some strange misunderstanding has not attracted the favourable attention of many Russian revolutionary writers, is, as we have seen, being conducted by Russian society; nor did it begin yesterday.” “The real question is how these separate social strata ... are to conduct this [note this!] struggle against the autocracy with the maximum success ... The main question for us is to know how our workers should conduct this social [!] struggle against the autocracy.” ...

These arguments of R.M. are again cluttered with an unbelievable amount of confusion and errors.

First, R.M. confuses *legal opposition* with the struggle against the autocracy, with the struggle to overthrow the autocracy. This confusion, unpardonable in a socialist, results from his employing the expression “struggle against the autocracy” without an explanation: this expression may mean (with a reservation) struggle *against* the autocracy, but also struggle against individual measures of the autocracy within the framework of that same autocratic system.

Secondly, by regarding legal opposition as the social struggle against the autocracy and affirming that our workers should wage “this social struggle”, R.M. virtually says that our workers should carry on legal opposition, not a revolutionary struggle, against the autocracy; in other words, he sinks into a hideous debasement of social-democracy, which he confuses with the most commonplace and beggarly Russian liberalism.

Thirdly, R.M. declares a *flagrant untruth* regarding Russian social-democratic writers (true, he prefers making his reproaches in “all comradeship”, without naming names; but if it is not social-democrats whom he has in mind, his words have no sense), when he states that they do not pay attention to legal opposition. On the contrary, the Emancipation of Labour group, and P.B. Axelrod in particular, as well as the *Manifesto of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party* and the pamphlet, *The Tasks of the Russian Social-Democrats* (published by the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party and designated by Axelrod as a *commentary* to the *Manifesto*) — all, not only paid attention to legal opposition, but even elucidated with precision its relation to social-democracy.

Let us clarify the issue. What sort of “struggle against the autocracy” is being conducted by our Zemstvos, by our liberal societies in general, and by the liberal press? Are they carrying on a struggle against the autocracy, for the overthrow of the autocracy? *No, they never have engaged and still do not engage in such a struggle.* This is a struggle that is waged only by the revolutionaries, who frequently come from the liberal society and rely on its sympathy. But waging a revolutionary struggle is in no sense the same thing as sympathising with the revolutionaries and supporting them; the struggle against the autocracy is in no sense the same thing as legal opposition to the autocracy. The Russian liberals express their dissatisfaction with the autocracy only in the form *sanctioned* by the autocracy itself, i.e., the form that the autocracy does not consider dangerous to the autocracy. The grandest showing of liberal opposition has been nothing more than the *petitions* of the liberals to the tsarist government to draw the people into the administration. And each time the liberals patiently accepted the brutal police rejections of their petitions; they put up with the

lawless and savage repressions with which the government of gendarmes repaid even legal attempts to make known their opinion. Simply to present the liberal opposition as a social struggle against the autocracy is a pure *distortion* of the issue, because the Russian liberals have *never* organised a revolutionary party to struggle for the overthrow of the autocracy, although they could have found and can still find for this purpose both the material means and representatives of Russian liberalism abroad. R.M. not only distorts the issue, but he drags in the name of the great Russian socialist N.G. Chernyshevsky. “The workers’ allies in this struggle”, says R.M., “are all the advanced strata of Russian society, who are defending their social interests and institutions, who have a clear conception of the common good, who ‘never forget’ [R.M. quotes Chernyshevsky] that there is ‘a great difference as to whether changes are brought about by an independent decision of the government or *by the formal demand of society.*” If this comment is applied to all representatives of the “social struggle” in the way R.M. understands it, i.e., to all Russian liberals, then it is a *falsification pure and simple*. The Russian liberals have never presented any formal demands to the government, and precisely for this reason the Russian liberals have never played and now certainly cannot play an *independent* revolutionary role. Not “all the advanced strata of society” can be allies of the working class and social-democracy, but only revolutionary parties founded by members of that society. In general, the liberals can and should serve merely *as one of the sources* of additional forces and means for the revolutionary working-class party (as P.B. Axelrod so clearly stated in the above-mentioned pamphlet). N.G. Chernyshevsky ridiculed “the progressive strata of Russian society” for the very fact that they did not understand the necessity for formal demands to the government and indifferently watched revolutionaries from their own midst perish under the blows of the autocratic government. In this case R.M.’s quotations from Chernyshevsky are as senseless as his quotations from the same author, torn piecemeal out of context, in the second article of the *Separate Supplement*, which are meant to show that Chernyshevsky was not a utopian and that Russian social-democrats do not appreciate the full significance of the “great Russian socialist”. In his book on Chernyshevsky (articles in the collection *Sotsial-Demokrat*,<sup>5</sup> issued as a separate volume in German) Plekhanov fully appreciated the significance of Chernyshevsky and explained his attitude to the theory of Marx and Engels. The editors of *Rabochaya Mysl* have merely revealed their own inability to give anything like a connected and comprehensive assessment of Chernyshevsky, of his strong and weak sides.

“The real question” for Russian social-democracy is by no means that of determining how the liberals are to conduct the “social struggle” (by “social struggle” R.M., as we have seen, means legal opposition), but how to organise a revolutionary

working-class party devoted to the struggle for the overthrow of the autocracy, a party that could gain the backing of *all* opposition elements in Russia, a party that could *utilise* all manifestations of opposition in its revolutionary struggle. It is precisely a revolutionary working-class party that is needed for this purpose, because in Russia only the working class can be a determined and consistent fighter for democracy, because without the vigorous influence of such a party the liberal elements “could remain a sluggish, inactive, dormant force” (P.B. Axelrod, *op. cit.*, p. 23). In saying that our “more advanced strata” are conducting “a real [!!!] social struggle against the autocracy” (p. 12 of R.M.’s article), that “the main question for us is how our workers should conduct *this social struggle* against the autocracy” — in saying such things, R.M. is, in fact, retreating completely from social-democracy. We can only offer serious advice to the editors of *Rabochaya Mysl* to ponder well the question of where they want to go and where their real place is: among the revolutionaries, who carry the banner of the social revolution to the working classes and want to organise them into a political revolutionary party, or among the liberals, who are conducting their own “social struggle” (i.e., the legal opposition)? There is nothing at all socialist in the theory of the “independent social activity” of the workers; in the theory of “social mutual aid” and of the craft unions that “so far” confine themselves to the 10-hour working day; in the theory of the “social struggle” of the Zemstvos, liberal societies, and others against the autocracy — there is nothing in this theory that the liberals would not accept! Indeed, the entire program of *Rabochaya Mysl* (to the extent that one can call it a program) tends, in essence, to leave the Russian workers undeveloped and split, and to make them the *tail-end of the liberals!*

Some of R.M.’s phrases are particularly strange. “The whole trouble is merely that our revolutionary intelligentsia”, he proclaims, “mercilessly persecuted by the political police, mistake the struggle against the political police for the political struggle against the autocracy.” What sense can there be in such a statement? The political police are called political because they persecute enemies of the autocracy and those who struggle against the autocracy. For this reason, *Rabochaya Mysl*, so long as its metamorphosis into a liberal is not completed, fights against the political police as do all Russian revolutionaries and socialists and all class-conscious workers. From the fact that the political police mercilessly persecute socialists and workers, that the autocracy maintains a “well-ordered organisation”, “competent and resourceful statesmen” (p. 7 of R.M.’s article), only two conclusions are to be drawn: the cowardly and wretched liberal will pass judgement that our people in general and our workers in particular are still ill-prepared for the struggle and that all hopes must be placed in the “struggle” of the Zemstvos, the liberal press, etc., since this is the “real struggle against the autocracy”

and not only a struggle against the political police. The socialist and every class-conscious worker will conclude that the working-class party must bend all its efforts to the formation of a “well-ordered organisation”, to the training of “competent and resourceful revolutionaries” from among the advanced workers and socialists, people who will raise the working-class party to the high level of the leading fighter for democracy and who will be able to win over to its side all opposition elements.

The editors of *Rabochaya Mysl* do not realise that they are standing on an inclined plane down which they will roll to the first of these two conclusions!

Or, again: “What amazes us further in these programs [i.e., in the programs of the social-democrats]”, writes R.M., “is that they incessantly give first place to the advantages of workers’ activities in a parliament [nonexistent in Russia], while completely ignoring ... the importance of workers’ participation” in the employers’ legislative assemblies, on factory boards, and in municipal self-government (p. 15). If the advantages of parliament are not brought into the forefront, how will the workers learn about political rights and political liberty? If we keep silent on these questions — as does *Rabochaya Mysl* — does this not mean perpetuating the political ignorance of the lower strata of the workers? As to workers’ participation in municipal self-government, no social-democrat has ever denied anywhere the advantages and the importance of the activities of *socialist* workers in municipal self-government; but it is ridiculous to speak of this in Russia, where no open manifestation of socialism is possible and where firing the workers with enthusiasm for municipal self-government (even were this possible) would actually mean distracting advanced workers from the socialist working-class cause towards liberalism.

“The attitude of the advanced strata of the workers towards this [autocratic] government”, says R.M., “is as understandable as their attitude towards the factory owners.” The common-sense view of this, therefore, is that the advanced strata of the workers are no less class-conscious social-democrats than the socialists from among the intelligentsia, so that *Rabochaya Mysl*’s attempt to separate the one from the other is absurd and harmful. The Russian working class, accordingly, has produced the elements necessary for the formation of an independent working-class political party. But the editors of *Rabochaya Mysl* draw from the fact of the political consciousness of the advanced strata of the workers the conclusion ... that it is necessary to hold these advanced elements back, so as to keep them marking time! “Which struggle is it most desirable for the workers to wage?” asks R.M., and he answers: Desirable is the struggle that is possible, and possible is the struggle which the workers are “waging at the given moment”!!! It would be difficult to express more glaringly the senseless and unprincipled opportunism with which the editors of *Rabochaya Mysl*, allured by

fashionable “Bernsteinism”, have become infected! What is possible is desirable, and what we have at the given moment is possible! It is as though a man setting out on a long and difficult road on which numerous obstacles and numerous enemies await him were told in answer to his question “Where shall I go?”: “It is desirable to go where it is possible to go, and it is possible to go where you are going at the given moment”! This is the sheerest nihilism, not revolutionary, however, but opportunist nihilism, manifested either by anarchists or bourgeois liberals! By “calling upon” the Russian workers to engage in a “partial” and “political” struggle (with political struggle understood, not as the struggle against the autocracy, but only as “the struggle to improve the condition of all workers”), R.M. is actually calling upon the Russian working-class movement and Russian social-democracy to take *a step backward*, he is actually calling upon the workers to separate from the social-democrats and thus throw overboard everything that has been acquired by European and Russian experience! The workers have no need for socialists in their struggle to improve their condition, if that is their only struggle. In all countries there are workers who wage the struggle for the improvement of their condition, but know nothing of socialism or are even hostile to it.

“In conclusion”, writes R.M., “a few words on our conception of working-class socialism.” After what has been said above the reader will have no difficulty in imagining the sort of “conception” it is. It is simply a copy of Bernstein’s “fashionable” book. Our “young” social-democrats substitute the “independent social and political activity of the workers” for the class struggle of the proletariat. If we recall how R.M. understands *social* “struggle” and “politics”, it will be clear that this is a direct return to the “formula” of certain Russian legal writers. Instead of indicating precisely the aim (and essence) of socialism — the transfer of the land, factories, etc., in general, of all the means of production, to the ownership of the whole of society and the replacement of the capitalist mode of production by production according to a common plan in the interests of all members of society — instead of all this, R.M. indicates first of all the development of craft unions and consumers’ cooperatives, and says only in passing that socialism leads to the complete socialisation of all the means of production. On the other hand, he prints in the heaviest type: “Socialism is merely a further and higher development of the modern community” — a phrase borrowed from Bernstein, which not only does not explain but even obscures the significance and substance of socialism. All the liberals and the entire bourgeoisie undoubtedly favour the “development of the modern community”, so that they will all rejoice at R.M.’s declaration. Nevertheless, the bourgeois are the *enemies* of socialism. The point is that “the modern community” has many varied aspects, and of those who employ this

general expression, some have one aspect in view, others another. And so, instead of explaining the concept of the class struggle and socialism to the workers, R.M. offers them only nebulous and misleading phrases. Lastly, instead of indicating the means modern socialism advances for the achievement of socialism — the winning of political power by the organised proletariat — instead of this, R.M. speaks only of placing production under their (the workers’) social management or under the management of democratised social power, democratised “by their [the workers’] active participation on boards examining all kinds of factory affairs, in courts of arbitration, in all possible assemblies, commissions, and conferences for the elaboration of labour laws; by the workers’ participation in public self-government, and, lastly, in the country’s general representative institution”. In this way the editors of *Rabochaya Mysl* include in working-class socialism only that which is to be obtained along the *peaceful* path and exclude the revolutionary path. This narrowing-down of socialism and its reduction to common bourgeois liberalism represents again a tremendous step backwards as compared with the views of all Russian social-democrats and of the overwhelming majority of European social-democrats. The working class would, of course, prefer to take power *peacefully* (we have already stated that this seizure of power can be carried out only by the organised working class which has passed through the school of the class struggle), but to *renounce* the revolutionary seizure of power would be *madness* on the part of the proletariat, both from the theoretical and the practical-political points of view; it would mean nothing but a disgraceful retreat in face of the bourgeoisie and all other propertied classes. It is very probable — even most probable — that the bourgeoisie will not make peaceful concessions to the proletariat and at the decisive moment will resort to violence for the defence of its privileges. In that case, no other way will be left to the proletariat for the achievement of its aim but that of revolution. This is the reason the program of “working-class socialism” speaks of the winning of political power in general *without defining* the method, for the choice of method depends on a future which we cannot precisely determine. But, we repeat, to limit the activities of the proletariat under any circumstances to peaceful “democratisation” alone is arbitrarily to narrow and vulgarise the concept of working-class socialism.

We shall not analyse the other articles in the *Separate Supplement* in such great detail. We have spoken of the article on the 10th anniversary of Chernyshevsky’s death. As to the pro-Bernsteinian propaganda of the *Rabochaya Mysl* editorial board, which the enemies of socialism throughout the world, especially the bourgeois liberals, have seized on, and against which the vast majority of the German social-democrats and class-conscious German workers spoke out so decisively (at their Hannover Congress) — as to Bernsteinism, this is not the place to speak of it in detail. We are

interested in our *Russian* Bernsteinism, and we have shown the limitless confusion of ideas, the absence of anything like independent views, the tremendous step backwards as compared with the views of Russian social-democracy which “our” Bernsteinism represents. As far as German Bernsteinism is concerned, we would rather leave it to the Germans themselves to handle. We would remark only that Russian Bernsteinism is infinitely lower than the German. Bernstein, despite his errors, despite his obvious striving to retrogress both theoretically and politically, still has sufficient intelligence and sufficient conscientiousness *not to propose changes* in the program of German social-democracy without himself having arrived at any new theory or program; in the final and decisive moment, he declared his acceptance of Bebel's resolution, a resolution that announced solemnly to the world that German social-democracy would stand by its old program and its old tactics. And our Russian Bernsteinians? Without having done a hundredth of what Bernstein has done, they even go so far as to refuse to recognise the fact that all Russian social-democratic organisations laid the foundations of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party in 1898, published its *Manifesto*, and announced *Rabochaya Gazeta* to be its official organ, and that these publications stand by the “old” program of the Russian social-democrats in its entirety. Our Bernsteinians do not seem to be aware of the fact that, if they have rejected the old views and adopted new ones, it is their moral duty — to Russian social-democracy and to the Russian socialists and workers who devoted all their efforts to the preparations for, and the founding of, the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party and who in their majority now fill Russian prisons — that it is the duty of those who profess the new views, not to confine themselves to jabbing from holes and corners at “our revolutionaries” in general, but to announce directly and publicly with whom and with what they are in disagreement, what new views and what new program they advance in place of the old.

There is still one other question left for us to examine, probably the most important one, namely, how such a retrograde trend in Russian social-democracy is *to be explained*. In our opinion it is not to be explained solely by the personal qualities of the *Rabochaya Mysl* editors or by the influence of the fashionable Bernsteinism alone. We hold that it is to be explained mainly by the peculiarities in the historical development of Russian social-democracy, which gave rise to — and *had temporarily* to give rise to — a narrow understanding of working-class socialism.

In the '80s and at the beginning of the '90s, when social-democrats initiated their practical work in Russia, they were confronted firstly with the Narodnaya Volya, which charged them with departing from the political struggle that had been inherited from the Russian revolutionary movement, and with which the social-democrats carried

on a persistent polemic. Secondly, they were confronted with the Russian liberal circles, which were also dissatisfied with the turn taken by the revolutionary movement — from the Narodnaya Volya trend to social-democracy. The twofold polemic centred round the question of politics. In their struggle against the narrow conceptions of the Narodnaya Volya adherents, who reduced politics to conspiracy-making, the social-democrats could be led to, and did at times, declare themselves against politics in general (in view of the then prevailing narrow conception of politics). On the other hand, the social-democrats often heard, in the liberal and radical *salons* of bourgeois “society”, regrets that the revolutionaries had abandoned terror; people who were mortally afraid for their own skins and at a decisive moment failed to give support to the heroes who struck blows at the autocracy, these people hypocritically accused the social-democrats of political indifferentism, and yearned for the rebirth of a party that would pull the chestnuts out of the fire for them. Naturally, the social-democrats conceived a hatred for such people and their phrases, and they turned to the more mundane but more serious work of propaganda among the factory proletariat. At first it was inevitable that this work should have a narrow character and should be embodied in the narrow declarations of some social-democrats. This narrowness, however, did not frighten those social-democrats who had not in the least forgotten the broad historical aims of the Russian working-class movement. What matters it if the *words* of the social-democrats sometimes have a narrow meaning when *their deeds* cover a broad field. They do not give themselves up to useless conspiracies, they do not hob-nob with the Balalaikins of bourgeois liberalism, but they go to that class which alone is the real revolutionary class and assist in the development of its forces! They believed that this narrowness would disappear of its own accord with each step that broadened social-democratic propaganda. And this, to a considerable degree, is what has happened. From propaganda they began to go over to widespread agitation. Widespread agitation, naturally, brought to the forefront a growing number of class-conscious advanced workers; revolutionary organisations began to take form (the St. Petersburg, Kiev, and other Leagues of Struggle, the Jewish Workers’ Union). These organisations naturally tended to merge and, eventually, they succeeded: they united and laid the foundations of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party. It would seem that the old narrowness would then have been left without any basis and that it would be completely cast aside. But things turned out differently: the spread of their agitation brought the social-democrats into contact with the lower, less developed strata of the proletariat; to attract these strata it was necessary for the agitator to be able to adapt himself to the lowest level of understanding, he was taught to put the “demands and interests of the given moment” in the foreground and to push back the

broad ideals of socialism and the political struggle. The fragmentary, amateur nature of social-democratic work, the extremely weak connections between the study circles in the different cities, between the Russian social-democrats and their comrades abroad who possessed a profounder knowledge and a richer revolutionary experience, as well as a wider political horizon, naturally led to a gross exaggeration of this (*absolutely essential*) aspect of social-democratic activity, which could bring some individuals to lose sight of the other aspects, especially since with every reverse the most developed workers and intellectuals were wrenched from the ranks of the struggling army, so that sound revolutionary traditions and continuity could not as yet be evolved. It is in this extreme exaggeration of one aspect of social-democratic work that we see the chief cause of the sad retreat from the ideals of Russian social-democracy. Add to this enthusiasm over a fashionable book, ignorance of the history of the Russian revolutionary movement, and a childish claim to originality, and you have all the elements that go to make up “the retrograde trend in Russian social-democracy”.

We shall, therefore, have to deal in greater detail with the question of the relation of the advanced strata of the proletariat to the less advanced, and the significance of social-democratic work among these two sections.

The history of the working-class movement in all countries shows that the better-situated strata of the working class respond to the ideas of socialism more rapidly and more easily. From among these come, in the main, the advanced workers that every working-class movement brings to the fore, those who can win the confidence of the labouring masses, who devote themselves entirely to the education and organisation of the proletariat, who accept socialism consciously, and who even elaborate independent socialist theories. Every viable working-class movement has brought to the fore such working-class leaders, its own Proudhons, Vaillants, Weitlings, and Bebels. And our Russian working-class movement promises not to lag behind the European movement in this respect. At a time when educated society is losing interest in honest, illegal literature, an impassioned desire for knowledge and for socialism is growing among the workers, real heroes are coming to the fore from amongst the workers, who, despite their wretched living conditions, despite the stultifying penal servitude of factory labour, possess so much character and willpower that they study, study, study, and turn themselves into conscious social-democrats — “the working-class intelligentsia”. This “working-class intelligentsia” already exists in Russia, and we must make every effort to ensure that its ranks are regularly reinforced, that its lofty mental requirements are met and that leaders of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party come from its ranks. The newspaper that wants to become the organ of all Russian social-democrats must, therefore, be at the level of the advanced workers; not

only must it not lower its level artificially, but, on the contrary, it must raise it constantly, it must follow up all the tactical, political, and theoretical problems of world social-democracy. Only then will the demands of the working-class intelligentsia be met, and it itself will take the cause of the Russian workers and, *consequently*, the cause of the Russian revolution, into its own hands.

After the numerically small stratum of advanced workers comes the broad stratum of average workers. These workers, too, strive ardently for socialism, participate in workers' study circles, read socialist newspapers and books, participate in agitation, and differ from the preceding stratum only in that they cannot become fully independent leaders of the social-democratic working-class movement. 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. Such workers, absorbed by *local* practical work and interested mainly in the events of the working-class movement and the immediate problems of agitation, should connect their every act with thoughts of the entire Russian working-class movement, its historical task, and the ultimate goal of socialism, so that the newspaper, the mass of whose readers are average workers, must connect socialism and the political struggle with every local and narrow question.

Lastly, behind the stratum of average workers comes the mass that constitutes the lower strata of the proletariat. It is quite possible that a socialist newspaper will be completely or well-nigh incomprehensible to them (even in Western Europe the number of social-democratic voters is much larger than the number of readers of social-democratic newspapers), but it would be absurd to conclude from this that the newspaper of the social-democrats should adapt itself to the lowest possible level of the workers. The only thing that follows from this is that different forms of agitation and propaganda must be brought to bear on these strata — pamphlets written in more popular language, oral agitation, and chiefly — leaflets on local events. The social-democrats should not confine themselves even to this; it is quite possible that the first steps towards arousing the consciousness of the lower strata of the workers will have to take the form of legal educational activities. It is very important for the *party* to make use of this activity, guide it in the direction in which it is most needed, send out legal workers to plough up virgin fields that can later be planted by social-democratic agitators. Agitation among the lower strata of the workers should, of course, provide the widest field for the personal qualities of the agitator and the

peculiarities of the locality, the trade concerned, etc. "Tactics and agitation must not be confused", says Kautsky in his book against Bernstein. "Agitational methods must be adapted to individual and local conditions. Every agitator must be allowed to select those methods of agitation that he has at his disposal. One agitator may create the greatest impression by his enthusiasm, another by his biting sarcasm, a third by his ability to adduce a large number of instances, etc. While being adapted to the agitator, agitation must also be adapted to the public. The agitator must speak so that he will be understood; he must take as a starting-point something well known to his listeners. All this is self-evident and is not merely applicable to agitation conducted among the peasantry. One has to talk to cabmen differently than to sailors, and to sailors differently than to printers. *Agitation* must be individualised, but our *tactics*, our political *activity* must be *uniform*" (S. 2-3). These words from a leading representative of social-democratic theory contain a superb assessment of agitation as part of the general activity of the party. These words show how unfounded are the fears of those who think that the formation of a revolutionary party conducting a political struggle will interfere with agitation, will push it into the background and curtail the freedom of the agitators. On the contrary, only an organised party can carry out widespread agitation, provide the necessary guidance (and material) for agitators on all economic and political questions, make use of every local agitational success for the instruction of all Russian workers, and send agitators to those places and into that *milieu* where they ran work with the greatest success. It is only in an organised party that people possessing the capacities for work as agitators will be able to dedicate themselves wholly to this task — to the advantage both of agitation and of the other aspects of social-democratic work. From this it can be seen that whoever forgets political agitation and propaganda on account of the economic struggle, whoever forgets the necessity of organising the working-class movement into the struggle of a political party, will, aside from everything else, deprive himself of even an opportunity of successfully and steadily attracting the lower strata of the proletariat to the working-class cause.

However, such an exaggeration of one side of our activities to the detriment of the others, even the urge to throw overboard the other aspects, is fraught with still graver consequences for the Russian working-class movement. The lower strata of the proletariat may even become demoralised by such calumnies as that the founders of Russian social-democracy only want to use the workers to overthrow the autocracy, by invitations to confine themselves to the restoration of holidays and to craft unions, with no concern for the final aims of socialism and the immediate tasks of the political struggle. Such workers may (and will) always be ensnared by the bait of any sops offered by the government or the bourgeoisie. The lower strata of the proletariat, the

very undeveloped workers, might, under the influence of the preaching of *Rabochaya Mysl*, fall victim to the bourgeois and profoundly reactionary idea that the worker cannot and should not interest himself in anything but increased wages and the restoration of holidays (“the interests of the moment”); that the working people can and should conduct the workers’ struggle by their own efforts alone, by their own “private initiative”, and not attempt to combine it with socialism; that they should not strive to turn the working-class movement into the essential, advanced cause of all mankind. We repeat, the most undeveloped workers might be demoralised by such an idea, but we are confident that the advanced Russian workers, those who guide the workers’ study circles and all social-democratic activity, those who today fill our prisons and places of exile — from Archangel Gubernia to Eastern Siberia — that those workers will reject such a theory with indignation. To reduce the entire movement to the interests of the moment means to speculate on the backward condition of the workers, means to cater to their worst inclinations. It means artificially to break the link between the working-class movement and socialism, between the fully defined political strivings of the advanced workers and the spontaneous manifestations of protest on the part of the masses. Hence, the attempt of *Rabochaya Mysl* to introduce a special trend merits particular attention and calls for a vigorous protest. As long as *Rabochaya Mysl*, adapting itself, apparently, to the lower strata of the proletariat, assiduously avoided the question of the ultimate goal of socialism and the political struggle, with no declaration of its special trend, many social-democrats only shook their heads, hoping that with the development and extension of their work the members of the *Rabochaya Mysl* group would come to rid themselves of their narrowness. However, when people who, until now, have performed the useful work of a preparatory class clutch at fashionable opportunist theories and begin to deafen the ears of Europe with announcements about intending to put the whole of Russian social-democracy into the preparatory class for many years (if not for ever), when, in other words, people who have, until now, been labouring usefully over a barrel of honey begin “in full view of the public” to pour ladles of tar into it, then it is time for us to set ourselves decisively against this retrograde trend!

Russian social-democracy, both through its founders, the members of the Emancipation of Labour group, and through the Russian social-democratic organisations that founded the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, has always recognised the following two principles: (1) The essence of social-democracy is the organisation of the class struggle of the proletariat for the purpose of winning political power, of transferring all means of production to society as a whole, and of replacing capitalist by socialist economy; (2) the task of Russian social-democracy is to organise

the Russian revolutionary working-class party which has as its immediate aim the overthrow of the autocracy and the winning of political liberty. Whoever departs from these basic principles (formulated precisely in the program of the Emancipation of Labour group and expressed in the *Manifesto of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party*) departs from social-democracy. ■

# Declaration of the Editorial Board of *Iskra*

## **In the name of the editorial board**

In undertaking the publication of a political newspaper, *Iskra*, we consider it necessary to say a few words concerning the objects for which we are striving and the understanding we have of our tasks.

We are passing through an extremely important period in the history of the Russian working-class movement and Russian social-democracy. The past few years have been marked by an astonishingly rapid spread of social-democratic ideas among our intelligentsia, and meeting this trend in social ideas is an independent movement of the industrial proletariat, which is beginning to unite and struggle against its oppressors, and to strive eagerly towards socialism. Study circles of workers and social-democratic intellectuals are springing up everywhere, local agitation leaflets are being widely distributed, the demand for social-democratic literature is increasing and is far outstripping the supply, and intensified government persecution is powerless to restrain the movement. The prisons and places of exile are filled to overflowing. Hardly a month goes by without our hearing of socialists “caught in dragnets” in all parts of Russia, of the capture of underground couriers, of the confiscation of literature and printing-presses. But the movement is growing, it is spreading to ever wider regions, it is penetrating more and more deeply into the working class and is attracting public attention to an ever-increasing degree. The entire economic development of Russia and the history of social thought and of the revolutionary movement in Russia serve as a guarantee that the social-democratic working-class movement will grow and will, in the end, surmount all the obstacles that confront it.

On the other hand, the principal feature of our movement, which has become

particularly marked in recent times, is its state of disunity and its amateur character, if one may so express it. Local study circles spring up and function independently of one another and — what is particularly important — of circles that have functioned and still function in the same districts. Traditions are not established and continuity is not maintained; local publications fully reflect this disunity and the lack of contact with what Russian social-democracy has already achieved.

Such a state of disunity is not in keeping with the demands posed by the movement in its present strength and breadth, and creates, in our opinion, a critical moment in its development. The need for consolidation and for a definite form and organisation is felt with irresistible force in the movement itself; yet among social-democrats active in the practical field this need for a transition to a higher form of the movement is not everywhere realised. On the contrary, among wide circles an ideological wavering is to be seen, an infatuation with the fashionable “criticism of Marxism” and with “Bernsteinism”, the spread of the views of the so-called “Economist” trend, and what is inseparably connected with it — an effort to keep the movement at its lower level, to push into the background the task of forming a revolutionary party that heads the struggle of the entire people. *It is a fact* that such an ideological wavering is to be observed among Russian social-democrats; that narrow practicalism, detached from the theoretical clarification of the movement as a whole, threatens to divert the movement to a false path. No one who has direct knowledge of the state of affairs in the majority of our organisations has any doubt whatever on that score. Moreover, literary productions exist which confirm this. It is sufficient to mention the *Credo*, which has already called forth legitimate protest, the *Separate Supplement to Rabochaya Mysl* (September 1899), which brought out so markedly the trend that permeates the *whole* of *Rabochaya Mysl*; and, finally, the manifesto of the St. Petersburg Self-Emancipation of the Working Class group,<sup>1</sup> also drawn up in the spirit of “Economism”. And *completely untrue* are the assertions of *Rabochaya Dyelo* to the effect that the *Credo* merely represents the opinions of individuals, that the trend represented by *Rabochaya Mysl* expresses merely the confusion of mind and the tactlessness of its editors, and not a special tendency in the progress of the Russian working-class movement.

Simultaneously with this, the works of authors whom the reading public has hitherto, with more or less reason, regarded as prominent representatives of “legal” Marxism are increasingly revealing a change of views in a direction approximating that of bourgeois apologetics. As a result of all this, we have the confusion and anarchy which has enabled the ex-Marxist, or, more precisely, the ex-socialist, Bernstein, in recounting his successes, to declare, unchallenged, in the press that the majority of

social-democrats active in Russia are his followers.

We do not desire to exaggerate the gravity of the situation, but it would be immeasurably more harmful to close our eyes to it. For this reason we heartily welcome the decision of the Emancipation of Labour Group to resume its literary activity and begin a systematic struggle against the attempts to distort and vulgarise social-democracy.

The following practical conclusion is to be drawn from the foregoing: we Russian social-democrats must unite and direct all our efforts towards the formation of a strong party which must struggle under the single banner of revolutionary social-democracy. This is precisely the task laid down by the congress in 1898 at which the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party was formed, and which published its *Manifesto*.

We regard ourselves as members of this party; we agree entirely with the fundamental ideas contained in the *Manifesto* and attach extreme importance to it as a public declaration of its aims. Consequently, we, as members of the party, present the question of our immediate and direct tasks as follows: What plan of activity must we adopt to revive the party on the firmest possible basis?

The reply usually made to this question is that it is necessary to elect anew a central party body and instruct it to resume the publication of the party organ. But, in the period of confusion through which we are now passing, such a simple method is hardly expedient.

To establish and consolidate the party means to establish and consolidate unity among all Russian social-democrats, and, for the reasons indicated above, such unity cannot be decreed, it cannot be brought about, by a decision, say, of a meeting of representatives; it must be worked for. In the first place, it is necessary to work for solid ideological unity which should eliminate discordance and confusion that — let us be frank! — reign among Russian social-democrats at the present time. This ideological unity must be consolidated by a party program. Secondly, we must work to achieve an organisation especially for the purpose of establishing and maintaining contact among all the centres of the movement, of supplying complete and timely information about the movement, and of delivering our newspapers and periodicals regularly to all parts of Russia. Only when such an organisation has been founded, only when a Russian socialist post has been established, will the party possess a sound foundation and become a real fact, and, therefore, a mighty political force. We intend to devote our efforts to the first half of this task, i.e., to creating a common literature, consistent in principle and capable of ideologically uniting revolutionary social-democracy, since we regard this as the pressing demand of the movement today and a necessary preliminary measure towards the resumption of party activity.

As we have said., the ideological unity of Russian social-democrats has still to be created, and to this end it is, in our opinion, necessary to have an open and all-embracing discussion of the fundamental questions of principle and tactics raised by the present-day “Economists,” Bernsteinians, and “critics”. Before we can unite, and in order that we may unite, we must first of all draw firm and definite lines of demarcation. Otherwise, our unity will be purely fictitious, it will conceal the prevailing confusion and hinder its radical elimination. It is understandable, therefore, that we do not intend to make our publication a mere storehouse of various views. On the contrary, we shall conduct it in the spirit of a strictly defined tendency. This tendency can be expressed by the word Marxism and there is hardly need to add that we stand for the consistent development of the ideas of Marx and Engels and emphatically reject the equivocating, vague, and opportunist “corrections” for which Eduard Bernstein, P. Struve, and many others have set the fashion. But although we shall discuss all questions from our own definite point of view, we shall give space in our columns to polemics between comrades. Open polemics, conducted in full view of all Russian social-democrats and class-conscious workers, are necessary and desirable in order to clarify the depth of existing differences, in order to afford discussion of disputed questions from all angles, in order to combat the extremes into which representatives, not only of various views, but even of various localities, or various “specialities” of the revolutionary movement, inevitably fall. Indeed, as noted above, we regard one of the drawbacks of the present-day movement to be the absence of open polemics between avowedly differing views, the effort to conceal differences on fundamental questions.

We shall not enumerate in detail all questions and points of subject-matter included in the program of our publication, for this program derives automatically from the general conception of what a political newspaper, published under present conditions, should be.

We will exert our efforts to bring every Russian comrade to regard our publication as his own, to which all groups would communicate every kind of information concerning the movement, in which they would relate their experiences, express their views, indicate their needs for political literature, and voice their opinions concerning social-democratic editions: in a word, they would thereby share whatever contribution they make to the movement and whatever they draw from it. Only in this way will it be possible to establish a genuinely all-Russian social-democratic organ. Only such a publication will be capable of leading the movement on to the high road of political struggle. “Extend the bounds and broaden the content of our propagandist, agitational, and organisational activity” — these words of P.B. Axelrod must serve as a slogan defining the activities of Russian social-democrats in the immediate future, and we

adopt this slogan in the program of our publication.

We appeal not only to socialists and class-conscious workers, we also call upon all who are oppressed by the present political system., we place the columns of our publications at their disposal in order that they may expose all the abominations of the Russian autocracy.

Those who regard social-democracy as an organisation serving exclusively the spontaneous struggle of the proletariat may be content with merely local agitation and working-class literature “pure and simple”. We do not understand social-democracy in this way; we regard it as a revolutionary party, inseparably connected with the working-class movement and directed against absolutism. Only when organised in such a party will the proletariat — the most revolutionary class in Russia today — be in a position to fulfil the historical task that confronts it — to unite under its banner all the democratic elements in the country and to crown the tenacious struggle in which so many generations have fallen with the final triumph over the hated regime.



The size of the newspaper will range from one to two printed signatures.

In view of the conditions under which the Russian underground press has to work, there will be no regular date of publication.

We have been promised contributions by a number of prominent representatives of international social-democracy, the close cooperation of the Emancipation of Labour Group (G.V. Plekhanov, P.B. Axelrod, and V.I. Zasluch), and the support of several organisations of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, as well as of separate groups of Russian social-democrats. ■

## Where to Begin?<sup>1</sup>

In recent years the question of “what is to be done” has confronted Russian social-democrats with particular insistence. It is not a question of what path we must choose (as was the case in the late '80s and early '90s), but of what practical steps we must take upon the known path and how they shall be taken. It is a question of a system and plan of practical work. And it must be admitted that we have not yet solved this question of the character and the methods of struggle, fundamental for a party of practical activity, that it still gives rise to serious differences of opinion which reveal a deplorable ideological instability and vacillation. On the one hand, the “Economist” trend, far from being dead, is endeavouring to clip and narrow the work of political organisation and agitation. On the other, unprincipled eclecticism is again rearing its head, aping every new “trend”, and is incapable of distinguishing immediate demands from the main tasks and permanent needs of the movement as a whole. This trend, as we know, has ensconced itself in *Rabocheye Dyelo*.<sup>2</sup> This journal's latest statement of “program”, a bombastic article under the bombastic title “A Historic Turn” (“*Listok*” *Rabochevo Dyela*, No. 6<sup>3</sup>) bears out with special emphasis the characterisation we have given. Only yesterday there was a flirtation with “Economism”, a fury over the resolute condemnation of *Rabochaya Mysl*<sup>4</sup> and Plekhanov's presentation of the question of the struggle against autocracy was being toned down. But today Liebknecht's words are being quoted: “If the circumstances change within 24 hours, then tactics must be changed within 24 hours.” There is talk of a “strong fighting organisation” for direct attack, for storming the autocracy; of “broad revolutionary political agitation among the masses” (how energetic we are now — both revolutionary and political!); of “ceaseless calls for street protests”; of “street demonstrations of a pronounced [*sic!*] political character”; and so on, and so forth.

We might perhaps declare ourselves happy at *Rabocheye Dyelo*'s quick grasp of the

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Written in May 1901. Published in *Iskra*, No. 4, May 1901. Text taken from Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 5 (Progress Publishers: Moscow, 1977).

program we put forward in the first issue of *Iskra*,<sup>5</sup> calling for the formation of a strong well-organised party, whose aim is not only to win isolated concessions but to storm the fortress of the autocracy itself; but the lack of any set point of view in these individuals can only dampen our happiness.

*Rabocheye Dyelo*, of course, mentions Liebknecht's name in vain. The tactics of agitation in relation to some special question, or the tactics with regard to some detail of party organisation may be changed in 24 hours; but only people devoid of all principle are capable of changing, in 24 hours, or, for that matter, in 24 months, their view on the necessity — in general, constantly, and absolutely — of an organisation of struggle and of political agitation among the masses. It is ridiculous to plead different circumstances and a change of periods: the building of a fighting organisation and the conduct of political agitation are essential under any “drab, peaceful” circumstances, in any period, no matter how marked by a “declining revolutionary spirit”; moreover, it is precisely in such periods and under such circumstances that work of this kind is particularly necessary, since it is too late to form the organisation in times of explosion and outbursts; the party must be in a state of readiness to launch activity at a moment's notice. “Change the tactics within 24 hours”! But in order to change tactics it is first necessary to have tactics; without a strong organisation skilled in waging political struggle under all circumstances and at all times, there can be no question of that systematic plan of action, illumined by firm principles and steadfastly carried out, which alone is worthy of the name of tactics. Let us, indeed, consider the matter; we are now being told that the “historic moment” has presented our party with a “completely new” question — the question of terror. Yesterday the “completely new” question was political organisation and agitation; today it is terror. Is it not strange to hear people who have so grossly forgotten their principles holding forth on a radical change in tactics?

Fortunately, *Rabocheye Dyelo* is in error. The question of terror is not a new question at all; it will suffice to recall briefly the established views of Russian social-democracy on the subject.

In principle we have never rejected and cannot reject terror. Terror is one of the forms of military action that may be perfectly suitable and even essential at a definite juncture in the battle, given a definite state of the troops and the existence of definite conditions. But the important point is that terror, at the present time, is by no means suggested as an operation for the army in the field, an operation closely connected with and integrated into the entire system of struggle, but as an independent form of occasional attack unrelated to any army. Without a central body and with the weakness of local revolutionary organisations, this, in fact, is all that terror can be. We, therefore,

declare emphatically that under the present conditions such a means of struggle is inopportune and unsuitable; that it diverts the most active fighters from their real task, the task which is most important from the standpoint of the interests of the movement as a whole; and that it disorganises the forces, not of the government, but of the revolution. We need but recall the recent events. With our own eyes we saw that the mass of workers and “common people” of the towns pressed forward in struggle, while the revolutionaries lacked a staff of leaders and organisers. Under such conditions, is there not the danger that, as the most energetic revolutionaries go over to terror, the fighting contingents, in whom alone it is possible to place serious reliance, will be weakened? Is there not the danger of rupturing the contact between the revolutionary organisations and the disunited masses of the discontented, the protesting, and the disposed to struggle, who are weak precisely because they are disunited? Yet it is this contact that is the sole guarantee of our success. Far be it from us to deny the significance of heroic individual blows, but it is our duty to sound a vigorous warning against becoming infatuated with terror, against taking it to be the chief and basic means of struggle, as so many people strongly incline to do at present. Terror can never be a regular military operation; at best it can only serve as one of the methods employed in a decisive assault. But can we *issue the call* for such a decisive assault at the present moment? *Rabocheye Dyelo* apparently thinks we can. At any rate, it exclaims: “Form assault columns!” But this, again, is more zeal than reason. The main body of our military forces consists of volunteers and insurgents. We possess only a few small units of regular troops, and these are not even mobilised; they are not connected with one another, nor have they been trained to form columns of any sort, let alone assault columns. In view of all this, it must be clear to anyone who is capable of appreciating the general conditions of our struggle and who is mindful of them at every “turn” in the historical course of events that at the present moment our slogan cannot be “To the assault”, but has to be, “Lay siege to the enemy fortress”. In other words, the immediate task of our party is not to summon all available forces for the attack right now, but to call for the formation of a revolutionary organisation capable of uniting all forces and guiding the movement in actual practice and not in name alone, that is, an organisation ready at any time to support every protest and every outbreak and use it to build up and consolidate the fighting forces suitable for the decisive struggle.

The lesson of the February and March events<sup>6</sup> has been so impressive that no disagreement in principle with this conclusion is now likely to be encountered. What we need at the present moment, however, is not a solution of the problem in principle but a practical solution. We should not only be clear on the nature of the organisation that is needed and its precise purpose, but we must elaborate a definite *plan* for an

organisation, so that its formation may be undertaken from all aspects. In view of the pressing importance of the question, we, on our part, take the liberty of submitting to the comrades a skeleton plan to be developed in greater detail in a pamphlet now in preparation for print.<sup>7</sup>

In our opinion, the starting-point of our activities, the first step towards creating the desired organisation, or, let us say, the main thread which, if followed, would enable us steadily to develop, deepen, and extend that organisation, should be the founding of an all-Russian political newspaper. A newspaper is what we most of all need; without it we cannot conduct that systematic, all-round propaganda and agitation, consistent in principle, which is the chief and permanent task of social-democracy in general and, in particular, the pressing task of the moment, when interest in politics and in questions of socialism has been aroused among the broadest strata of the population. Never has the need been felt so acutely as today for reinforcing dispersed agitation in the form of individual action, local leaflets, pamphlets, etc., by means of generalised and systematic agitation that can only be conducted with the aid of the periodical press. It may be said without exaggeration that the frequency and regularity with which a newspaper is printed (and distributed) can serve as a precise criterion of how well this cardinal and most essential sector of our militant activities is built up. Furthermore, our newspaper must be all-Russian. If we fail, and as long as we fail, to combine our efforts to influence the people and the government by means of the printed word, it will be utopian to think of combining other means, more complex, more difficult, but also more decisive, for exerting influence. Our movement suffers in the first place, ideologically, as well as in practical and organisational respects, from its state of fragmentation, from the almost complete immersion of the overwhelming majority of social-democrats in local work, which narrows their outlook, the scope of their activities, and their skill in the maintenance of secrecy and their preparedness. It is precisely in this state of fragmentation that one must look for the deepest roots of the instability and the waverings noted above. The *first* step towards eliminating this shortcoming, towards transforming diverse local movements into a single, all-Russian movement, must be the founding of an all-Russian newspaper. Lastly, what we need is definitely a *political* newspaper. Without a political organ, a political movement deserving that name is inconceivable in the Europe of today. Without such a newspaper we cannot possibly fulfil our task — that of concentrating all the elements of political discontent and protest, of vitalising thereby the revolutionary movement of the proletariat. We have taken the first step, we have aroused in the working class a passion for “economic”, factory exposures; we must now take the next step, that of arousing in every section of the population that is at all politically conscious a passion

for *political* exposure. We must not be discouraged by the fact that the voice of political exposure is today so feeble, timid, and infrequent. This is not because of a wholesale submission to police despotism, but because those who are able and ready to make exposures have no tribune from which to speak, no eager and encouraging audience, they do not see anywhere among the people that force to which it would be worth while directing their complaint against the “omnipotent” Russian government. But today all this is rapidly changing. There is such a force — it is the revolutionary proletariat, which has demonstrated its readiness, not only to listen to and support the summons to political struggle, but boldly to engage in battle. We are now in a position to provide a tribune for the nationwide exposure of the tsarist government, and it is our duty to do this. That tribune must be a social-democratic newspaper. The Russian working class, as distinct from the other classes and strata of Russian society, displays a constant interest in political knowledge and manifests a constant and extensive demand (not only in periods of intensive unrest) for illegal literature. When such a mass demand is evident, when the training of experienced revolutionary leaders has already begun, and when the concentration of the working class makes it virtual master in the working-class districts of the big cities and in the factory settlements and communities, it is quite feasible for the proletariat to found a political newspaper. Through the proletariat the newspaper will reach the urban petty bourgeoisie, the rural handicraftsmen, and the peasants, thereby becoming a real people's political newspaper.

The role of a newspaper, however, is not limited solely to the dissemination of ideas, to political education, and to the enlistment of political allies. A newspaper is not only a collective propagandist and a collective agitator, it is also a collective organiser. In this last respect it may be likened to the scaffolding round a building under construction, which marks the contours of the structure and facilitates communication between the builders, enabling them to distribute the work and to view the common results achieved by their organised labour. With the aid of the newspaper, and through it, a permanent organisation will naturally take shape that will engage, not only in local activities, but in regular general work, and will train its members to follow political events carefully, appraise their significance and their effect on the various strata of the population, and develop effective means for the revolutionary party to influence those events. The mere technical task of regularly supplying the newspaper with copy and of promoting regular distribution will necessitate a network of local agents of the united party, who will maintain constant contact with one another, know the general state of affairs, get accustomed to performing regularly their detailed functions in the all-Russian work, and test their strength in the organisation of various revolutionary

actions. This network of agents\* will form the skeleton of precisely the kind of organisation we need — one that is sufficiently large to embrace the whole country; sufficiently broad and many-sided to effect a strict and detailed division of labour; sufficiently well tempered to be able to conduct steadily *its own* work under any circumstances, at all “sudden turns”, and in face of all contingencies; sufficiently flexible to be able, on the one hand, to avoid an open battle against an overwhelming enemy, when the enemy has concentrated all his forces at one spot, and yet, on the other, to take advantage of his unwieldiness and to attack him when and where he least expects it. Today we are faced with the relatively easy task of supporting student demonstrations in the streets of big cities; tomorrow we may, perhaps, have the more difficult task of supporting, for example, the unemployed movement in some particular area, and the day after may have to be at our posts to play a revolutionary part in a peasant uprising. Today we must take advantage of the tense political situation arising out of the government’s campaign against the Zemstvo; tomorrow we may have to support popular indignation against some tsarist bashi-bazouk on the rampage and help, by means of boycott, indictment demonstrations, etc., to make things so hot for him as to force him into open retreat. Such a degree of combat readiness can be developed only through the constant activity of regular troops. If we join forces to produce a common newspaper, this work will train and bring into the foreground, not only the most skilful propagandists, but the most capable organisers, the most talented political party leaders capable, at the right moment, of releasing the slogan for the decisive struggle and of taking the lead in that struggle.

In conclusion, a few words to avoid possible misunderstanding. We have spoken continuously of systematic, planned preparation, yet it is by no means our intention to imply that the autocracy can be overthrown only by a regular siege or by organised assault. Such a view would be absurd and doctrinaire. On the contrary, it is quite possible, and historically much more probable, that the autocracy will collapse under the impact of one of the spontaneous outbursts or unforeseen political complications which constantly threaten it from all sides. But no political party that wishes to avoid adventurous gambles can base its activities on the anticipation of such outbursts and

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\* It will be understood, of course, that these agents could work successfully only in the closest contact with the local committees (groups, study circles) of our party. In general, the entire plan we project can, of course, be implemented only with the most active support of the committees which have on repeated occasions attempted to unite the party and which, we are sure, will achieve this unification — if not today, then tomorrow, if not in one way, then in another.

complications. We must go our own way and we must steadfastly carry on our regular work, and the less our reliance on the unexpected, the less the chance of our being caught unawares by any "historic turns". ■

# A Talk with Defenders of Economism

Below we publish in full, as received from one of our representatives,

*A Letter to the Russian Social-Democratic Press*

In response to the suggestion made by our comrades in exile that we express our views on *Iskra*, we have resolved to state the reasons for our disagreement with that organ.

While recognising that the appearance of a special social-democratic organ specially devoted to questions of the political struggle is entirely opportune, we do not think that *Iskra*, which has undertaken this task, has performed it satisfactorily. The principal drawback of the paper, which runs like a scarlet thread through its columns, and which is the cause of all its other defects, large and small, is the exaggerated importance it attaches to the influence which the ideologists of the movement exert upon its various tendencies. At the same time, *Iskra* gives too little consideration to the material elements and the material environment of the movement, whose interaction creates a definite type of labour movement and determines its path, the path from which the ideologists, despite all their efforts, are incapable of diverting it, even if they are inspired by the finest theories and programs.

This defect becomes most marked when *Iskra* is compared with *Yuzhny Rabochy*,<sup>1</sup> which, like *Iskra*, raises the banner of political struggle but connects it with the preceding phase of the South-Russian working-class movement. Such a presentation of the question is alien to *Iskra*. It has set itself the task of fanning “the spark into a great conflagration”,\* but forgets that necessary inflammable material and favourable environmental conditions are required for such a task. In dissociating itself completely from the “Economists”, *Iskra* loses sight of the fact that their activity prepared the ground for the workers’ participation in the February and March events, upon which *Iskra* lays so

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Published in *Iskra*, No. 12, December 6, 1901. Text taken from Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 5.

\* A play on the word *Iskra*, which means “spark”.— *Ed.*

much stress and, to all appearances, greatly exaggerates. While criticising adversely the activity of the social-democrats of the late '90s, *Iskra* ignores the fact that at that time the conditions were lacking for any work other than the struggle for minor demands, and ignores also the enormous educational significance of that struggle. *Iskra* is entirely wrong and unhistorical in its appraisal of that period and of the direction of the activities of the Russian social-democrats at the time, in identifying their tactics with those of Zubatov, in failing to differentiate between the "struggle for minor demands", which widens and deepens the labour movement, and "minor concessions", whose purpose was to paralyse every struggle and every movement.

Thoroughly imbued with the sectarian intolerance so characteristic of ideologists in the infantile period of social movements, *Iskra* is ready to brand every disagreement with it, not only as a departure from social-democratic principles, but as desertion to the camp of the enemy. Of such a nature is its extremely indecent and most reprehensible attack upon *Rabochaya Mysl*, contained in the article on Zubatov, in which the latter's success among a certain section of the working class was attributed to that publication. Negatively disposed to the other social-democratic organisations, which differ from it in their views on the progress and the tasks of the Russian labour movement, *Iskra*, in the heat of controversy, at times forgets the truth and, picking on isolated unfortunate expressions, attributes to its opponents views they do not hold, emphasises points of disagreement that are frequently of little material importance, and obstinately ignores the numerous points of contact in views. We have in mind *Iskra's* attitude towards *Rabocheye Dyelo*.

*Iskra's* excessive predilection for controversy is due primarily to its exaggerating the role of ideology (programs, theories ...) in the movement, and is partly an echo of the internecine squabbles that have flared up among Russian political exiles in Western Europe, of which they have hastened to inform the world in a number of polemical pamphlets and articles. In our opinion, these disagreements exercise almost no influence upon the actual course of the Russian social-democratic movement, except perhaps to damage it by bringing an undesirable schism into the midst of the comrades working in Russia. For this reason, we cannot but express our disapproval of *Iskra's* fervent polemics, particularly when it oversteps the bounds of decency.

This basic drawback of *Iskra* is also the cause of its inconsistency on the question of the attitude of social-democracy to the various social classes and tendencies. By theoretical reasoning, *Iskra* solved the problem of the immediate transition to the struggle against absolutism. In all probability it senses the difficulty of such a task for the workers under the present state of affairs but lacking the patience to wait until the workers will have gathered sufficient forces for this struggle, *Iskra* begins to seek allies

in the ranks of the liberals and intellectuals. In this quest, it not infrequently departs from the class point of view, obscures class antagonisms, and puts into the forefront the common nature of the discontent with the government, although the causes and the degree of the discontent vary considerably among the “allies”. Such, for example, is *Iskra*’s attitude towards the Zemstvo. It tries to fan into flames of political struggle the Zemstvo’s Frondian demonstrations,<sup>2</sup> which are frequently called forth by the fact that the government pays more attention to the protection of industry than to the agrarian aspirations of the Zemstvo gentry,\* and it promises the nobles that are dissatisfied with the government’s sops the assistance of the working class, but it does not say a word about the class antagonism that exists between these social strata. It may be conceded that it is admissible to say that the Zemstvo is being roused and that it is an element fighting the government; but this must be stated so clearly and distinctly that no doubt will be left as to the character of a possible agreement with such elements. *Iskra*, however, approaches the question of our attitude towards the Zemstvo in a way that to our mind can only dim class-consciousness: for in this matter, like the advocates of liberalism and of the various cultural endeavours, *Iskra* goes against the fundamental task of social-democratic literature, which is, not to obscure class antagonism, but to criticise the bourgeois system and explain the class interests that divide it. Such, too, is *Iskra*’s attitude towards the student movement. And yet in other articles *Iskra* sharply condemns all compromise and defends, for instance, the intolerant conduct of the Guesdists.

We shall refrain from dwelling upon *Iskra*’s minor defects and blunders, but in conclusion we think it our duty to observe that we do not in the least desire by our criticism to belittle the significance which *Iskra* can acquire, nor do we close our eyes to its merits. We welcome it as a political, social-democratic newspaper in Russia. We regard one of its greatest merits to be its able explanation of the question of terror to which it devoted a number of timely articles. Finally, we cannot refrain from noting the exemplary, literary style in which *Iskra* is written, a thing so rare in illegal publications, its regular appearance, and the abundance of fresh and interesting material which it publishes.

*A group of comrades*

September 1901

In the first place, we should like to say that we cordially welcome the straightforwardness and frankness of the authors of this letter. It is high time to stop playing at hide-and-seek, concealing one’s Economist “*credo*” (as is done by a section of the Odessa

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\* A reference to the liberal landlords, members of the Zemstvo boards. — *Ed.*

Committee from which the “politicians” broke away), or declaring, as if in mockery of the truth, that at the present time “not a single social-democratic organisation is guilty of the sin of Economism” (*Two Conferences*, p. 32, published by *Rabocheye Dyelo*). And now to the matter.

The authors of the letter fall into the very same fundamental error as that made by *Rabocheye Dyelo* (see particularly issue No. 10). They are muddled over the question of the relations between the “material” (spontaneous, as *Rabocheye Dyelo* puts it) elements of the movement and the ideological (conscious, operating “according to plan”). They fail to understand that the “ideologist” is worthy of the name only when he *precedes* the spontaneous movement, points out the road, and is able ahead of all others to solve all the theoretical, political, tactical, and organisational questions which the “material elements” of the movement spontaneously encounter. In order truly to give “consideration to the material elements of the movement”, one must view them critically, one must be able to point out the dangers and defects of spontaneity and to *elevate* it to the level of consciousness. To say, however, that ideologists (i.e., politically conscious leaders) cannot divert the movement from the path determined by the interaction of environment and elements is to ignore the simple truth that the conscious element *participates* in this interaction and in the determination of the path. Catholic and monarchist labour unions in Europe are also an inevitable result of the interaction of environment and elements, but it was the consciousness of priests and Zubatovs and not that of socialists that participated in this interaction. The theoretical views of the authors of this letter (like those of *Rabocheye Dyelo*) do not represent Marxism, but that parody of it which is nursed by our “critics” and Bernsteinians who are unable to connect spontaneous evolution with conscious revolutionary activity.

In the prevailing circumstances of today this profound theoretical error inevitably leads to a great tactical error, which has brought incalculable damage to Russian social-democracy. It is a fact that the spontaneous awakening of the masses of the workers and (due to their influence) of other social strata has been taking place with astonishing rapidity during the past few years. The “material elements” of the movement have grown enormously even as compared with 1898, but *the conscious leaders* (the social-democrats) *lag behind this growth*. This is the main cause of the crisis which Russian social-democracy is now experiencing. The mass (spontaneous) movement lacks “ideologists” sufficiently trained theoretically to be proof against all vacillations; it lacks leaders with such a broad political outlook, such revolutionary energy, and such organisational talent as to create a militant political party on the basis of the new movement.

All this in itself, would, however, be but half the evil. Theoretical knowledge, political

experience, and organising ability are things that can be acquired. If only the desire exists to study and acquire these qualities. But since the end of 1897, particularly since the autumn of 1898, there have come forward in the Russian social-democratic movement individuals and periodicals that not only close their eyes to this drawback, but that have declared it to be a special virtue, that have elevated the worship of, and servility towards, spontaneity to the dignity of a theory and are preaching that social-democrats must not march ahead of the movement, but should drag along *at the tail-end*. (These periodicals include not only *Rabochaya Mysl*, but *Rabocheye Dyelo*, which began with the “stages theory” and ended with the defence, as a matter of principle, of spontaneity, of the “full rights of the movement of the moment”, of “tactics-as-process”, etc.)

This was, indeed, a sad situation. It meant the emergence of a *separate trend*, which is usually designated as Economism (in the broad sense of the word), the principal feature of which is its incomprehension, even *defence, of lagging*, i.e., as we have explained, the lagging of the conscious leaders behind the spontaneous awakening of the masses. The characteristic features of this trend express themselves in the following: with respect to principles, in a vulgarisation of Marxism and in helplessness in the face of modern “criticism”, that up-to-date species of opportunism; with respect to politics, in the striving to restrict political agitation and political struggle or to reduce them to petty activities, in the failure to understand that unless social-democrats take the leadership of the general democratic movement in *their own* hands, they will never be able to overthrow the autocracy; with respect to tactics, in utter instability (last spring *Rabocheye Dyelo* stood in amazement before the “new” question of terror, and only six months later, after considerable wavering and, as always, dragging along at the tailend of the movement, did it express itself against terror, in a very ambiguous resolution); and with respect to organisation, in the failure to understand that the mass character of the movement does not diminish, but increases, our obligation to establish a strong and centralised organisation of revolutionaries capable of leading the preparatory struggle, every unexpected outbreak, and, finally, the decisive assault.

Against this trend we have conducted and will continue to conduct an irreconcilable struggle. The authors of the letter apparently belong to this trend. They tell us that the economic struggle prepared the ground for the workers’ participation in the demonstrations. True enough; but we appreciated sooner and more profoundly than all others the importance of this preparation, when, as early as December 1900, in our first issue, we opposed the stages theory,\* and when, in February, in our second issue,

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\* See Lenin, “The Urgent Tasks of Our Movement”, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4, pp. 366-371. — *Ed.*

immediately after the drafting of the students into the army, and prior to the demonstrations, we called upon the workers to come to the aid of the students. The February and March events did not “refute the fears and alarms of *Iskra*” (as Martynov, who thereby displays his utter failure to understand the question, thinks — *Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 10, p. 53), but wholly confirmed them, for the leaders lagged behind the spontaneous rise of the masses and proved to be unprepared for the fulfilment of their duties as leaders. Even at the present time the preparations are far from adequate, and for that reason all talk about “exaggerating the role of ideology” or the role of the conscious element as compared with the spontaneous element, etc., continues to exercise a most baneful influence upon our party.

No less harmful is the influence exerted by the talk, allegedly in defence of the class point of view, about the need to lay less stress on the general character of discontent manifested by the various strata of the population against the government. On the contrary, we are proud of the fact that *Iskra* rouses political discontent among *all* strata of the population, and the only thing we regret is that we are unable to do this on a much wider scale. It is not true to say that in doing so, we obscure the class point of view; the authors of the letter have not pointed to a single concrete instance in evidence of this, nor can they do so. social-democracy, as the vanguard in the struggle for democracy, must (notwithstanding the opinion expressed in *Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 10, p. 41) lead the activities of the various oppositional strata, explain to them the general political significance of their partial and professional conflicts with the government, rally them to the support of the revolutionary party, and train from its own ranks leaders capable of exercising political influence upon all oppositional strata. Any renunciation of this function, however florid the phrases about close, organic contact with the proletarian struggle, etc., with which it may deck itself, is tantamount to a fresh “defence of lagging”, the defence of lagging behind the nationwide democratic movement on the part of social-democrats; it is tantamount to a surrender of the leadership to bourgeois democracy. Let the authors of the letter ponder over the question as to why the events of last spring served so strongly to stimulate *non*-social-democratic revolutionary tendencies, instead of raising the authority and prestige of social-democracy.

Nor can we refrain from protesting against the astonishing shortsightedness displayed by the authors of the letter in regard to the controversies and internecine squabbles among the political exiles. They repeat the stale nonsense about the “indecenty” of devoting to *Rabochaya Mysl* an article on Zubatov. Do they wish to deny that the spreading of Economism facilitates the tasks of the Zubatovs? In asserting this, however, we do not in the slightest “identify” the tactics of the Economists with

those of Zubatov. As for the “political exiles” (if the authors of the letter were not so unpardonably careless concerning the continuity of ideas in the Russian social-democratic movement, they would have known that the warning about Economism sounded by the “political exiles”, to be precise, by the Emancipation of Labour group, has been strikingly confirmed!), note the manner in which Lassalle, who was active among the Rhine workers in 1852, judged the controversies of the exiles in London. Writing to Marx, he said:

... The publication of your work against the “big men”, Kinkel, Ruge, etc., should hardly meet with any difficulties on the part of the police ... For, in my opinion, the government is not averse to the publication of such works, because it thinks that “the revolutionaries will cut one another’s throats”. Their bureaucratic logic neither suspects nor fears the fact that it is precisely internal party struggles that lend a party strength and vitality; that the greatest proof of a party’s weakness is its diffuseness and the blurring of clear demarcations; and that a party becomes stronger by purging itself.  
[Letter from Lassalle to Marx, June 24, 1852.]

Let the numerous complacent opponents of severity, irreconcilability, and fervent polemics, etc., take note!

In conclusion, we shall observe that in these remarks we have been able to deal only briefly with the questions in dispute. We intend to devote a special pamphlet to the analysis of these questions, which we hope will appear in the course of six weeks. ■



V.I. Lenin (1897)

# What Is to Be Done?

## Burning Questions of Our Movement<sup>1</sup>

... Party struggles lend a party strength and vitality; the greatest proof of a party's weakness is its diffuseness and the blurring of clear demarcations; a party becomes stronger by purging itself ...

— *From a letter of Lassalle to Marx, June 24, 1852.*

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Written in late 1901 and early 1902. First published as a separate work in March 1902. Text taken from Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 5.

## Preface

According to the author's original plan, the present pamphlet was to have been devoted to a detailed development of the ideas expressed in the article "Where to Begin?" (*Iskra*, No. 4, May 1901).<sup>\*</sup> We must first apologise to the reader for the delay in fulfilling the promise made in that article (and repeated in response to many private inquiries and letters). One of the reasons for this delay was the attempt, undertaken in June of the past year (1901), to unite all the social-democratic organisations abroad. It was natural to wait for the results of this attempt, for, had the effort proved successful, it would perhaps have been necessary to expound *Iskra's* conceptions of organisation from a somewhat different approach; in any case, such a success promised to put an end very quickly to the existence of the two trends in the Russian social-democratic movement. As the reader knows, the attempt failed, and, as we propose to show, was bound to fail after the new swing of *Rabocheye Dyelo*, in its issue No. 10, towards Economism. It was found to be absolutely essential to begin a determined struggle against this trend, diffuse and ill-defined, but for that reason the more persistent, the more capable of reasserting itself in diverse forms. Accordingly, the original plan of the pamphlet was altered and considerably enlarged.

Its main theme was to have been the three questions raised in the article "Where to Begin?" — the character and main content of our political agitation; our organisational tasks; and the plan for building, simultaneously and from various sides, a militant, all-Russia organisation. These questions have long engaged the mind of the author, who tried to raise them in *Rabochaya Gazeta*<sup>2</sup> during one of the unsuccessful attempts to revive that paper (see Chapter V). But the original plan to confine the pamphlet to an analysis of only these three questions and to set forth our views as far as possible in a positive form, without, or almost without, entering into polemics, proved wholly impracticable, for two reasons. On the one hand, Economism proved to be much more tenacious than we had supposed (we employ the term Economism in the broad sense, as explained in *Iskra*, No. 12 [December 1901], in the

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<sup>\*</sup> See this volume, pp. 68ff. — *Ed.*

article entitled “A Talk With Defenders of Economism”, which was a synopsis, so to speak, of the present pamphlet\*). It became clear beyond doubt that the differences regarding the solution of the three questions mentioned were explainable to a far greater degree by the basic antithesis between the two trends in the Russian social-democratic movement than by differences over details. On the other hand, the perplexity of the Economists over the practical application of our views in *Iskra* clearly revealed that we often speak literally in different tongues and therefore *cannot* arrive at an understanding without beginning *ab ovo*,\*\* and that an attempt must be made, in the simplest possible style, illustrated by numerous and concrete examples, *systematically to “clarify”* all our basic points of difference with *all* the Economists. I resolved to make such an attempt at “clarification”, fully realising that it would greatly increase the size of the pamphlet and delay its publication; I saw *no other way* of meeting my pledge I had made in the article “Where to Begin?” Thus, to the apologies for the delay, I must add others for the serious literary shortcomings of the pamphlet. I had to work *in great haste*, with frequent interruptions by a variety of other tasks.

The examination of the above three questions still constitutes the main theme of this pamphlet, but I found it necessary to begin with two questions of a more general nature — why such an “innocent” and “natural” slogan as “freedom of criticism” should be for us a veritable war-cry, and why we cannot come to an understanding even on the fundamental question of the role of social-democrats in relation to the spontaneous mass movement. Further, the exposition of our views on the character and substance of political agitation developed into an explanation of the difference between trade-unionist politics and social-democratic politics, while the exposition of our views on organisational tasks developed into an explanation of the difference between the amateurish methods which satisfy the Economists, and the organisation of revolutionaries which we hold to be indispensable. Further, I advance the “plan” for an all-Russia political newspaper with all the more insistence because the objections raised against it are untenable, and because no real answer has been given to the question I raised in the article “Where to Begin?” as to how we can set to work from all sides simultaneously to create the organisation we need. Finally, in the concluding part, I hope to show that we did all we could to prevent a decisive break with the Economists, a break which nevertheless proved inevitable; that *Rabocheye Dyelo* acquired a special significance, a “historical” significance, if you will, because it expressed fully and strikingly, not consistent Economism, but the confusion and vacillation which

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\* See this volume, pp. 75ff. — *Ed.*

\*\* From the beginning. — *Ed.*

constitute the distinguishing feature of *an entire period* in the history of Russian social-democracy; and that therefore the polemic with *Rabocheye Dyelo*, which may upon first view seem excessively detailed, also acquires significance, for we can make no progress until we have completely put an end to this period.

*N. Lenin*

*February 1902*

# I. Dogmatism & ‘Freedom of Criticism’

## A. What does ‘freedom of criticism’ mean?

“Freedom of criticism” is undoubtedly the most fashionable slogan at the present time, and the one most frequently employed in the controversies between socialists and democrats in all countries. At first sight, nothing would appear to be more strange than the solemn appeals to freedom of criticism made by one of the parties to the dispute. Have voices been raised in the advanced parties against the constitutional law of the majority of European countries which guarantees freedom to science and scientific investigation? “Something must be wrong here”, will be the comment of the onlooker who has heard this fashionable slogan repeated at every turn but has not yet penetrated the essence of the disagreement among the disputants; “evidently this slogan is one of the conventional phrases which, like nicknames, become legitimised by use, and become almost generic terms.”

In fact, it is no secret for anyone that two trends have taken form in present-day international\* social-democracy. The conflict between these trends now flares up in a bright flame and now dies down and smoulders under the ashes of imposing “truce resolutions”. The essence of the “new” trend, which adopts a “critical” attitude towards “obsolete dogmatic” Marxism, has been clearly enough *presented* by Bernstein and *demonstrated* by Millerand.

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\* Incidentally, in the history of modern socialism this is a phenomenon, perhaps unique and in its way very consoling, namely, that the strife of the various trends within the socialist movement has from national become international. Formerly, the disputes between Lassalleans and Eisenachers,<sup>3</sup> between Guesdists and Possibilists,<sup>4</sup> between Fabians and social-democrats, and between Narodnaya Volya adherents and social-democrats, remained confined within purely national frameworks, reflecting purely national features, and proceeding, as it were, on different planes. At the present time (as is now evident), the English Fabians, the French Ministerialists, the German Bernsteinians, and the Russian Critics — all belong to the same family, all extol each other, learn from each other, and together take up arms against “dogmatic” Marxism. In this first really international battle with socialist opportunism, international revolutionary social-democracy will perhaps become sufficiently strengthened to put an end to the political reaction that has long reigned in Europe?

Social-democracy must change from a party of social revolution into a democratic party of social reforms. Bernstein has surrounded this political demand with a whole battery of well-attuned “new” arguments and reasonings. Denied was the possibility of putting socialism on a scientific basis and of demonstrating its necessity and inevitability from the point of view of the materialist conception of history. Denied was the fact of growing impoverishment, the process of proletarianisation, and the intensification of capitalist contradictions; the very concept, “*ultimate aim*”, was declared to be unsound, and the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat was completely rejected. Denied was the antithesis in principle between liberalism and socialism. Denied was *the theory of the class struggle*, on the alleged grounds that it could not be applied to a strictly democratic society governed according to the will of the majority, etc.

Thus, the demand for a decisive turn from revolutionary social-democracy to bourgeois social-reformism was accompanied by a no less decisive turn towards bourgeois criticism of all the fundamental ideas of Marxism. In view of the fact that this criticism of Marxism has long been directed from the political platform, from university chairs, in numerous pamphlets and in a series of learned treatises, in view of the fact that the entire younger generation of the educated classes has been systematically reared for decades on this criticism, it is not surprising that the “new critical” trend in social-democracy should spring up, all complete, like Minerva from the head of Jove. The content of this new trend did not have to grow and take shape, it was transferred bodily from bourgeois to socialist literature.

To proceed. If Bernstein’s theoretical criticism and political yearnings were still unclear to anyone, the French took the trouble strikingly to demonstrate the “new method”. In this instance, too, France has justified its old reputation of being “the land where, more than anywhere else, the historical class struggles were each time fought out to a decision ...” (Engels, Introduction to Marx’s *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*).<sup>5</sup> The French socialists have begun, not to theorise, but to act. The democratically more highly developed political conditions in France have permitted them to put “Bernsteinism into practice” immediately, with all its consequences. Millerand has furnished an excellent example of practical Bernsteinism; not without reason did Bernstein and Vollmar rush so zealously to defend and laud him. Indeed, if social-democracy, in essence, is merely a party of reform and must be bold enough to admit this openly, then not only has a socialist the right to join a bourgeois cabinet, but he must always strive to do so. If democracy, in essence, means the abolition of class domination, then why should not a socialist minister charm the whole bourgeois world by orations on class collaboration? Why should he not remain in the cabinet even after the shooting down of workers by gendarmes has exposed, for the hundredth

and thousandth time, the real nature of the democratic collaboration of classes? Why should he not personally take part in greeting the tsar, for whom the French socialists now have no other name than hero of the gallows, knout, and exile (*knouteur, pendeur et deportateur*)? And the reward for this utter humiliation and self-degradation of socialism in the face of the whole world, for the corruption of the socialist consciousness of the working masses — the only basis that can guarantee our victory — the reward for this is pompous *projects* for miserable reforms, so miserable in fact that much more has been obtained from bourgeois governments!

He who does not deliberately close his eyes cannot fail to see that the new “critical” trend in socialism is nothing more nor less than a new variety of *opportunism*. And if we judge people, not by the glittering uniforms they don or by the high-sounding appellations they give themselves, but by their actions and by what they actually advocate, it will be clear that “freedom of criticism” means freedom for an opportunist trend in social-democracy, freedom to convert social-democracy into a democratic party of reform, freedom to introduce bourgeois ideas and bourgeois elements into socialism.

“Freedom” is a grand word, but under the banner of freedom for industry the most predatory wars were waged, under the banner of freedom of labour, the working people were robbed. The modern use of the term “freedom of criticism” contains the same inherent falsehood. Those who are really convinced that they have made progress in science would not demand freedom for the new views to continue side by side with the old, but the substitution of the new views for the old. The cry heard today, “Long live freedom of criticism”, is too strongly reminiscent of the fable of the empty barrel.

We are marching in a compact group along a precipitous and difficult path, firmly holding each other by the hand. We are surrounded on all sides by enemies, and we have to advance almost constantly under their fire. We have combined, by a freely adopted decision, for the purpose of fighting the enemy, and not of retreating into the neighbouring marsh, the inhabitants of which, from the very outset, have reproached us with having separated ourselves into an exclusive group and with having chosen the path of struggle instead of the path of conciliation. And now some among us begin to cry out: Let us go into the marsh! And when we begin to shame them, they retort: What backward people you are! Are you not ashamed to deny us the liberty to invite you to take a better road! Oh, yes, gentlemen! You are free not only to invite us, but to go yourselves wherever you will, even into the marsh. In fact, we think that the marsh is your proper place, and we are prepared to render *you* every assistance to get there. Only let go of our hands, don't clutch at us and don't besmirch the grand word freedom, for we too are “free” to go where we please, free to fight not only against the

marsh, but also against those who are turning towards the marsh!

## B. The new advocates of 'freedom of criticism'

Now, this slogan ("freedom of criticism") has in recent times been solemnly advanced by *Rabocheye Dyelo* (No. 10), organ of the Union of Russian Social-Democrats Abroad, not as a theoretical postulate, but as a political demand, as a reply to the question, "Is it possible to unite the social-democratic organisations operating abroad?": "For a durable unity, there must be freedom of criticism" (p. 36).

From this statement two definite conclusions follow: (1) that *Rabocheye Dyelo* has taken under its wing the opportunist trend in international social-democracy in general, and (2) that *Rabocheye Dyelo* demands freedom for opportunism in Russian social-democracy. Let us examine these conclusions.

*Rabocheye Dyelo* is "particularly" displeased with the "inclination of *Iskra* and *Zarya* to predict a rupture between the *Mountain* and the *Gironde* in international social-democracy".\*

Generally speaking [writes B. Krichevsky, editor of *Rabocheye Dyelo*] this talk of the *Mountain* and the *Gironde* heard in the ranks of social-democracy represents a shallow historical analogy, a strange thing to come from the pen of a Marxist. The *Mountain* and the *Gironde* did not represent different temperaments, or intellectual trends, as the historians of social thought may think, but different classes or strata — the middle bourgeoisie, on the one hand, and the petty bourgeoisie and the proletariat, on the other. In the modern socialist movement, however, there is no conflict of class interests; the socialist movement in its entirety, in *all* of its diverse forms [Krichevsky's italics], including the most pronounced Bernsteinians, stands on the basis of the class interests of the proletariat and its class struggle for political and economic emancipation [pp. 32-33].

A bold assertion! Has not Krichevsky heard of the fact, long ago noted, that it is precisely the extensive participation of an "academic" *stratum* in the socialist movement in recent years that has promoted such a rapid spread of Bernsteinism? And what is

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<sup>a</sup> A comparison of the two trends within the revolutionary proletariat (the revolutionary and the opportunist), and the two trends within the revolutionary bourgeoisie in the 18th century (the Jacobin, known as the *Mountain*, and the Girondist) was made in the leading article in No. 2 of *Iskra* (February 1901). The article was written by Plekhanov. The Cadets,<sup>6</sup> the Bezzaglavtsi,<sup>7</sup> and the Mensheviks to this day love to refer to Jacobinism in Russian social-democracy. But how Plekhanov came to apply this concept for the first time against the right wing of social-democracy — about this they prefer to keep silent or to forget. [Author's note to the 1907 edition. — *Ed.*]

most important — on what does our author found his opinion that even “the most pronounced Bernsteinians” stand on the basis of the class struggle for the political and economic emancipation of the proletariat? No one knows. This determined defence of the most pronounced Bernsteinians is not supported by any argument or reasoning whatever. Apparently, the author believes that if he repeats what the most pronounced Bernsteinians say about themselves his assertion requires no proof. But can anything more “shallow” be imagined than this judgement of an entire trend based on nothing more than what the representatives of that trend say about themselves? Can anything more shallow be imagined than the subsequent “homily” on the two different and even diametrically opposite types, or paths, of party development? (*Rabocheye Dyelo*, pp. 34-35.) The German social-democrats, in other words, recognise complete freedom of criticism, but the French do not, and it is precisely their example that demonstrates the “bane of intolerance”.

To this we can only say that the very example B. Krichevsky affords us attests to the fact that the name Marxists is at times assumed by people who conceive history literally in the “Ilovaisky manner”. To explain the unity of the German Socialist Party and the disunity of the French Socialist Party, there is no need whatever to go into the special features in the history of these countries, to contrast the conditions of military semi-absolutism in the one with republican parliamentarism in the other, to analyse the effects of the Paris Commune and the effects of the Exceptional Law Against the Socialists, to compare the economic life and economic development of the two countries, or to recall that “the unexampled growth of German social-democracy” was accompanied by a strenuous struggle, unique in the history of socialism, not only against erroneous theories (Mühlberger, Dühring,\* the *Katheders*-Socialists<sup>8</sup>), but also against erroneous tactics (Lassalle), etc., etc. All that is superfluous! The French quarrel among themselves because they are intolerant; the Germans are united because they

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\* At the time Engels dealt his blows at Dühring, many representatives of German social-democracy inclined towards the latter's views, and accusations of acerbity, intolerance, unconradely polemics, etc., were hurled at Engels even publicly at a party congress. At the congress of 1877, Most, and his supporters, introduced a resolution to prohibit the publication of Engels's articles in *Vorwärts* because “they do not interest the overwhelming majority of the readers”, and Vahlteich declared that their publication had caused great damage to the party, that Dühring too had rendered services to social-democracy: “We must utilise everyone in the interests of the party; let the professors engage in polemics if they care to do so, but *Vorwärts* is not the place in which to conduct them” (*Vorwärts*, No. 65, June 6, 1877). Here we have another example of the defence of “freedom of criticism”, and our legal critics and illegal opportunists, who love so much to cite the example of the Germans, would do well to ponder it!

are good boys.

And observe, this piece of matchless profundity is designed to “refute” the fact that puts to rout the defence of the Bernsteinians. The question whether or not the Bernsteinians *stand* on the basis of the class struggle of the proletariat is one that can be completely and irrevocably answered only by historical experience. Consequently, the example of France holds greatest significance in this respect, because France is the only country in which the Bernsteinians attempted to *stand* independently, on their own feet, with the warm approval of their German colleagues (and partly also of the Russian opportunists; cf. *Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 2-3, pp. 83-84). The reference to the “intolerance” of the French, apart from its “historical” significance (in the Nozdryov sense), turns out to be merely an attempt to hush up very unpleasant facts with angry invectives.

Nor are we inclined to make a present of the Germans to Krichevsky and the numerous other champions of “freedom of criticism”. If the “most pronounced Bernsteinians” are still tolerated in the ranks of the German party, it is only to the extent that they *submit* to the Hannover resolution,<sup>9</sup> which emphatically rejected Bernstein’s “amendments”, and to the Lübeck resolution, which (notwithstanding the diplomatic terms in which it is couched) contains a direct warning to Bernstein. It is debatable, from the standpoint of the interests of the German party, whether diplomacy was appropriate and whether, in this case, a bad peace is better than a good quarrel; in short, opinions may differ as to the expediency of any one of the *methods* employed to reject Bernsteinism, but that the German party *did reject* Bernsteinism on two occasions, is a fact no one can fail to see. Therefore, to think that the German example confirms the thesis that “the most pronounced Bernsteinians stand on the basis of the class struggle of the proletariat, for political and economic emancipation”, means to fail completely to understand what is going on under our very eyes.\*

Nor is that all. As we have seen, *Rabocheye Dyelo* demands “freedom of criticism” and defends Bernsteinism before *Russian* social-democracy. Apparently it convinced itself that we were unfair to our “Critics” and Bernsteinians. But to which ones? who? where? when? What did the unfairness represent? About this, not a word. *Rabocheye Dyelo* does not name a single Russian Critic or Bernsteinian! We are left with but one

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\* It should be observed that *Rabocheye Dyelo* has always confined itself to a bare statement of facts concerning Bernsteinism in the German party and completely “refrained” from expressing its own opinion. See, for instance, the reports of the Stuttgart Congress<sup>10</sup> in No. 2-3 (p. 66), in which all the disagreements are reduced to “tactics” and the statement is merely made that the overwhelming majority remain true to the previous revolutionary tactics. Or, No. 4-5 (p. 25, *et seq.*), in which we have nothing but a paraphrasing of the speeches delivered at the Hanover Congress, with a reprint of Bebel’s resolution. An exposition and a criticism of Bernstein’s

of two possible suppositions. *Either* the unfairly treated party is none other than *Rabocheye Dyelo* itself (this is confirmed by the fact that in the two articles in No. 10 reference is made only to the wrongs suffered by *Rabocheye Dyelo* at the hands of *Zarya* and *Iskra*). If that is the case, how is the strange fact to be explained that *Rabocheye Dyelo*, which always vehemently dissociated itself from all solidarity with Bernsteinism, could not defend itself without putting in a word in defence of the “most pronounced Bernsteinians” and of freedom of criticism? Or some third persons have been treated unfairly. If this is the case, then what reasons may there be for not naming them?

We see, therefore, that *Rabocheye Dyelo* is continuing to play the game of hide-and-seek it has played (as we shall show below) ever since its founding. And let us note further this *first* practical application of the vaunted “freedom of criticism”. In actual fact, not only was it forthwith reduced to abstention from all criticism, but also to abstention from expressing independent views altogether. The very *Rabocheye Dyelo*, which avoids mentioning Russian Bernsteinism as if it were a shameful disease (to use Starover’s apt expression), proposes, for the treatment of this disease, to *copy word for word* the latest German prescription for the German variety of the malady! Instead of freedom of criticism — slavish (worse: apish) imitation! The very same social and political content of modern international opportunism reveals itself in a variety of ways according to national peculiarities. In one country the opportunists have long ago come out under a separate flag; in another, they have ignored theory and in fact pursued the policy of the Radicals-Socialists; in a third, some members of the revolutionary party have deserted to the camp of opportunism and strive to achieve their aims, not in open struggle for principles and for new tactics, but by gradual, imperceptible, and, if one may so put it, unpunishable corruption of their party; in a fourth country, similar deserters employ the same methods in the gloom of political slavery, and with a completely original combination of “legal” and “illegal” activity, etc. To talk of freedom of criticism and of Bernsteinism as a condition for uniting the *Russian* social-democrats and not to explain how *Russian* Bernsteinism has manifested itself and what particular fruits it has borne, amounts to talking with the aim of saying nothing.

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views are again put off (as was the case in No. 2-3) to be dealt with in a “special article”. Curiously enough, in No. 4-5 (p. 33), we read the following: “... the views expounded by Bebel have the support of the vast majority of the congress”, and a few lines thereafter: “... David defended Bernstein’s views ... First of all, he tried to show that ... Bernstein and his friends, after all is said and done [*sic!*], stand on the basis of the class struggle ...” This was written in December 1899, and in September 1901 *Rabocheye Dyelo*, apparently no longer believing that Bebel was right, repeats David’s views as its own!

Let us ourselves try, if only in a few words, to say what *Rabocheye Dyelo* did not want to say (or which was, perhaps, beyond its comprehension).

### C. Criticism in Russia

The chief distinguishing feature of Russia in regard to the point we are examining is that *the very beginning* of the spontaneous working-class movement, on the one hand, and of the turn of progressive public opinion towards Marxism, on the other, was marked by the combination of manifestly heterogeneous elements under a common flag to fight the common enemy (the obsolete social and political world outlook). We refer to the heyday of "legal Marxism". Speaking generally, this was an altogether curious phenomenon that no one in the '80s or the beginning of the '90s would have believed possible. In a country ruled by an autocracy, with a completely enslaved press, in a period of desperate political reaction in which even the tiniest outgrowth of political discontent and protest is persecuted, the theory of revolutionary Marxism suddenly forces its way into the *censored* literature and, though expounded in Aesopian language, is understood by all the "interested". The government had accustomed itself to regarding only the theory of the (revolutionary) *Narodnaya Volya* as dangerous, without, as is usual, observing its internal evolution, and rejoicing at *any* criticism levelled against it. Quite a considerable time elapsed (by our Russian standards) before the government realised what had happened and the unwieldy army of censors and gendarmes discovered the new enemy and flung itself upon him. Meanwhile, Marxist books were published one after another, Marxist journals and newspapers were founded, nearly everyone became a Marxist, Marxists were flattered, Marxists were courted, and the book publishers rejoiced at the extraordinary, ready sale of Marxist literature. It was quite natural, therefore, that among the Marxian neophytes who were caught up in this atmosphere, there should be more than one "author who got a swelled head..."<sup>11</sup>

We can now speak calmly of this period as of an event of the past. It is no secret that the brief period in which Marxism blossomed on the surface of our literature was called forth by an alliance between people of extreme and of very moderate views. In point of fact, the latter were bourgeois democrats; this conclusion (so markedly confirmed by their subsequent "critical" development) suggested itself to some even when the "alliance" was still intact.\*

That being the case, are not the revolutionary social-democrats who entered into

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\* The reference is to an article by K. Tulin directed against Struve. [See Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 1, pp. 333-507. — *Ed.*] The article was based on an essay entitled "The Reflection of Marxism in Bourgeois Literature". [Author's note to the 1907 edition. — *Ed.*]

the alliance with the future "Critics" mainly responsible for the subsequent "confusion"? This question, together with a reply in the affirmative, is sometimes heard from people with too rigid a view. But such people are entirely in the wrong. Only those who are not sure of themselves can fear to enter into temporary alliances even with unreliable people; not a single political party could exist without such alliances. The combination with the legal Marxists was in its way the first really political alliance entered into by Russian social-democrats. Thanks to this alliance, an astonishingly rapid victory was obtained over Narodism, and Marxist ideas (even though in a vulgarised form) became very widespread. Moreover, the alliance was not concluded altogether without "conditions". Evidence of this is the burning by the censor, in 1895, of the Marxist collection *Material on the Question of the Economic Development of Russia*.<sup>12</sup> If the literary agreement with the legal Marxists can be compared with a political alliance, then that book can be compared with a political treaty.

The rupture, of course, did not occur because the "allies" proved to be bourgeois democrats. On the contrary, the representatives of the latter trend are natural and desirable allies of social-democracy insofar as its democratic tasks, brought to the fore by the prevailing situation in Russia, are concerned. But an essential condition for such an alliance must be the full opportunity for the socialists to reveal to the working class that its interests are diametrically opposed to the interests of the bourgeoisie. However, the Bernsteinian and "critical" trend, to which the majority of the legal Marxists turned, deprived the socialists of this opportunity and demoralised the socialist consciousness by vulgarising Marxism, by advocating the theory of the blunting of social contradictions, by declaring the idea of the social revolution and of the dictatorship of the proletariat to be absurd, by reducing the working-class movement and the class struggle to narrow trade-unionism and to a "realistic" struggle for petty, gradual reforms. This was synonymous with bourgeois democracy's denial of socialism's right to independence and, consequently, of its right to existence; in practice it meant a striving to convert the nascent working-class movement into an appendage of the liberals.

Naturally, under such circumstances the rupture was necessary. But the "peculiar" feature of Russia manifested itself in the fact that this rupture simply meant the elimination of the social-democrats from the most accessible and widespread "legal" literature. The "ex-Marxists", who took up the flag of "criticism" and who obtained almost a monopoly to "demolish Marxism, entrenched themselves in this literature. Catchwords like "Against orthodoxy" and "Long live freedom of criticism" (now repeated by *Rabocheye Dyelo*) forthwith became the vogue, and the fact that neither the censor nor the gendarmes could resist this vogue is apparent from the publication of *three* Russian editions of the work of the celebrated Bernstein (celebrated in the Herostrean

sense) and from the fact that the works of Bernstein, Mr. Prokopovich, and others were recommended by Zubatov (*Iskra*, No. 10). A task now devolved upon the social-democrats that was difficult in itself and was made incredibly more difficult by purely external obstacles — the task of combating the new trend. This trend did not confine itself to the sphere of literature. The turn towards “criticism” was accompanied by an infatuation for Economism among social-democratic practical workers.

The manner in which the connection between, and interdependence of, legal criticism and illegal Economism arose and grew is in itself an interesting subject, one that could serve as the theme of a special article. We need only note here that this connection undoubtedly existed. The notoriety deservedly acquired by the *Credo* was due precisely to the frankness with which it formulated this connection and blurted out the fundamental political tendency of Economism — let the workers carry on the economic struggle (it would be more correct to say the trade unionist struggle, because the latter also embraces specifically working class politics) and let the Marxist intelligentsia merge with the liberals for the political “struggle.” Thus, trade-unionist work “among the people” meant fulfilling the first part of this task, while legal criticism meant fulfilling the second. This statement was such an excellent weapon against Economism that, had there been no *Credo*, it would have been worth inventing one.

The *Credo* was not invented, but it was published without the consent and perhaps even against the will of its authors. At all events, the present writer, who took part in dragging this new “program” into the light of day,\* has heard complaints and reproaches to the effect that copies of the resume of the speakers’ views were distributed, dubbed the *Credo*, and even published in the press together with the protest! We refer to this episode because it reveals a very peculiar feature of our Economism — fear of publicity. This is a feature of Economism generally, and not of the authors of the *Credo* alone. It was revealed by that most outspoken and honest advocate of Economism, *Rabochaya Mysl*, and by *Rabocheye Dyelo* (which was indignant over the publication of “Economist” documents in the *Vademecum*<sup>15</sup>), as well as by the Kiev Committee, which two years ago refused to permit the publication of its *profession de foi*,\* together with a repudiation of it,\* and by many other individual representatives of Economism.

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\* The reference is to the *Protest of the Seventeen against the Credo*. The present writer took part in drawing up this protest (the end of 1899).<sup>13</sup> The protest and the *Credo* were published abroad in the spring of 1900. [See “A Protest of Russian Social-Democrats”, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4, pp. 167-182. — *Ed.*] It is now known from the article written by Madame Kuskova (I think in *Byloye*<sup>14</sup>) that she was the author of the *Credo* and that Mr. Prokopovich was very prominent among the Economists abroad at the time. [Author’s note to the 1907 edition. — *Ed.*]

\*\* Confession of faith.<sup>16</sup>

This fear of criticism displayed by the advocates of freedom of criticism cannot be attributed solely to craftiness (although, on occasion, no doubt craftiness is brought into play: it would be improvident to expose the young and as yet frail shoots of the new trend to attacks by opponents). No, the majority of the Economists look with sincere resentment (as by the very nature of Economism they must) upon all theoretical controversies, factional disagreements, broad political questions, plans for organising revolutionaries, etc. "Leave all that to the people abroad!" said a fairly consistent Economist to me one day, thereby expressing a very widespread (and again purely trade-unionist) view; our concern is the working-class movement, the workers, organisations here, in our localities; all the rest is merely the invention of doctrinaires, "the overrating of ideology", as the authors of the letter, published in *Iskra*, No. 12, expressed it, in unison with *Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 10.

The question now arises: such being the peculiar features of Russian "criticism" and Russian Bernsteinism, what should have been the task of those who sought to oppose opportunism in deeds and not merely in words? First, they should have made efforts to resume the theoretical work that had barely begun in the period of legal Marxism and that fell anew on the shoulders of the comrades working underground. Without such work the successful growth of the movement was impossible. Secondly, they should have actively combated the legal "criticism" that was perverting people's minds on a considerable scale. Thirdly, they should have actively opposed confusion and vacillation in the practical movement, exposing and repudiating every conscious or unconscious attempt to degrade our program and our tactics.

That *Rabocheye Dyelo* did none of these things is well known; we shall have occasion below to deal with this well-known fact in detail and from various aspects. At the moment, however, we desire merely to show the glaring contradiction that exists between the demand for "freedom of criticism" and the specific features of our native criticism and Russian Economism. It suffices but to glance at the text of the resolution in which the Union of Russian Social-Democrats Abroad endorsed the point of view of *Rabocheye Dyelo*.

In the interests of the further ideological development of social-democracy, we recognise the freedom of criticism of social-democratic theory in party literature to be absolutely necessary insofar as the criticism does not run counter to the class and revolutionary character of this theory [*Two Conferences*, p. 10].

And the motivation? The resolution "in its first part coincides with the resolution of

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\*As far as our information goes, the composition of the Kiev Committee has changed since then.

the Lübeck party congress on Bernstein" ... In the simplicity of their souls the "Unionists" failed to observe what a *testimonium paupertatis* (attestation of poverty) they betray with this copying ... "But ... in its second part, it restricts freedom of criticism much more than did the Lübeck party congress."

The resolution of the Union Abroad, then, is directed against the Russian Bernsteinians? If it is not, then the reference to Lübeck would be utterly absurd. But it is not true to say that it "restricts freedom of criticism". In adopting their Hannover resolution, the Germans, point by point, rejected *precisely* the amendments proposed by Bernstein, while in their Lübeck resolution they cautioned *Bernstein personally*, by naming him. Our "free" imitators, however, make *not a single allusion* to a *single* manifestation of specifically Russian "criticism" and Russian Economism. In view of this omission, the bare reference to the class and revolutionary character of the theory leaves far wider scope for misinterpretation, particularly when the Union Abroad refuses to identify "so-called Economism" with opportunism (*Two Conferences*, p. 8, paragraph 1). But all this, in passing. The main thing to note is that the positions of the opportunists in relation to the revolutionary social-democrats in Russia are diametrically opposed to those in Germany. In that country, as we know, the revolutionary social-democrats are in favour of preserving that which exists — the old program and the tactics, which are universally known and have been elucidated in all their details by many decades of experience. But the "Critics" desire to introduce changes, and since these Critics represent an insignificant minority, and since they are very timid in their revisionist efforts, one can understand the motives of the majority in confining themselves to the dry rejection of "innovations". In Russia, however, it is the Critics and the Economists who are in favour of preserving that which exists: the "Critics" want us to go on regarding them as Marxists and to guarantee them the "freedom of criticism" they enjoyed to the full (for, in fact, they never recognised any kind of *party* ties,\* and, moreover, we never had a generally recognised party body that could "restrict" freedom of criticism, if only by counsel); the Economists want the revolutionaries to recognise the "sovereign character of the present movement" (*Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 10, p. 25), i.e., to recognise the "legitimacy" of that which exists;

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\* The fact alone of the absence of public party ties and party traditions, representing as it does a cardinal difference between Russia and Germany, should have warned all sensible socialists against blind imitation. But here is an instance of the lengths to which "freedom of criticism" goes in Russia. Mr. Bulgakov, the Russian Critic, utters the following reprimand to the Austrian Critic, Hertz: "Notwithstanding the independence of his conclusions, Hertz on this point (on the question of cooperative societies) apparently remains excessively bound by the opinions of his party, and although he disagrees with it in details, he dare not reject the common principle"

they want the “ideologists” not to try to “divert” the movement from the path that “is determined by the interaction of material elements and material environment” (“Letter” in *Iskra*, No. 12); they want to have that struggle recognised as desirable “which it is possible for the workers to wage under the present conditions”, and as the only possible struggle, that “which they are actually waging at the present time” (*Separate Supplement to Rabochaya Mysl*, p. 14). We revolutionary social-democrats, on the contrary, are dissatisfied with this worship of spontaneity, i.e., of that which exists “at the present moment”. We demand that the tactics that have prevailed in recent years be changed; we declare that “before we can unite, and in order that we may unite, we must first of all draw firm and definite lines of demarcation” (see announcement of the publication of *Iskra*).<sup>\*</sup> In a word, the Germans stand for that which exists and reject changes; we demand a change of that which exists, and reject subservience thereto and reconciliation to it.

This “slight” difference our “free” copyists of German resolutions failed to notice.

#### D. Engels on the importance of the theoretical struggle

“Dogmatism, doctrinairism”, “ossification of the party — the inevitable retribution that follows the violent strait-lacing of thought” — these are the enemies against which the knightly champions of “freedom of criticism” in *Rabocheye Dyelo* rise up in arms. We are very glad that this question has been placed on the order of the day and we would only propose to add to it one other:

And who are the judges?

We have before us two publishers’ announcements. One, “The Program of the Periodical Organ of the Union of Russian Social-Democrats Abroad — *Rabocheye Dyelo*” (reprint from No. 1 of *Rabocheye Dyelo*), and the other, the “Announcement of the Resumption of the Publications of the Emancipation of Labour Group”. Both are dated 1899, when the “crisis of Marxism” had long been under discussion. And what do we find? We would seek in vain in the first announcement for any reference to this phenomenon, or a definite statement of the position the new organ intends to adopt on this question. Not a word is said about theoretical work and the urgent tasks that

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(*Capitalism and Agriculture*, Vol. II, p. 287). The subject of a politically enslaved state, in which 999 out of 1000 of the population are corrupted to the marrow by political subservience and completely lack the conception of party honour and party ties, superciliously reproves a citizen of a constitutional state for being excessively “bound by the opinions of his party”! Our illegal organisations have nothing else to do, of course, but draw up resolutions on freedom of criticism ...

<sup>\*</sup> See this volume, pp. 63ff. — *Ed.*

now confront it, either in this program or in the supplements to it that were adopted by the Third Congress of the Union Abroad in 1901 (*Two Conferences*, pp. 15-18). During this entire time the editorial board of *Rabocheye Dyelo* ignored theoretical questions, in spite of the fact that these were questions that disturbed the minds of all social-democrats the world over.

The other announcement, on the contrary, points first of all to the declining interest in theory in recent years, imperatively demands “vigilant attention to the theoretical aspect of the revolutionary movement of the proletariat”, and calls for “ruthless criticism of the Bernsteinian and other antirevolutionary tendencies” in our movement. The issues of *Zarya* to date show how this program has been carried out.

Thus, we see that high-sounding phrases against the ossification of thought, etc., conceal unconcern and helplessness with regard to the development of theoretical thought. The case of the Russian social-democrats manifestly illustrates the general European phenomenon (long ago noted also by the German Marxists) that the much vaunted freedom of criticism does not imply substitution of one theory for another, but freedom from all integral and pondered theory; it implies eclecticism and lack of principle. Those who have the slightest acquaintance with the actual state of our movement cannot but see that the wide spread of Marxism was accompanied by a certain lowering of the theoretical level. Quite a number of people with very little, and even a total lack of theoretical training joined the movement because of its practical significance and its practical successes. We can judge from that how tactless *Rabocheye Dyelo* is when, with an air of triumph, it quotes Marx's statement: “Every step of real movement is more important than a dozen programs.”<sup>17</sup> To repeat these words in a period of theoretical disorder is like wishing mourners at a funeral many happy returns of the day. Moreover, these words of Marx are taken from his letter on the Gotha Program,<sup>18</sup> in which he *sharply condemns* eclecticism in the formulation of principles. If you must unite, Marx wrote to the party leaders, then enter into agreements to satisfy the practical aims of the movement, but do not allow any bargaining over principles, do not make theoretical “concessions”. This was Marx's idea, and yet there are people among us who seek — in his name — to belittle the significance of theory!

Without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement. This idea cannot be insisted upon too strongly at a time when the fashionable preaching of opportunism goes hand in hand with an infatuation for the narrowest forms of practical activity. Yet, for Russian social-democrats the importance of theory is enhanced by three other circumstances, which are often forgotten: first, by the fact that our party is only in process of formation, its features are only just becoming defined, and it has as yet far from settled accounts with the other trends of revolutionary thought that

threaten to divert the movement from the correct path. On the contrary, precisely the very recent past was marked by a revival of non-social-democratic revolutionary trends (an eventuation regarding which Axelrod long ago warned the Economists). Under these circumstances, what at first sight appears to be an "unimportant" error may lead to most deplorable consequences, and only short-sighted people can consider factional disputes and a strict differentiation between shades of opinion inopportune or superfluous. The fate of Russian social-democracy for very many years to come may depend on the strengthening of one or the other "shade".

Secondly, the social-democratic movement is in its very essence an international movement. This means, not only that we must combat national chauvinism, but that an incipient movement in a young country can be successful only if it makes use of the experiences of other countries. In order to make use of these experiences it is not enough merely to be acquainted with them, or simply to copy out the latest resolutions. What is required is the ability to treat these experiences critically and to test them independently. He who realises how enormously the modern working-class movement has grown and branched out will understand what a reserve of theoretical forces and political (as well as revolutionary) experience is required to carry out this task.

Thirdly, the national tasks of Russian social-democracy are such as have never confronted any other socialist party in the world. We shall have occasion further on to deal with the political and organisational duties which the task of emancipating the whole people from the yoke of autocracy imposes upon us. At this point, we wish to state only that the *role of vanguard fighter can be fulfilled only by a party that is guided by the most advanced theory*. To have a concrete understanding of what this means, let the reader recall such predecessors of Russian social-democracy as Herzen, Belinsky, Chernyshevsky, and the brilliant galaxy of revolutionaries of the '70s; let him ponder over the world significance which Russian literature is now acquiring; let him . . . but be that enough!

Let us quote what Engels said in 1874 concerning the significance of theory in the social-democratic movement. Engels recognises, *not two* forms of the great struggle of social-democracy (political and economic), as is the fashion among us, *but three, placing the theoretical struggle on a par with the first two*. His recommendations to the German working-class movement, which had become strong, practically and politically, are so instructive from the standpoint of present-day problems and controversies, that we hope the reader will not be vexed with us for quoting a long passage from his prefatory note to *Der deutsche Bauernkrieg*,\* which has long become a great bibliographical rarity:

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<sup>a</sup> Dritter Abdruck, Leipzig, 1875. Verlag der Genossenschaftsbuchdruckerei. [*The Peasant War in Germany*. Third impression. Cooperative Publishers, Leipzig, 1875. — Ed.]

The German workers have two important advantages over those of the rest of Europe. First, they belong to the most theoretical people of Europe; and they have retained that sense of theory which the so-called "educated" classes of Germany have almost completely lost. Without German philosophy, which preceded it, particularly that of Hegel, German scientific socialism — the only scientific socialism that has ever existed — would never have come into being. Without a sense of theory among the workers, this scientific socialism would never have entered their flesh and blood as much as is the case. What an immeasurable advantage this is may be seen, on the one hand, from the indifference towards all theory, which is one of the main reasons why the English working-class movement crawls along so slowly in spite of the splendid organisation of the individual unions; on the other hand, from the mischief and confusion wrought by Proudhonism, in its original form, among the French and Belgians, and, in the form further caricatured by Bakunin, among the Spaniards and Italians.

The second advantage is that, chronologically speaking, the Germans were about the last to come into the workers' movement. Just as German theoretical socialism will never forget that it rests on the shoulders of Saint-Simon, Fourier, and Owen — three men who, in spite of all their fantastic notions and all their utopianism, have their place among the most eminent thinkers of all times, and whose genius anticipated innumerable things, the correctness of which is now being scientifically proved by us — so the practical workers' movement in Germany ought never to forget that it has developed on the shoulders of the English and French movements, that it was able simply to utilise their dearly bought experience, and could now avoid their mistakes, which in their time were mostly unavoidable. Without the precedent of the English trade unions and French workers' political struggles, without the gigantic impulse given especially by the Paris Commune, where would we be now?

It must be said to the credit of the German workers that they have exploited the advantages of their situation with rare understanding. For the first time since a workers' movement has existed, the struggle is being conducted pursuant to its three sides — the theoretical, the political, and the practical-economic (resistance to the capitalists) — in harmony and in its interconnections, and in a systematic way. It is precisely in this, as it were, concentric attack, that the strength and invincibility of the German movement lies.

Due to this advantageous situation, on the one hand, and to the insular peculiarities of the English and the forcible suppression of the French movement, on the other, the German workers have for the moment been placed in the vanguard of the proletarian struggle. How long events will allow them to occupy this post of honour cannot be foretold. But let us hope that as long as they occupy it, they will fill it fittingly. This

demands redoubled efforts in every field of struggle and agitation. In particular, it will be the duty of the leaders to gain an ever clearer insight into all theoretical questions, to free themselves more and more from the influence of traditional phrases inherited from the old world outlook, and constantly to keep in mind that socialism, since it has become a science, demands that it be pursued as a science, i.e., that it be studied. The task will be to spread with increased zeal among the masses of the workers the ever more clarified understanding thus acquired, to knit together ever more firmly the organisation both of the party and of the trade unions ... If the German workers progress in this way, they will not be marching exactly at the head of the movement — it is not at all in the interest of this movement that the workers of any particular country should march at its head — but they will occupy an honourable place in the battle line; and they will stand armed for battle when either unexpectedly grave trials or momentous events demand of them increased courage, increased determination and energy.<sup>19</sup>

Engels's words proved prophetic. Within a few years the German workers were subjected to unexpectedly grave trials in the form of the Exceptional Law Against the Socialists. And they met those trials armed for battle and succeeded in emerging from them victorious.

The Russian proletariat will have to undergo trials immeasurably graver; it will have to fight a monster compared with which an antisocialist law in a constitutional country seems but a dwarf. History has now confronted us with an immediate task which is the *most revolutionary* of all the *immediate* tasks confronting the proletariat of any country. The fulfilment of this task, the destruction of the most powerful bulwark, not only of European, but (it may now be said) of Asiatic reaction, would make the Russian proletariat the vanguard of the international revolutionary proletariat. And we have the right to count upon acquiring this honourable title, already earned by our predecessors, the revolutionaries of the '70s, if we succeed in inspiring our movement, which is a thousand times broader and deeper, with the same devoted determination and vigour. ■

## II. The Spontaneity of the Masses & the Consciousness of the Social-Democrats

We have said that our movement, much more extensive and deep than the movement of the '70s, must be inspired with the same devoted determination and energy that inspired the movement at that time. Indeed, no one, we think, has until now doubted that the strength of the present-day movement lies in the awakening of the masses (principally, the industrial proletariat) and that its weakness lies in the lack of consciousness and initiative among the revolutionary leaders.

However, of late a staggering discovery has been made, which threatens to disestablish all hitherto prevailing views on this question. This discovery was made by *Rabocheye Dyelo*, which in its polemic with *Iskra* and *Zarya* did not confine itself to making objections on separate points, but tried to ascribe “general disagreements” to a more profound cause — to the “different appraisals of the *relative* importance of the spontaneous and consciously ‘methodical’ element”. *Rabocheye Dyelo* formulated its indictment as a “*belittling of the significance of the objective or the spontaneous element of development*”.<sup>a</sup> To this we say: Had the polemics with *Iskra* and *Zarya* resulted in nothing more than causing *Rabocheye Dyelo* to hit upon these “general disagreements”, that alone would give us considerable satisfaction, so significant is this thesis and so clear is the light it sheds on the quintessence of the present-day theoretical and political differences that exist among Russian social-democrats.

For this reason the question of the relation between consciousness and spontaneity is of such enormous general interest, and for this reason the question must be dealt with in great detail.

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<sup>a</sup> *Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 10, September 1901, pp. 17-18. *Rabocheye Dyelo*'s italics.

## A. The beginning of the spontaneous upsurge

In the previous chapter we pointed out how *universally* absorbed the educated youth of Russia was in the theories of Marxism in the middle of the '90s. In the same period the strikes that followed the famous St. Petersburg industrial war of 1896 assumed a similar general character. Their spread over the whole of Russia clearly showed the depth of the newly awakening popular movement, and if we are to speak of the "spontaneous element" then, of course, it is this strike movement which, first and foremost, must be regarded as spontaneous. But there is spontaneity and spontaneity. Strikes occurred in Russia in the '70s and '60s (and even in the first half of the 19th century), and they were accompanied by the "spontaneous" destruction of machinery, etc. Compared with these "revolts", the strikes of the '90s might even be described as "conscious", to such an extent do they mark the progress which the working-class movement made in that period. This shows that the "spontaneous element", in essence, represents nothing more nor less than consciousness in an *embryonic form*. Even the primitive revolts expressed the awakening of consciousness to a certain extent. The workers were losing their age-long faith in the permanence of the system which oppressed them and began ... I shall not say to understand, but to sense the necessity for collective resistance, definitely abandoning their slavish submission to the authorities. But this was, nevertheless, more in the nature of outbursts of desperation and vengeance than of *struggle*. The strikes of the '90s revealed far greater flashes of consciousness; definite demands were advanced, the strike was carefully timed, known cases and instances in other places were discussed, etc. The revolts were simply the resistance of the oppressed, whereas the systematic strikes represented the class struggle in embryo, but only in embryo. Taken by themselves, these strikes were simply trade union struggles, not yet social-democratic struggles. They marked the awakening antagonisms between workers and employers; but the workers were not, and could not be, conscious of the irreconcilable antagonism of their interests to the whole of the modern political and social system, i.e., theirs was not yet social-democratic consciousness. In this sense, the strikes of the '90s, despite the enormous progress they represented as compared with the "revolts", remained a purely spontaneous movement.

We have said that *there could not have been* social-democratic consciousness among the workers. It would have to be brought to them from without. The history of all countries shows that the working class, exclusively by its own effort, is able to develop only trade union consciousness, i.e., the conviction that it is necessary to combine in unions, fight the employers, and strive to compel the government to pass necessary labour legislation, etc.\* The theory of socialism, however, grew out of the philosophic,

historical, and economic theories elaborated by educated representatives of the propertied classes, by intellectuals. By their social status, the founders of modern scientific socialism, Marx and Engels, themselves belonged to the bourgeois intelligentsia. In the very same way, in Russia, the theoretical doctrine of social-democracy arose altogether independently of the spontaneous growth of the working-class movement; it arose as a natural and inevitable outcome of the development of thought among the revolutionary socialist intelligentsia. In the period under discussion, the middle '90s, this doctrine not only represented the completely formulated program of the Emancipation of Labour group, but had already won over to its side the majority of the revolutionary youth in Russia.

Hence, we had both the spontaneous awakening of the working masses, their awakening to conscious life and conscious struggle, and a revolutionary youth, armed with social-democratic theory and straining towards the workers. In this connection it is particularly important to state the oft-forgotten (and comparatively little-known) fact that, although the *early* social-democrats of that period *zealously carried on economic agitation* (being guided in this activity by the truly useful indications contained in the pamphlet *On Agitation*,<sup>20</sup> then still in manuscript), they did not regard this as their sole task. On the contrary, *from the very beginning* they set for Russian social-democracy the most far-reaching historical tasks, in general, and the task of overthrowing the autocracy, in particular. Thus, towards the end of 1895, the St. Petersburg group of social-democrats, which founded the League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class, prepared the first issue of a newspaper called *Rabocheye Dyelo*. This issue was ready to go to press when it was seized by the gendarmes, on the night of December 8, 1895, in a raid on the house of one of the members of the group, Anatoly Alexeyevich Vaneyev,\*\* so that the first edition of *Rabocheye Dyelo* was not destined to see the light of day. The leading article in this issue (which perhaps 30 years hence some *Russkaya Starina*<sup>21</sup> will unearth in the archives of the Department of Police) outlined the historical tasks of the working class in Russia and placed the achievement of political liberty at their head. The issue also contained an article entitled "What Are

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\* Trade-unionism does not exclude "politics" altogether, as some imagine. Trade unions have always conducted some political (but not social-democratic) agitation and struggle. We shall deal with the difference between trade union politics and social-democratic politics in the next chapter.

\*\* A.A. Vaneyev died in Eastern Siberia in 1899 from consumption, which he contracted during solitary confinement in prison prior to his banishment. That is why we considered it possible to publish the above information, the authenticity of which we guarantee, for it comes from persons who were closely and directly acquainted with A.A. Vaneyev.

Our Ministers Thinking About?”\* which dealt with the crushing of the elementary education committees by the police. In addition, there was some correspondence from St. Petersburg, and from other parts of Russia (e.g., a letter on the massacre of the workers in Yaroslavl Gubernia). This, “first effort”, if we are not mistaken, of the Russian social-democrats of the '90s was not a purely local, or less still, “economic”, newspaper, but one that aimed to unite the strike movement with the revolutionary movement against the autocracy, and to win over to the side of social-democracy all who were oppressed by the policy of reactionary obscurantism. No one in the slightest degree acquainted with the state of the movement at that period could doubt that such a paper would have met with warm response among the workers of the capital and the revolutionary intelligentsia and would have had a wide circulation. The failure of the enterprise merely showed that the social-democrats of that period were unable to meet the immediate requirements of the time owing to their lack of revolutionary experience and practical training. This must be said, too, with regard to the *S. Peterburgsky Rabochy Listok*<sup>22</sup> and particularly with regard to *Rabochaya Gazeta* and the *Manifesto* of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, founded in the spring of 1898. Of course, we would not dream of blaming the social-democrats of that time for this unpreparedness. But in order to profit from the experience of that movement, and to draw practical lessons from it, we must thoroughly understand the causes and significance of this or that shortcoming. It is therefore highly important to establish the fact that a part (perhaps even a majority) of the social-democrats, active in the period of 1895-98, justly considered it possible even then, at the very beginning of the “spontaneous” movement, to come forward with a most extensive program and a militant tactical line.\*\* Lack of training of the majority of the revolutionaries, an entirely natural phenomenon, could not have roused any particular fears. Once the tasks were

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\* See Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 2, pp. 87-92. — *Ed.*

\*\* “In adopting a hostile attitude towards the activities of the social-democrats of the late '90s, *Iskra* ignores the absence at that time of conditions for any work other than the struggle for petty demands”, declare the Economists in their “Letter to Russian Social-Democratic Organs” (*Iskra*, No. 12). The facts given above show that the assertion about “absence of conditions” is *diametrically opposed to the truth*. Not only at the end, but even in the mid-'90s, all the conditions existed for *other* work, besides the struggle for petty demands — all the conditions except adequate training of leaders. Instead of frankly admitting that we, the ideologists, the leaders, lacked sufficient training — the Economists seek to shift the blame entirely upon the “absence of conditions”, upon the effect of material environment that determines the road from which no ideologist will be able to divert the movement. What is this but slavish cringing before spontaneity, what but the infatuation of the “ideologists” with their own shortcomings?

correctly defined, once the energy existed for repeated attempts to fulfil them, temporary failures represented only part misfortune. Revolutionary experience and organisational skill are things that can be acquired, provided the desire is there to acquire them, provided the shortcomings are recognised, which in revolutionary activity is more than halfway towards their removal.

But what was only part misfortune became full misfortune when this consciousness began to grow dim (it was very much alive among the members of the groups mentioned), when there appeared people — and even social-democratic organs — that were prepared to regard shortcomings as virtues, that even tried to invent a *theoretical* basis for their *slavish cringing before spontaneity*. It is time to draw conclusions from this trend, the content of which is incorrectly and too narrowly characterised as Economism.

## **B. Bowing to spontaneity. *Rabochaya Mysl***

Before dealing with the literary manifestation of this subservience to spontaneity, we should like to note the following characteristic fact (communicated to us from the above-mentioned source), which throws light on the conditions in which the two future conflicting trends in Russian social-democracy arose and grew among the comrades working in St. Petersburg. In the beginning of 1897, just prior to their banishment, A.A. Vaneyev and several of his comrades attended a private meeting<sup>23</sup> at which “old” and “young” members of the League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class gathered. The conversation centred chiefly about the question of organisation, particularly about the “rules for the workers’ mutual benefit fund”, which, in their final form, were published in “*Listok*” *Rabotnika*,<sup>24</sup> No. 9-10, p. 46. Sharp differences immediately showed themselves between the “old” members (“Decembrists”, as the St. Petersburg social-democrats jestingly called them) and several the “young” members (who subsequently took an active part in the work of *Rabochaya Mysl*), with a heated discussion ensuing. The “young” members defended the main principles of the rules in the form in which they were published. The “old” members contended that the prime necessity was not this, but the consolidation of the League of Struggle into an organisation of revolutionaries to which all the various workers’ mutual benefit funds, students’ propaganda circles, etc., should be subordinated. It goes without saying that the disputing sides far from realised at the time that these disagreements were the beginning of a cleavage; on the contrary, they regarded them as something isolated and casual. But this fact shows that in Russia, too, Economism did not arise and spread without a struggle against the “old” social-democrats (which the Economists of today are apt to forget). And if, in the main, this struggle has not left

“documentary” traces behind it, it is *solely* because the membership of the circles then functioning underwent such constant change that no continuity was established and, consequently, differences in point of view were not recorded in any documents.

The founding of *Rabochaya Mysl* brought Economism to the light of day, but not at one stroke. We must picture to ourselves concretely the conditions for activity and the short-lived character of the majority of the Russian study circles (a thing that is possible only for those who have themselves experienced it) in order to understand how much there was of the fortuitous in the successes and failures of the new trend in various towns, and the length of time during which neither the advocates nor the opponents of the “new” could make up their minds — and literally had no opportunity of so doing — as to whether this really expressed a distinct trend or merely the lack of training of certain individuals. For example, the first mimeographed copies of *Rabochaya Mysl* never reached the great majority of social-democrats, and if we are able to refer to the leading article in the first number, it is only because it was reproduced in an article by V.I.<sup>25</sup> (“*Listok*” *Rabotnika*, No. 9-10, p. 47, *et seq.*), who, of course, did not fail to extol with more zeal than reason the new paper, which was so different from the papers and projects for papers mentioned above.\* It is well worth dwelling on this leading article because it brings out in bold relief *the entire spirit of Rabochaya Mysl* and Economism generally.

After stating that the arm of the “blue-coats”\*\* could never halt the progress of the working-class movement, the leading article goes on to say: “... The virility of the working-class movement is due to the fact that the workers themselves are at last taking their fate into their own hands, and out of the hands of the leaders”; this fundamental thesis is then developed in greater detail. Actually, the leaders (i.e., the social-democrats, the organisers of the League of Struggle) were, one might say, torn out of the hands of the workers\*\*\* by the police; yet it is made to appear that the workers were fighting against the leaders and liberated themselves from their yoke!

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\* It should be stated in passing that the praise of *Rabochaya Mysl* in November 1898, when Economism had become fully defined, especially abroad, emanated from the selfsame V. I., who very soon after became one of the editors of *Rabocheye Dyelo*. And yet *Rabocheye Dyelo* denied that there were two trends in Russian social-democracy, and continues to deny it to this day!

\*\* The tsarist gendarmes wore blue uniforms. — *Ed.*

\*\*\* That this simile is a correct one is shown by the following characteristic fact. When, after the arrest of the “Decembrists”, the news spread among the workers of the Schlüsselburg Highway that the discovery and arrest were facilitated by an *agent provocateur*, N.N. Mikhailov, a dentist, who had been in contact with a group associated with the “Decembrists”, the workers were so enraged that they decided to kill him.

Instead of sounding the call to go forward towards the consolidation of the revolutionary organisation and the expansion of political activity, the call was issued for a *retreat* to the purely trade union struggle. It was announced that “the economic basis of the movement is eclipsed by the effort never to forget the political ideal”, and that the watchword for the working-class movement was “Struggle for economic conditions” (!) or, better still, “The workers for the workers”. It was declared that strike funds “are more valuable to the movement than a hundred other organisations” (compare this statement made in October 1897, with the polemic between the “Decembrists” and the young members in the beginning of 1897), etc. Catchwords like “We must concentrate, not on the ‘cream’ of the workers, but on the ‘average’, mass worker”; “Politics always obediently follows economics”,\* etc., etc., became the fashion, exercising an irresistible influence upon the masses of the youth who were attracted to the movement but who, in the majority of cases, were acquainted only with such fragments of Marxism as were expounded in legally appearing publications.

Political consciousness was completely overwhelmed by spontaneity — the spontaneity of the “social-democrats” who repeated Mr. V.V.’s “ideas”, the spontaneity of those workers who were carried away by the arguments that a kopek added to a ruble was worth more than any socialism or politics, and that they must “fight, knowing that they are fighting, not for the sake of some future generation, but for themselves and their children” (leader in *Rabochaya Mysl*, No. 1). Phrases like these have always been a favourite weapon of the West-European bourgeois, who, in their hatred for socialism, strove (like the German “*Sozial-Politiker*” Hirsch) to transplant English trade-unionism to their native soil and to preach to the workers that by engaging in the purely trade union\*\* struggle they would be fighting for themselves and for their children, and not for some future generations with some future socialism. And now the “V.V.s of Russian social-democracy” have set about repeating these bourgeois phrases. It is important at this point to note three circumstances that will be useful to our further analysis of *contemporary* differences.\*\*\*

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\* These quotations are taken from the same leading article in the first number of *Rabochaya Mysl*. One can judge from this the degree of theoretical training possessed by these “V.V.s of Russian social-democracy”,<sup>26</sup> who kept repeating the crude vulgarisation of “economic materialism” at a time when the Marxists were carrying on a literary war against the real Mr. V.V., who had long ago been dubbed “a past master of reactionary deeds” for holding *similar* views on the relations between politics and economics!

\*\* The Germans even have a special expression, *Nur-Gewerkschaftler*, which means an advocate of the “pure trade union” struggle.

\*\*\* We emphasise the word *contemporary* for the benefit of those who may pharisaically shrug

In the first place, the overwhelming of political consciousness by spontaneity, to which we referred above, also took place *spontaneously*. This may sound like a pun, but, alas, it is the bitter truth. It did not take place as a result of an open struggle between two diametrically opposed points of view, in which one triumphed over the other; it occurred because of the fact that an increasing number of “old” revolutionaries were “torn away” by the gendarmes and increasing numbers of “young” “V.V.s of Russian social-democracy” appeared on the scene. Everyone, who has, I shall not say participated in, but at least breathed the atmosphere of, the *present-day* Russian movement, knows perfectly well that this is precisely the case. And if, nevertheless, we insist strongly that the reader be fully clear on this generally known fact, if we cite, for explicitness, as it were, the facts of the first edition of *Rabocheye Dyelo* and of the polemic between the “old” and the “young” at the beginning of 1897, we do this because the people who vaunt their “democracy” speculate on the ignorance of these facts on the part of the broad public (or of the very young generation). We shall return to this point further on.

Secondly, in the very first literary expression of Economism we observe the exceedingly curious phenomenon — highly characteristic for an understanding of all the differences prevailing among present-day social-democrats — that the adherents of the “labour movement pure and simple”, worshippers of the closest “organic” contacts (*Rabocheye Dyelo*’s term) with the proletarian struggle, opponents of any nonworker intelligentsia (even a socialist intelligentsia), are compelled, in order to defend their positions, to resort to the arguments of the *bourgeois* “pure trade-unionists”. This shows that from the very outset *Rabochaya Mysl* began — unconsciously — to implement the program of the *Credo*. This shows (something *Rabocheye Dyelo* cannot grasp) that *all* worship of the spontaneity of the working class movement, all belittling of the role of “the conscious element”, of the role of social-democracy, *means, quite independently of whether he who belittles that role desires it or not, a strengthening of the influence of bourgeois ideology upon the workers*. All those who talk about “overrating the importance of ideology”,\* about exaggerating the role of the conscious element,\*\* etc., imagine that the labour movement pure and simple can elaborate, and will elaborate, an independent ideology for itself, if only the workers

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their shoulders and say: It is easy enough to attack *Rabochaya Mysl* now, but is not all this ancient history? *Mutato nomine de te fabula narratur* [Change the name and the tale is about you. — *Ed.*] is our answer to such contemporary Pharisees, whose complete subjection to the ideas of *Rabochaya Mysl* will be *proved* further on.

\* Letter of the “Economists” in *Iskra*, No. 12.

\*\* *Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 10.

“wrest their fate from the hands of the leaders”. But this is a profound mistake. To supplement what has been said above, we shall quote the following profoundly true and important words of Karl Kautsky on the new draft program of the Austrian Social-Democratic Party.\*

Many of our revisionist critics believe that Marx asserted that economic development and the class struggle create, not only the conditions for socialist production, but also, and directly, the *consciousness* [K.K.'s italics] of its necessity. And these critics assert that England, the country most highly developed capitalistically, is more remote than any other from this consciousness. Judging by the draft, one might assume that this allegedly orthodox Marxist view, which is thus refuted, was shared by the committee that drafted the Austrian program. In the draft program it is stated: “The more capitalist development increases the numbers of the proletariat, the more the proletariat is compelled and becomes fit to fight against capitalism. The proletariat becomes conscious” of the possibility and of the necessity for socialism. In this connection socialist consciousness appears to be a necessary and direct result of the proletarian class struggle. But this is absolutely untrue. Of course, socialism, as a doctrine, has its roots in modern economic relationships just as the class struggle of the proletariat has, and, like the latter, emerges from the struggle against the capitalist-created poverty and misery of the masses. But socialism and the class struggle arise side by side and not one out of the other; each arises under different conditions. Modern socialist consciousness can arise only on the basis of profound scientific knowledge. Indeed, modern economic science is as much a condition for socialist production as, say, modern technology, and the proletariat can create neither the one nor the other, no matter how much it may desire to do so; both arise out of the modern social process. The vehicle of science is not the proletariat, but the *bourgeois intelligentsia* [K.K.'s italics]: it was in the minds of individual members of this stratum that modern socialism originated, and it was they who communicated it to the more intellectually developed proletarians who, in their turn, introduce it into the proletarian class struggle where conditions allow that to be done. Thus, socialist consciousness is something introduced into the proletarian class struggle from without [*von Aussen Hineingetragen*] and not something that arose within it spontaneously [*urwüchsig*]. Accordingly, the old Hainfeld program quite rightly stated that the task of social-democracy is to imbue the proletariat (literally: saturate the proletariat) with the *consciousness* of its position and the consciousness of its task. There would be no need for this if consciousness arose of itself from the class

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\* *Neue Zeit*, 1901-02, XX, I, No. 3, p. 79. The committee's draft to which Kautsky refers was adopted by the Vienna Congress (at the end of last year) in a slightly amended form.

struggle. The new draft copied this proposition from the old program, and attached it to the proposition mentioned above. But this completely broke the line of thought ...

Since there can be no talk of an independent ideology formulated by the working masses themselves in the process of their movement,\* the *only* choice is — either bourgeois or socialist ideology. There is no middle course (for mankind has not created a “third” ideology, and, moreover, in a society torn by class antagonisms there can never be a nonclass or an above-class ideology). Hence, to belittle the socialist ideology *in any way, to turn aside from it in the slightest degree* means to strengthen bourgeois ideology. There is much talk of spontaneity. But the *spontaneous* development of the working-class movement leads to its subordination to bourgeois ideology, *to its development along the lines of the Credo program*; for the spontaneous working-class movement is trade-unionism, is *Nur-Gewerkschaftlerei*, and trade-unionism means the ideological enslavement of the workers by the bourgeoisie. Hence, our task, the task of social-democracy, is *to combat spontaneity, to divert* the working-class movement from this spontaneous, trade-unionist striving to come under the wing of the bourgeoisie, and to bring it under the wing of revolutionary social-democracy. The sentence employed by the authors of the Economist letter published in *Iskra*, No. 12, that the efforts of the most inspired ideologists fail to divert the working-class movement from the path that is determined by the interaction of the material elements and the material environment *is therefore tantamount to renouncing socialism*. If these authors were capable of fearlessly, consistently, and thoroughly considering what they say, as everyone who enters the arena of literary and public activity should be, there would be nothing left for them but to “fold their useless arms over their empty breasts” and surrender the field of action to the Struves and Prokopoviches, who are dragging the working-class movement “along the line of least resistance”, i.e., along the line of bourgeois trade-unionism, or to the Zubatovs, who are dragging it along the line of

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\* This does not mean, of course, that the workers have no part in creating such an ideology. They take part, however, not as workers, but as socialist theoreticians, as Proudhons and Weitlings; in other words, they take part only when they are able, and to the extent that they are able, more or less, to acquire the knowledge of their age and develop that knowledge. But in order that working men *may succeed in this more often*, every effort must be made to raise the level of the consciousness of the workers in general; it is necessary that the workers do not confine themselves to the artificially restricted limits of “*literature for workers*” but that they learn to an increasing degree to master *general literature*. It would be even truer to say “are not confined”, instead of “do not confine themselves”, because the workers themselves wish to read and do read all that is written for the intelligentsia, and only a few (bad) intellectuals believe that it is enough “for workers” to be told a few things about factory conditions and to have repeated to them over and over again what has long been known.

clerical and gendarme “ideology”.

Let us recall the example of Germany. What was the historic service Lassalle rendered to the German working-class movement? It was that he *diverted* that movement from the path of progressionist trade-unionism and cooperativism towards which it had been spontaneously moving (*with the benign assistance of Schulze-Delitzsch and his like*). To fulfil such a task it was necessary to do something quite different from talking of underrating the spontaneous element, of tactics-as-process, of the interaction between elements and environment, etc. *A fierce struggle against spontaneity* was necessary, and only after such a struggle, extending over many years, was it possible, for instance, to convert the working population of Berlin from a bulwark of the progressionist party into one of the finest strongholds of social-democracy. This struggle is by no means over even today (as might seem to those who learn the history of the German movement from Prokopovich, and its philosophy from Struve). Even now the German working class is, so to speak, split up among a number of ideologies. A section of the workers is organised in Catholic and monarchist trade unions; another section is organised in the Hirsch-Duncker unions,<sup>27</sup> founded by the bourgeois worshippers of English trade-unionism; the third is organised in social-democratic trade unions. The last-named group is immeasurably more numerous than the rest, but the social-democratic ideology was able to achieve this superiority, and will be able to maintain it, only in an unswerving struggle against all other ideologies.

But why, the reader will ask, does the spontaneous movement, the movement along the line of least resistance, lead to the domination of bourgeois ideology? For the simple reason that bourgeois ideology is far older in origin than socialist ideology, that it is more fully developed, and that it has at its disposal *immeasurably* more means of dissemination.\* And the younger the socialist movement in any given country, the more vigorously it must struggle against all attempts to entrench nonsocialist ideology, and the more resolutely the workers must be warned against the bad counsellors who shout against “overrating the conscious element”, etc. The authors of the Economist

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\* It is often said that the working class *spontaneously* gravitates towards socialism. This is perfectly true in the sense that socialist theory reveals the causes of the misery of the working class more profoundly and more correctly than any other theory, and for that reason the workers are able to assimilate it so easily, *provided*, however, this theory does not itself yield to spontaneity, *provided* it subordinates spontaneity to itself. Usually this is taken for granted, but it is precisely this which *Rabocheye Dyelo* forgets or distorts. The working class spontaneously gravitates towards socialism; nevertheless, most widespread (and continuously and diversely revived) bourgeois ideology spontaneously imposes itself upon the working class to a still greater degree.

letter, in unison with *Rabocheye Dyelo*, inveigh against the intolerance that is characteristic of the infancy of the movement. To this we reply: Yes, our movement is indeed in its infancy, and in order that it may grow up faster, it must become imbued with intolerance against those who retard its growth by their subservience to spontaneity. Nothing is so ridiculous and harmful as pretending that we are “old hands” who have long ago experienced all the decisive stages of the struggle.

Thirdly, the first issue of *Rabochaya Mysl* shows that the term “Economism” (which, of course, we do not propose to abandon, since, in one way or another, this designation has already established itself) does not adequately convey the real character of the new trend. *Rabochaya Mysl* does not altogether repudiate the political struggle; the rules for a workers’ mutual benefit fund published in its first issue contain a reference to combating the government. *Rabochaya Mysl* believes, however, that “politics always obediently follows economics” (*Rabocheye Dyelo* varies this thesis when it asserts in its program that “in Russia more than in any other country, the economic struggle is inseparable from the political struggle”). *If by politics is meant social-democratic politics*, then the theses of *Rabochaya Mysl* and *Rabocheye Dyelo* are utterly incorrect. The economic struggle of the workers is very often connected (although not inseparably) with bourgeois politics, clerical politics, etc., as we have seen. *Rabocheye Dyelo*’s theses are correct, if by politics is meant trade union politics, viz., the common striving of all workers to secure from the government measures for alleviating the distress to which their condition gives rise, but which do not abolish that condition, i.e., which do not remove the subjection of labour to capital. That striving indeed is common to the English trade-unionists, who are hostile to socialism, to the Catholic workers, to the “Zubatov” workers, etc. There is politics and politics. Thus, we see that *Rabochaya Mysl* does not so much deny the political struggle, as it bows to its *spontaneity*, to its unconsciousness. While fully recognising the political struggle (better: the political desires and demands of the workers), which arises spontaneously from the working-class movement itself, it absolutely refuses *independently to work out* a specifically *social-democratic politics* corresponding to the general tasks of socialism and to present-day conditions in Russia. Further on we shall show that *Rabocheye Dyelo* commits the same error.

### C. The Self-Emancipation group<sup>28</sup> & *Rabocheye Dyelo*

We have dealt at such length with the little-known and now almost forgotten leading article in the first issue of *Rabochaya Mysl* because it was the first and most striking expression of that general stream of thought which afterwards emerged into the light of day in innumerable streamlets. V.I. was perfectly right when, in praising the first

issue and the leading article of *Rabochaya Mysl*, he said that the article had been written in a “sharp and fervent” manner (“*Listok*” *Rabotnika*, No. 9-10, p. 49). Every man with convictions who thinks he has something new to say writes “fervently” and in such a way as to make his views stand out in bold relief. Only those who are accustomed to sitting between two stools lack “fervour”; only such people are able to praise the fervour of *Rabochaya Mysl* one day and attack the “fervent polemics” of its opponents the next.

We shall not dwell on the *Separate Supplement to Rabochaya Mysl* (below we shall have occasion, on various points, to refer to this work, which expresses the ideas of the Economists more consistently than any other) but shall briefly mention the “Appeal of the Self-Emancipation of the Workers Group” (March 1899, reprinted in the London *Nakanune*,<sup>29</sup> No. 7, July 1899). The authors of the “Appeal” rightly say that “the workers of Russia are *only just awakening*, are just beginning to look about them, and are *instinctively clutching at the first available means of struggle*”. Yet they draw from this the same false conclusion as that drawn by *Rabochaya Mysl*, forgetting that the instinctive is the unconscious (the spontaneous) to the aid of which socialists must come; that the “first available means of struggle” will always be, in modern society, the trade union means of struggle, and the “first available” ideology the bourgeois (trade union) ideology. Similarly, these authors do not “repudiate” politics, they merely (merely!) echo Mr. V.V. that politics is the superstructure, and therefore, “political agitation must be the superstructure to the agitation carried on in favour of the economic struggle; it must arise on the basis of this struggle and follow in its wake”.

As for *Rabocheye Dyelo*, it began its activity with the “defence” of the Economists. It stated a *downright untruth* in its opening issue (No. 1, pp. 141-142) in claiming that it “does not know to which young comrades Axelrod referred” when he warned the Economists in his well-known pamphlet.\* In the polemic that flared up with Axelrod and Plekhanov over this untruth, *Rabocheye Dyelo* had to admit that “in form of perplexity, it sought to *defend* all the younger social-democrats abroad from this unjust accusation” (the charge of narrowness levelled by Axelrod at the Economists). In reality this accusation was completely justified, and *Rabocheye Dyelo* knew perfectly well that, among others, it applied also to V.I., a member of its editorial board. Let me note in passing that in this polemic Axelrod was entirely right and *Rabocheye Dyelo* entirely wrong in their respective interpretations of my pamphlet *The Tasks of the Russian Social-Democrats*.\*\* The pamphlet was written in 1897, before the appearance

\* *Present Tasks and Tactics of the Russian Social-Democracy*, Geneva, 1898. Two letters to *Rabochaya Gazeta*, written in 1897.

\*\* See Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 2, pp. 323-351. — *Ed.*

of *Rabochaya Mysl*, when I thought, rightly, that the *original* tendency of the St. Petersburg League of Struggle, which I characterised above, was dominant. And this tendency was dominant at least until the middle of 1898. Consequently, *Rabocheye Dyelo* had no right whatever, in its attempt to deny the existence and danger of Economism, to refer to a pamphlet that expressed views *forced out* by Economist views in St. Petersburg in 1897-98.\*

But *Rabocheye Dyelo* not only “defended” the Economists, it itself constantly fell into their fundamental errors. The source of this confusion is to be found in the ambiguity of the interpretation given to the following thesis of the *Rabocheye Dyelo* program: “We consider that the most important phenomenon of Russian life, the one that will mainly *determine the tasks* [our italics] and the character of the publication activity of the union, is the *mass working-class movement* [*Rabocheye Dyelo*’s italics] which has arisen in recent years.” That the mass movement is a most important phenomenon is a fact not to be disputed. But the crux of the matter is, how is one to understand the statement that the mass working class movement will “determine the tasks”? It may be interpreted in one of two ways. *Either* it means bowing to the spontaneity of this movement, i.e., reducing the role of social-democracy to mere subservience to the working-class movement as such (the interpretation of *Rabochaya Mysl*, the Self-Emancipation Group, and other Economists), or it means that the mass movement places before us *new* theoretical, political, and organisational tasks, far more complicated than those that might have satisfied us in the period before the rise of the mass movement. *Rabocheye Dyelo* inclined and still inclines towards the first interpretation, for it has said nothing definite about any new tasks, but has argued constantly as though the “mass movement” *relieves* us of the necessity of clearly understanding and fulfilling the tasks it sets before us. We need only point out that *Rabocheye Dyelo* considered that it was impossible to set the overthrow of the autocracy as the *first* task of the mass working-class movement, and that it degraded this task (in the name of the mass movement) to that of a struggle for immediate political demands

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\* In defending its first untruth (“we do not know to which young comrades Axelrod referred”), *Rabocheye Dyelo* added a second, when it wrote in its *Reply*: “Since the review of *The Tasks* was published, tendencies have arisen, or become more or less clearly defined, among certain Russian social-democrats, towards economic one-sidedness, which represent a step backwards from the state of our movement as described in *The Tasks*” (p. 9). This, in the *Reply*, published in 1900. But the first issue of *Rabocheye Dyelo* (containing the review) appeared in April 1899. Did Economism really arise only in 1899? No. The year 1899 saw the first protest of the *Russian* social-democrats against Economism (the protest against the *Credo*). Economism arose in 1897, as *Rabocheye Dyelo* very well knows, for already in November 1898, V.I. was praising *Rabochaya Mysl* (see “*Listok*” *Rabotnika*, No. 9-10).

(Reply, p. 25).

We shall pass over the article by B. Krichevsky, editor of *Rabocheye Dyelo*, entitled "The Economic and the Political Struggle in the Russian Movement", published in No. 7 of that paper, in which these very mistakes\* are repeated, and proceed directly to *Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 10. We shall not, of course, enter in detail into the various objections raised by Krichevsky and Martynov against *Zarya* and *Iskra*. We are here interested solely in the basis of principles on which *Rabocheye Dyelo*, in its 10th issue, took its stand. Thus, we shall not examine the strange fact that *Rabocheye Dyelo* saw a "diametrical contradiction" between the proposition:

Social-democracy does not tie its hands, it does not restrict its activities to some one preconceived plan or method of political struggle; it recognises all means of struggle as long as they correspond to the forces at-the disposal of the party ... [*Iskra*, No. 1.]\*\*

and the proposition:

Without a strong organisation skilled in waging political struggle under all circumstances and at all times, there can be no question of that systematic plan of action, illumined by firm principles and steadfastly carried out, which alone is worthy of the name of tactics. [*Iskra*, No. 4.]\*\*\*

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\* The "stages theory", or the theory of "timid zigzags", in the political struggle is expressed, for example, in this article, in the following way: "Political demands, which in their character are common to the whole of Russia, should, however, at first [this was written in August 1900!] correspond to the experience gained by the given stratum [*sic!*] of workers in the economic struggle. Only [!] on the basis of this experience can and should political agitation be taken up," etc. (p. 11). On page 4, the author, protesting against what he regards as the absolutely unfounded charge of Economist heresy, pathetically exclaims: "What social-democrat does not know that according to the theories of Marx and Engels the economic interests of certain classes play a decisive role in history, and, *consequently*, that particularly the proletariat's struggle for its economic interests must be of paramount importance in its class development and struggle for emancipation?" (Our italics.) The word "consequently" is completely irrelevant. The fact that economic interests play a decisive role *does not in the least imply* that the economic (i.e., trade union) struggle is of prime importance; for the most essential, the "decisive" interests of classes can be satisfied *only by radical political* changes in general. In particular the fundamental economic interests of the proletariat can be satisfied only by a political revolution that will replace the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie by the dictatorship of the proletariat. Krichevsky repeats the arguments of the "V.V.s of Russian social-democracy" (viz., that politics follows economics, etc.) and of the Bernsteinians of German social-democracy (e.g., by similar arguments Woltmann sought to prove that the workers must first of all acquire "economic power" before they can think about political revolution).

\*\* See Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4, pp. 370-371. — *Ed.*

\*\*\* See Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 5, p. 18. — *Ed.*

To confound recognition, *in principle*, of all means of struggle, of all plans and methods, provided they are expedient, with the demand *at a given political moment* to be guided by a strictly observed plan is tantamount, if we are to talk of tactics, to confounding the recognition by medical science of various methods of treating diseases with the necessity for adopting a certain definite method of treatment for a given disease. The point is, however, that *Rabocheye Dyelo*, itself the victim of a disease which we have called bowing to spontaneity, refuses to recognise any “method of treatment” for *that* disease. Hence, it has made the remarkable discovery that “tactics-as-plan contradicts the fundamental spirit of Marxism” (No. 10, p. 18), that tactics are “*a process of growth of party tasks, which grow together with the party*” (p. 11, *Rabocheye Dyelo*’s italics). This remark has every chance of becoming a celebrated maxim, a permanent monument to the *Rabocheye Dyelo* “trend”. To the question, *whither?* the leading organ replies: Movement is a process of changing the distance between the starting-point and subsequent points of the movement. This matchless example of profundity is not merely a curiosity (were it that, it would not be worth dealing with at length), but *the program of a whole trend*, the very program which R.M. (in the *Separate Supplement to Rabochaya Mysl*) expressed in the words: That struggle is desirable which is possible, and the struggle which is possible is that which is going on at the given moment. This is precisely the trend of unbounded opportunism, which passively adapts itself to spontaneity.

“Tactics-as-plan contradicts the essence of Marxism!” But this is a slander of Marxism; it means turning Marxism into the caricature held up by the Narodniks in their struggle against us. It means belittling the initiative and energy of class-conscious fighters, whereas Marxism, on the contrary, gives a gigantic impetus to the initiative and energy of the social-democrat, opens up for him the widest perspectives, and (if one may so express it) places at his disposal the mighty force of many millions of workers “spontaneously” rising for the struggle. The entire history of international social-democracy teems with plans advanced now by one, now by another political leader, some confirming the farsightedness and the correct political and organisational views of their authors and others revealing their shortsightedness and their political errors. At the time when Germany was at one of the crucial turning-points in its history — the formation of the empire, the opening of the Reichstag, and the granting of universal suffrage — Liebknecht had one plan for social-democratic politics and work in general, and Schweitzer had another. When the antisocialist law came down on the heads of the German socialists, Most and Hasselmann had one plan — they were prepared then and there to call for violence and terror; Höchberg, Schramm, and (partly) Bernstein had another — they began to preach to the social-democrats

that they themselves had provoked the enactment of the law by being unreasonably bitter and revolutionary, and must now earn forgiveness by their exemplary conduct. There was yet a third plan, proposed by those who prepared and carried out the publication of an illegal organ. It is easy, of course, with hindsight, many years after the struggle over the selection of the path to be followed, and after history has pronounced its verdict as to the expediency of the path selected, to utter profound maxims about the growth of party tasks, which grow together with the party. But at a time of confusion,\* when the Russian "Critics" and Economists are degrading social-democracy to the level of trade-unionism, and when the terrorists are strongly advocating the adoption of "tactics-as-plan" that repeats the old mistakes, at such a time, to confine oneself to profundities of this kind, means simply to issue to oneself a "certificate of poverty". At a time when many Russian social-democrats suffer from a lack of initiative and energy, from an inadequate "scope of political propaganda, agitation, and organisation",\*\* from a lack of "plans" for a broader organisation of revolutionary work, at such a time, to declare that "tactics-as-plan" contradicts the essence of Marxism" means not only to vulgarise Marxism in the realm of theory, but *to drag the party backward* in practice.

*Rabocheye Dyelo* goes on to sermonise:

The task of the revolutionary social-democrat is only to accelerate objective development by his conscious work, not to obviate it or substitute his own subjective plans for this development. *Iskra* knows all this in theory; but the enormous importance which Marxism justly attaches to conscious revolutionary work causes it in practice, owing to its doctrinaire view of tactics, *to belittle the significance of the objective or the spontaneous element of development.* [P. 18.]

Another example of the extraordinary theoretical confusion worthy of Mr. V.V. and his fraternity. We would ask our philosopher: how may a designer of subjective plans "belittle" objective development? Obviously by losing sight of the fact that this objective development creates or strengthens, destroys or weakens certain classes, strata, or groups, certain nations or groups of nations, etc., and in this way serves to determine a given international political alignment of forces, or the position adopted by revolutionary parties, etc. If the designer of plans did that, his guilt would not be that he belittled the spontaneous element, but, on the contrary, that he belittled the *conscious*

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\* "*Ein Jahr der Verwirrung*" ("A Year of Confusion") is the title Mehring gave to the chapter of his *History of German Social-Democracy* in which he describes the hesitancy and lack of determination displayed at first by the socialists in selecting the "tactics-as-plan" for the new situation.

\*\* Leading article in *Iskra*, No. 1. [See Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4, p. 369. — Ed.]

element, for he would then show that he lacked the “consciousness” properly to understand objective development. Hence, the very talk of “estimating the *relative* significance” (*Rabocheye Dyelo*’s italics) of spontaneity and consciousness itself reveals a complete lack of “consciousness”. If certain “spontaneous elements of development” can be grasped at all by human understanding, then an incorrect estimation of them will be tantamount to “belittling the conscious element”. But if they cannot be grasped, then we do not know them, and therefore cannot speak of them. What then is Krichevsky discussing? If he thinks that *Iskra*’s “subjective plans” are erroneous (as he in fact declares them to be), he should have shown what objective facts they ignore, and only then charged *Iskra* with *lacking political consciousness* for ignoring them, with “belittling the conscious element”, to use his own words. If, however, displeased with subjective plans, he can bring forward no argument other than that of “belittling the spontaneous element” (!), he merely shows: (1) that, theoretically, he understands Marxism *à la* Kareyev and Mikhailovsky, who have been sufficiently ridiculed by Beltov;<sup>30</sup> and (2) that, practically, he is quite satisfied with the “spontaneous elements of development” that have drawn our legal Marxists towards Bernsteinism and our social-democrats towards Economism, and that he is “full of wrath” against those who have determined at all costs *to divert* Russian social-democracy from the path of “spontaneous” development.

Further, there follow things that are positively droll. “Just as human beings will reproduce in the old-fashioned way despite all the discoveries of natural science, so the birth of a new social order will come about, in the future too, *mainly* as a result of elemental outbursts, despite all the discoveries of social science and the increase in the number of conscious fighters” (p. 19). Just as our grandfathers in their old-fashioned wisdom used to say, Anyone can bring children into the world, so today the “modern socialists” (*à la* Nartsis Tuporylov)<sup>31</sup> say in their wisdom, Anyone can participate in the spontaneous birth of a new social order. We too hold that anyone can. All that is required for participation of that kind is *to yield* to Economism when Economism reigns and to terrorism when terrorism arises. Thus, in the spring of this year, when it was so important to utter a note of warning against infatuation with terrorism, *Rabocheye Dyelo* stood in amazement, confronted by a problem that was “new” to it. And now, six months after, when the problem has become less topical, it presents us at one and the same time with the declaration: “We think that it is not and should not be the task of social-democracy to counteract the rise of terroristic sentiments” (*Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 10, p. 23), and with the conference resolution: “The conference regards systematic and aggressive terror as being inopportune” (*Two Conferences*, p. 18). How beautifully clear and coherent this is! Not to counteract, but to declare

inopportune, and to declare it in such a way that unsystematic and defensive terror does not come within the scope of the “resolution”. It must be admitted that such a resolution is extremely safe and is fully insured against error, just as a man who talks, but says nothing, insures himself against error. All that is needed to frame such a resolution is an ability to keep *at the tail end* of the movement. When *Iskra* ridiculed *Rabocheye Dyelo* for declaring the question of terror to be new,\* the latter angrily accused *Iskra* of “having the incredible effrontery to impose upon the party organisation solutions of tactical questions proposed by a group of emigrant writers more than 15 years ago” (p. 24). Effrontery indeed, and what an overestimation of the conscious element — first to resolve questions theoretically beforehand, and then to try to convince the organisation, the party, and the masses of the correctness of this solution!\*\* How much better it would be to repeat the elements and, without “imposing” anything upon anybody, swing with every “turn” — whether in the direction of Economism or in the direction of terrorism. *Rabocheye Dyelo* even generalises this great precept of worldly wisdom and accuses *Iskra* and *Zarya* of “setting up their program against the movement, like a spirit hovering over the formless chaos” (p. 29). But what else is the function of social-democracy if not to be a “spirit” that not only hovers over the spontaneous movement, but also *raises* this movement *to the level of “its program”*? Surely, it is not its function to drag at the *tail* of the movement. At best, this would be of no service to the movement; at worst, it would be exceedingly harmful. *Rabocheye Dyelo*, however, not only follows this “tactics-as-process”, but elevates it to a principle, so that it would be more correct to describe its tendency not as opportunism, but as *tail-ism* (from the word *tail*). And it must be admitted that those who are determined always to follow behind the movement and be its tail are absolutely and forever guaranteed against “belittling the spontaneous element of development”.



And so, we have become convinced that the fundamental error committed by the “new trend” in Russian social-democracy is its bowing to spontaneity and its failure to understand that the spontaneity of the masses demands a high degree of consciousness from us social-democrats. The greater the spontaneous upsurge of the masses and the more widespread the movement, the more rapid, incomparably so, the demand for greater consciousness in the theoretical, political and organisational work of social-

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\* See Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 5, pp. 18-20. — *Ed.*

\*\* Nor must it be forgotten that in solving “theoretically” the problem of terror, the Emancipation of Labour group *generalised* the experience of the antecedent revolutionary movement.

democracy.

The spontaneous upsurge of the masses in Russia proceeded (and continues) with such rapidity that the young social-democrats proved unprepared to meet these gigantic tasks. This unpreparedness is our common misfortune, the misfortune of *all* Russian social-democrats. The upsurge of the masses proceeded and spread with uninterrupted continuity; it not only continued in the places where it began, but spread to new localities and to new strata of the population (under the influence of the working class movement, there was a renewed ferment among the student youth, among the intellectuals generally, and even among the peasantry). Revolutionaries, however, *lagged behind* this upsurge, both in their “theories” and in their activity; they failed to establish a constant and continuous organisation capable of *leading* the whole movement.

In Chapter I, we established that *Rabocheye Dyelo* belittled our theoretical tasks and that it “spontaneously” repeated the fashionable catchword “freedom of criticism”; those who repeated this catchword lacked the “consciousness” to understand that the positions of the opportunist “Critics” and those of the revolutionaries in Germany and in Russia are diametrically opposed.

In the following chapters, we shall show how this bowing to spontaneity found expression in the sphere of the political tasks and in the organisational work of social-democracy. ■

### III. Trade-Unionist Politics & Social-Democratic Politics

We shall again begin by praising *Rabocheye Dyelo*. “Literature of Exposure and the Proletarian Struggle” is the title Martynov gave the article on his differences with *Iskra* published in *Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 10. He formulated the substance of the differences as follows: “We cannot confine ourselves solely to exposing the system that stands in its (the working-class party’s) path of development. We must also react to the immediate and current interests of the proletariat ... *Iskra* ... is in fact an organ of revolutionary opposition that exposes the state of affairs in our country, particularly the political state of affairs ... We, however, work and shall continue to work for the cause of the working class in close organic contact with the proletarian struggle” (p. 63). One cannot help being grateful to Martynov for this formula. It is of outstanding general interest, because substantially it embraces not only our disagreements with *Rabocheye Dyelo*, but the general disagreement between ourselves and the Economists on the political struggle. We have shown that the Economists do not altogether repudiate “politics”, but that they are constantly straying from the social-democratic to the trade-unionist conception of politics. Martynov strays in precisely this way, and we shall therefore take his views as a *model* of Economist error on this question. As we shall endeavour to prove, neither the authors of the *Separate Supplement to Rabochaya Mysl* nor the authors of the manifesto issued by the Self-Emancipation group, nor the authors of the Economist letter published in *Iskra*, No. 12, will have any right to complain against this choice.

#### A. Political agitation & its restriction by the Economists

Everyone knows that the economic\* struggle of the Russian workers underwent widespread development and consolidation simultaneously with the production of

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\* To avoid misunderstanding, we must point out that here, and throughout this pamphlet, by economic struggle, we imply (in keeping with the accepted usage among us) the “practical

“literature” exposing economic (factory and occupational) conditions. The “leaflets” were devoted mainly to the exposure of the factory system, and very soon a veritable passion for exposures was roused among the workers. As soon as the workers realised that the social-democratic study circles desired to, and could, supply them with a new kind of leaflet that told the whole truth about their miserable existence, about their unbearably hard toil, and their lack of rights, they began to send in, actually flood us with, correspondence from the factories and workshops. This “exposure literature” created a tremendous sensation, not only in the particular factory exposed in the given leaflet, but in all the factories to which news of the revealed facts spread. And since the poverty and want among the workers in the various enterprises and in the various trades are much the same, the “truth about the life of the workers” stirred *everyone*. Even among the most backward workers, a veritable passion arose to “get into print” — a noble passion for this rudimentary form of war against the whole of the present social system which is based upon robbery and oppression. And in the overwhelming majority of cases these “leaflets” were in truth a declaration of war, because the exposures served greatly to agitate the workers; they evoked among them common demands for the removal of the most glaring outrages and roused in them a readiness to support the demands with strikes. Finally, the employers themselves were compelled to recognise the significance of these leaflets as a declaration of war, so much so that in a large number of cases they did not even wait for the outbreak of hostilities. As is always the case, the mere publication of these exposures made them effective, and they acquired the significance of a strong moral influence. On more than one occasion, the mere appearance of a leaflet proved sufficient to secure the satisfaction of all or part of the demands put forward. In a word, economic (factory) exposures were and remain an important lever in the economic struggle. And they will continue to retain this significance as long as there is capitalism, which makes it necessary for the workers to defend themselves. Even in the most advanced countries of Europe it can still be seen that the exposure of abuses in some backward trade, or in some forgotten branch of domestic industry, serves as a starting-point for the awakening of class-consciousness, for the beginning of a trade union struggle, and for the spread of socialism.\*

The overwhelming majority of Russian social-democrats have of late been almost

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economic struggle”, which Engels, in the passage quoted above, described as “resistance to the capitalists”, and which in free countries is known as the organised-labour, syndical, or trade union struggle.

\* In the present chapter we deal only with the political struggle, in its broader or narrower meaning. Therefore, we note only in passing, merely as a curiosity, *Rabocheye Dyelo*’s charge

entirely absorbed by this work of organising the exposure of factory conditions. Suffice it to recall *Rabochaya Mysl* to see the extent to which they have been absorbed by it — so much so, indeed, that they have lost sight of the fact that this, *taken by itself*, is in essence still not social-democratic work, but merely trade union work. As a matter of fact, the exposures merely dealt with the relations between the workers *in a given trade* and their employers, and all they achieved was that the sellers of labour power learned to sell their “commodity” on better terms and to fight the purchasers over a purely commercial deal. These exposures could have served (if properly utilised by an organisation of revolutionaries) as a beginning and a component part of social-democratic activity; but they could also have led (and, given a worshipful attitude towards spontaneity, were bound to lead) to a “purely trade union” struggle and to a non-social-democratic working-class movement. social-democracy leads the struggle of the working class, not only for better terms for the sale of labour-power, but for the abolition of the social system that compels the propertyless to sell themselves to the rich. social-democracy represents the working class, not in its relation to a given group of employers alone, but in its relation to all classes of modern society and to the state as an organised political force. Hence, it follows that not only must social-democrats not confine themselves exclusively to the economic struggle, but that they must not allow the organisation of economic exposures to become the predominant part of their activities. We must take up actively the political education of the working class and the development of its political consciousness. Now that *Zarya* and *Iskra* have made the first attack upon Economism, “all are agreed” on this (although some agree only in words, as we shall soon see).

The question arises, what should political education consist in? Can it be confined to the propaganda of working-class hostility to the autocracy? Of course not. It is not enough *to explain* to the workers that they are politically oppressed (any more than it is *to explain* to them that their interests are antagonistic to the interests of the employers). Agitation must be conducted with regard to every concrete example of

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that *Iskra* is “too restrained” in regard to the economic struggle (*Two Conferences*, p. 27, rehashed by Martynov in his pamphlet, *Social-Democracy and the Working Class*). If the accusers computed by the hundredweights or reams (as they are so fond of doing) any given year's discussion of the economic struggle in the industrial section of *Iskra*, in comparison with the corresponding sections of *Rabocheye Dyelo* and *Rabochaya Mysl* combined, they would easily see that the latter lag behind even in this respect. Apparently, the realisation of this simple truth compels them to resort to arguments that clearly reveal their confusion. “*Iskra*”, they write, “willy-nilly [!] is compelled [!] to reckon with the imperative demands of life and to publish at least [!!] correspondence about the working-class movement” (*Two Conferences*, p. 27). Now this is really a crushing argument!

this oppression (as we have begun to carry on agitation round concrete examples of economic oppression). Inasmuch as this oppression affects the most diverse classes of society, inasmuch as it manifests itself in the most varied spheres of life and activity — vocational, civic, personal, family, religious, scientific, etc., etc. — is it not evident that *we shall not be fulfilling our task* of developing the political consciousness of the workers if we do not *undertake* the organisation of the *political exposure* of the autocracy in *all its aspects*? In order to carry on agitation round concrete instances of oppression, these instances must be exposed (as it is necessary to expose factory abuses in order to carry on economic agitation).

One might think this to be clear enough. It turns out, however, that it is only in words that “all” are agreed on the need to develop political consciousness, *in all its aspects*. It turns out that *Rabocheye Dyelo*, for example, far from tackling the task of organising (or making a start in organising) comprehensive political exposure, is even trying to *drag Iskra*, which has undertaken this task, *away from it*. Listen to the following: “The political struggle of the working class is merely [it is certainly not “merely”] the most developed, wide, and effective form of economic struggle” (program of *Rabocheye Dyelo*, published in issue No. 1, p. 3). “The social-democrats are now confronted with the task of lending the economic struggle itself, as far as possible, a political character” (Martynov, *Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 10, p. 42). “The economic struggle is the most widely applicable means of drawing the masses into active political struggle” (resolution adopted by the conference of the Union Abroad and “amendments” thereto, *Two Conferences*, pp. 11 and 17). As the reader will observe, all these theses permeate *Rabocheye Dyelo* from its very first number to the latest “Instructions to the Editors”, and all of them evidently express a single view regarding political agitation and struggle. Let us examine this view from the standpoint of the opinion prevailing among all Economists, that political agitation must *follow* economic agitation. Is it true that, in general,\* the economic struggle “is the most widely applicable means” of drawing the masses into the political struggle? It is entirely untrue. *Any and every* manifestation of

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\* We say “in general”, because *Rabocheye Dyelo* speaks of general principles and of the general tasks of the party as a whole. Undoubtedly, cases occur in practice when politics really *must* follow economics, but only Economists can speak of this in a resolution intended to apply to the whole of Russia. Cases do occur when *it is possible* “right from the beginning” to carry on political agitation “exclusively on an economic basis”; yet *Rabocheye Dyelo* came in the end to the conclusion that “there is no need for this whatever” (*Two Conferences*, p. 11). In the following chapter, we shall show that the tactics of the “politicians” and revolutionaries not only do not ignore the trade union tasks of social-democracy, but that, on the contrary, they alone *can secure* their consistent fulfilment.

police tyranny and autocratic outrage, not only in connection with the economic struggle, is not one whit less “widely applicable” as a means of “drawing in” the masses. The rural superintendents and the flogging of peasants, the corruption of the officials and the police treatment of the “common people” in the cities, the fight against the famine-stricken and the suppression of the popular striving towards enlightenment and knowledge, the extortion of taxes and the persecution of the religious sects, the humiliating treatment of soldiers and the barrack methods in the treatment of the students and liberal intellectuals — do all these and a thousand other similar manifestations of tyranny, though not directly connected with the “economic” struggle, represent, in general, *less* “widely applicable” means and occasions for political agitation and for drawing the masses into the political struggle? The very opposite is true. Of the sum total of cases in which the workers suffer (either on their own account or on account of those closely connected with them) from tyranny, violence, and the lack of rights, undoubtedly only a small minority represent cases of police tyranny in the trade union struggle as such. Why then should we, beforehand, *restrict* the scope of political agitation by declaring only *one* of the means to be “the most widely applicable”, when social-democrats must have, in addition, other, generally speaking, no less “widely applicable” means?

In the dim and distant past (a full year ago! ...) *Rabocheye Dyelo* wrote: “The masses begin to understand immediate political demands after one strike, or at all events, after several”, “as soon as the government sets the police and gendarmerie against them” [*August* (No. 7) 1900, p. 15]. This opportunist theory of stages has now been rejected by the Union Abroad, which makes a concession to us by declaring: “There is no need whatever to conduct political agitation right from the beginning, exclusively on an economic basis” (*Two Conferences*, p. 11). The union’s repudiation of part of its former errors will show the future historian of Russian social-democracy better than any number of lengthy arguments the depths to which our Economists have degraded socialism! But the Union Abroad must be very naive indeed to imagine that the abandonment of one form of restricting politics will induce us to agree to another form. Would it not be more logical to say, in this case too, that the economic struggle should be conducted on the widest possible basis, that it should always be utilised for political agitation, but that “there is no need whatever” to regard the economic struggle as the *most* widely applicable means of drawing the masses into active political struggle?

The Union Abroad attaches significance to the fact that it has substituted the phrase “most widely applicable means” for the phrase “the best means” contained in one of the resolutions of the Fourth Congress of the Jewish Workers’ Union (Bund).

We confess that we find it difficult to say which of these resolutions is the better one. In our opinion they are *both worse*. Both the Union Abroad and the Bund fall into the error (partly, perhaps unconsciously, under the influence of tradition) of giving an Economist, trade-unionist interpretation to politics. Whether this is done by employing the word “best” or the words “most widely applicable” makes no essential difference whatever. Had the Union Abroad said that “political agitation on an economic basis” is the most widely applied (not “applicable”) means, it would have been right in regard to a certain period in the development of our social-democratic movement. It would have been right in regard to the *Economists* and to many (if not the majority) of the practical workers of 1898-1901; for these practical Economists *applied* political agitation (to the extent that they applied it at all) *almost exclusively on an economic basis*. Political agitation on *such* lines was recognised and, as we have seen, even recommended by *Rabochaya Mysl* and the Self-Emancipation Group. *Rabocheye Dyelo* should have *strongly condemned* the fact that the useful work of economic agitation was accompanied by the harmful restriction of the political struggle; instead, it declares the means most widely *applied (by the Economists)* to be the most widely *applicable*! It is not surprising that when we call these people Economists, they can do nothing but pour every manner of abuse upon us; call us “mystifiers”, “disrupters”, “papal nuncios”, and “slanderers”<sup>\*</sup> go complaining to the whole world that we have mortally offended them; and declare almost on oath that “not a single social-democratic organisation is now tinged with Economism”.<sup>\*\*</sup> Oh, those evil, slanderous politicians! They must have deliberately invented this Economism, out of sheer hatred of mankind, in order mortally to offend other people.

What concrete, real meaning attaches to Martynov’s words when he sets before social-democracy the task of “lending the economic struggle itself a political character”? The economic struggle is the collective struggle of the workers against their employers for better terms *in the sale of their labour-power*, for better living and working conditions. This struggle is necessarily a trade union struggle, because working conditions differ greatly in different trades, and, consequently, the struggle *to improve* them can only be conducted on the basis of trade organisations (in the Western countries, through trade unions; in Russia, through temporary trade associations and through leaflets, etc.). Lending “the economic struggle itself a political character” means, therefore, striving to secure satisfaction of these trade demands, the improvement of working conditions in each separate trade by means of “legislative and administrative measures”

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\* These are the precise expressions used in *Two Conferences*, pp. 31, 32, 28 and 80.

\*\* *Two Conferences*, p. 32.

(as Martynov puts it on the ensuing page of his article, p. 43). This is precisely what all workers' trade unions do and always have done. Read the works of the soundly scientific (and "soundly" opportunist) Mr. and Mrs. Webb and you will see that the British trade unions long ago recognised, and have long been carrying out, the task of "lending the economic struggle itself a political character"; they have long been fighting for the right to strike, for the removal of all legal hindrances to the cooperative and trade union movements, for laws to protect women and children, for the improvement of labour conditions by means of health and factory legislation, etc.

Thus, the pompous phrase about "lending the economic struggle *itself* a political character", which sounds so "terrifically" profound and revolutionary, serves as a screen to conceal what is in fact the traditional striving *to degrade* social-democratic politics to the level of trade union politics. Under the guise of rectifying the onesidedness of *Iskra*, which, it is alleged, places "the revolutionising of dogma higher than the revolutionising of life",\* we are presented with the *struggle for economic reforms* as if it were something entirely new. In point of fact, the phrase "lending the economic struggle itself a political character" means nothing more than the struggle for economic reforms. Martynov himself might have come to this simple conclusion, had he pondered over the significance of his own words. "Our party," he says, training his heaviest guns on *Iskra*, "could and should have presented concrete demands to the government for legislative and administrative measures against economic exploitation, unemployment, famine, etc." (*Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 10, pp. 42-43). Concrete demands for measures — does not this mean demands for social reforms? Again we ask the impartial reader: Are we slandering the *Rabocheye Dyelo*-ites (may I be forgiven for this awkward, currently used designation!) by calling them concealed Bernsteinians when, as their point of *disagreement* with *Iskra*, they advance their thesis on the necessity of struggling for economic reforms?

Revolutionary social-democracy has always included the struggle for reforms as part of its activities. But it utilises "economic" agitation for the purpose of presenting to the government, not only demands for all sorts of measures, but also (and primarily) the demand that it cease to be an autocratic government. Moreover, it considers it its duty to present this demand to the government on the basis, not of the economic struggle *alone*, but of all manifestations in general of public and political life. In a word,

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\* *Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 10, p. 60. This is the Martynov variation of the application, which we have characterised above, of the thesis "every step of real movement is more important than a dozen programs" to the present chaotic state of our movement. In fact, this is merely a translation into Russian of the notorious Bernsteinian sentence: "The movement is everything, the final aim is nothing."

it subordinates the struggle for reforms, as the part to the whole, to the revolutionary struggle for freedom and for socialism. Martynov, however, resuscitates the theory of stages in a new form and strives to prescribe, as it were, an exclusively economic path of development for the political struggle. By advancing at this moment, when the revolutionary movement is on the upgrade, an alleged special “task” of struggling for reforms, he is dragging the party backwards and is playing into the hands of both “Economist” and liberal opportunism.

To proceed. Shamefacedly hiding the struggle for reforms behind the pompous thesis of “lending the economic struggle itself a political character”, Martynov advanced, as if it were a special point, *exclusively economic* (indeed, exclusively factory) reforms. As to the reason for his doing that, we do not know it. Carelessness, perhaps? Yet if he had in mind something else besides “factory” reforms, then the whole of his thesis, which we have cited, loses all sense. Perhaps he did it because he considers it possible and probable that the government will make “concessions” only in the economic sphere?\* If so, then it is a strange delusion. Concessions are also possible and are made in the sphere of legislation concerning flogging, passports, land redemption payments, religious sects, the censorship, etc., etc. “Economic” concessions (or pseudo-concessions) are, of course, the cheapest and most advantageous from the government’s point of view, because by these means it hopes to win the confidence of the working masses. For this very reason, we social-democrats *must not* under any circumstances or in any way whatever create grounds for the belief (or the misunderstanding) that we attach greater value to economic reforms, or that we regard them as being particularly important, etc. “Such demands”, writes Martynov, speaking of the concrete demands for legislative and administrative measures referred to above, “would not be merely a hollow sound, because, promising certain palpable results, they might be actively supported by the working masses ...” We are not Economists, oh no! We only cringe as slavishly before the “palpableness” of concrete results as do the Bernsteins, the Prokopoviches, the Struves, the R.M.s, and *tutti quanti*! We only wish to make it understood (together with Nartsis Tuporylov) that all which “does not promise palpable results” is merely a “hollow sound”! We are only trying to argue as if the working masses were incapable (and had not already proved their capabilities, notwithstanding those who ascribe their own philistinism to them) of actively supporting *every* protest against the autocracy, even if it *promises absolutely no palpable results whatever!*

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\* P. 43. “Of course, when we advise the workers to present certain economic demands to the government, we do so because in the *economic* sphere the autocratic government is, of necessity, prepared to make certain concessions.”

Let us take, for example, the very “measures” for the relief of unemployment and the famine that Martynov himself advances. *Rabocheye Dyelo* is engaged, judging by what it has promised, in drawing up and elaborating a program of “concrete [in the form of bills?] demands for legislative and administrative measures”, “promising palpable results”, while *Iskra*, which “constantly places the revolutionising of dogma higher than the revolutionising of life”, has tried to explain the inseparable connection between unemployment and the whole capitalist system, has given warning that “famine is coming”, has exposed the police “fight against the famine-stricken”, and the outrageous “provisional penal servitude regulations”; and *Zarya* has published a special reprint, in the form of an agitational pamphlet, of a section of its “Review of Home Affairs”, dealing with the famine.\* But good God! How “onesided” were these incorrigibly narrow and orthodox doctrinaires, how deaf to the calls of “life itself”! Their articles contained — oh horror! — *not a single*, can you imagine it? not a single “concrete demand” “promising palpable results”! Poor doctrinaires! They ought to be sent to Krichevsky and Martynov to be taught that tactics are a process of growth, of that which grows, etc., and that the economic struggle *itself* should be given a political character!

“In addition to its immediate revolutionary significance, the economic struggle of the workers against the employers and the government [*economic* struggle against the government”!] has also this significance: it constantly brings home to the workers the fact that they have no political rights” (Martynov, p. 44). We quote this passage, not in order to repeat for the hundredth and thousandth time what has been said above, but in order to express particular thanks to Martynov for this excellent new formula: “the economic struggle of the workers against the employers and the government”. What a gem! With what inimitable skill and mastery in eliminating all partial disagreements and shades of differences among Economists this clear and concise proposition expresses the *quintessence* of Economism, from summoning the workers “to the political struggle, which they carry on in the general interest, for the improvement of the conditions of all the workers”,\*\* continuing through the theory of stages, and ending in the resolution of the Conference on the “most widely applicable”, etc. “Economic struggle against the government” is precisely trade-unionist politics, which is still very far from being social-democratic politics.

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\* See Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 5, pp. 253-274. — *Ed.*

\*\* *Rabochaya Mysl*, *Separate Supplement*, p. 14.

## B. How Martynov rendered Plekhanov more profound

“What a large number of social-democratic Lomonosovs have appeared among us lately!” observed a comrade one day, having in mind the astonishing propensity of many who are inclined toward Economism to arrive, “necessarily, by their own understanding”, at great truths (e.g., that the economic struggle stimulates the workers to ponder over their lack of rights) and in doing so to ignore, with the supreme contempt of born geniuses, all that has been produced by the antecedent development of revolutionary thought and of the revolutionary movement. Lomonosov-Martynov is precisely such a born genius. We need but glance at his article “Urgent Questions” to see how by “his own understanding” he *arrives at* what was long ago said by Axelrod (of whom our Lomonosov, naturally, says not a word); how, for instance, he is *beginning* to understand that we cannot ignore the opposition of such or such strata of the bourgeoisie (*Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 9, pp. 61, 62, 71; compare this with *Rabocheye Dyelo*’s Reply to Axelrod, pp. 22, 23-24), etc. But alas, he is only “arriving” and is only “beginning”, not more than that, for so little has he understood Axelrod’s ideas, that he talks about “the economic struggle against the employers and the government”. For three years (1898-1901) *Rabocheye Dyelo* has tried hard to understand Axelrod, but has so far not understood him! Can one of the reasons be that social-democracy, “like mankind”, always sets itself only tasks that can be achieved?

But the Lomonosovs are distinguished not only by their ignorance of many things (that would be but half misfortune!), but also by their unawareness of their own ignorance. Now this is a real misfortune; and it is this misfortune that prompts them without further ado to attempt to render Plekhanov “more profound”.

Much water [Lomonosov-Martynov says] has flowed under the bridge since Plekhanov wrote his book (*Tasks of the Socialists in the Fight Against the Famine in Russia*). The social-democrats who for a decade led the economic struggle of the working class ... have failed as yet to lay down a broad theoretical basis for party tactics. This question has now come to a head, and if we should wish to lay down such a theoretical basis, we should certainly have to deepen considerably the principles of tactics developed at one time by Plekhanov ... Our present definition of the distinction between propaganda and agitation would have to be different from Plekhanov’s [Martynov has just quoted Plekhanov’s words: “A propagandist presents many ideas to one or a few persons; an agitator presents only one or a few ideas, but he presents them to a mass of people.”] By propaganda we would understand the revolutionary explanation of the present social system, entire or in its partial manifestations, whether that be done in a form intelligible to individuals or to broad masses. By agitation, in the strict sense of the word (*sic!*), we would understand the call upon the masses to undertake definite, concrete actions and

the promotion of the direct revolutionary intervention of the proletariat in social life. We congratulate Russian — and international — social-democracy on having found, thanks to Martynov, a new terminology, more strict and more profound. Hitherto we thought (with Plekhanov, and with all the leaders of the international working-class movement) that the propagandist, dealing with, say, the question of unemployment, must explain the capitalistic nature of crises, the cause of their inevitability in modern society, the necessity for the transformation of this society into a socialist society, etc. In a word, he must present “many ideas”, so many, indeed, that they will be understood as an integral whole only by a (comparatively) few persons. The agitator, however, speaking on the same subject, will take as an illustration a fact that is most glaring and most widely known to his audience, say, the death of an unemployed worker’s family from starvation, the growing impoverishment, etc., and, utilising this fact, known to all, will direct his efforts to presenting a *single idea* to the “masses”, e.g., the senselessness of the contradiction between the increase of wealth and the increase of poverty; he will strive *to rouse* discontent and indignation among the masses against this crying injustice, leaving a more complete explanation of this contradiction to the propagandist. Consequently, the propagandist operates chiefly by means of the *printed* word; the agitator by means of the *spoken* word. The propagandist requires qualities different from those of the agitator. Kautsky and Lafargue, for example, we term propagandists; Bebel and Guesde we term agitators. To single out a third sphere, or third function, of practical activity, and to include in this function “the call upon the masses to undertake definite concrete actions”, is sheer nonsense, because the “call”, as a single act, either naturally and inevitably supplements the theoretical treatise, propagandist pamphlet, and agitational speech, or represents a purely executive function. Let us take, for example, the struggle the German social-democrats are now waging against the corn duties. The theoreticians write research works on tariff policy, with the “call”, say, to struggle for commercial treaties and for free trade. The propagandist does the same thing in the periodical press, and the agitator in public speeches. At the present time, the “concrete action” of the masses takes the form of signing petitions to the Reichstag against raising the corn duties. The call for this action comes indirectly from the theoreticians, the propagandists, and the agitators, and, directly, from the workers who take the petition lists to the factories and to private homes for the gathering of signatures. According to the “Martynov terminology”, Kautsky and Bebel are both propagandists, while those who solicit the signatures are agitators. Isn’t it clear?

The German example recalled to my mind the German word “Verballhornung” which, literally translated, means “Ballhorning”. Johann Ballhorn, a Leipzig publisher of the 16th century, published a child’s reader in which, as was the custom, he introduced a drawing of a cock, but a

cock without spurs and with a couple of eggs lying near it. On the cover he printed the legend, “Revised edition by Johann Ballhorn”. Ever since then, the Germans describe any “revision” that is really a worsening as “ballhorning”. And one cannot help recalling Ballhorn upon seeing how the Martynovs try to render Plekhanov “more profound”.

Why did our Lomonosov “invent” this confusion? In order to illustrate how *Iskra* “devotes attention only to one side of the case, just as Plekhanov did a decade and a half ago” (39). “With *Iskra*, propagandist tasks force agitational tasks into the background, at least for the present” (52). If we translate this last proposition from the language of Martynov into ordinary human language (because mankind has not yet managed to learn the newly-invented terminology), we shall get the following: with *Iskra*, the tasks of political propaganda and political agitation force into the background the task of “presenting to the government concrete demands for legislative and administrative measures” that “promise certain palpable results” (or demands for social reforms, that is, if we are permitted once again to employ the old terminology of the old mankind not yet grown to Martynov’s level). We suggest that the reader compare this thesis with the following tirade:

What also astonishes us in these programs [the programs advanced by revolutionary social-democrats] is their constant stress upon the benefits of workers’ activity in parliament (nonexistent in Russia), though they completely ignore (thanks to their revolutionary nihilism) the importance of workers’ participation in the legislative manufacturers’ assemblies on factory affairs [which do exist in Russia] ... or at least the importance of workers’ participation in municipal bodies ...

The author of this tirade expresses in a somewhat more forthright and clearer manner the very idea which Lomonosov-Martynov discovered by his own understanding. The author is R.M., in the *Separate Supplement to Rabochaya Mysl* (p. 15).

### C. Political exposures & ‘training in revolutionary activity’

In advancing against *Iskra* his theory of “raising the activity of the working masses”, Martynov actually betrayed an urge to belittle that activity, for he declared the very economic struggle before which all Economists grovel to be the preferable, particularly important, and “most widely applicable” means of rousing this activity and its broadest field. This error is characteristic, precisely in that it is by no means peculiar to Martynov. In reality, it is possible to “raise the activity of the working masses” *only* when this activity is *not restricted* to “political agitation on an economic basis”. A basic condition for the necessary expansion of political agitation is the organisation of *comprehensive* political exposure. *In no way* except by means of such exposures *can* the masses be trained in political consciousness and revolutionary activity. Hence, activity of this kind

is one of the most important functions of international social-democracy as a whole, for even political freedom does not in any way eliminate exposures; it merely shifts somewhat their sphere of direction. Thus, the German party is especially strengthening its positions and spreading its influence, thanks particularly to the untiring energy with which it is conducting its campaign of political exposure. Working-class consciousness cannot be genuine political consciousness unless the workers are trained to respond to *all* cases of tyranny, oppression, violence, and abuse, no matter *what class* is affected — unless they are trained, moreover, to respond from a social-democratic point of view and no other. The consciousness of the working masses cannot be genuine class-consciousness, unless the workers learn, from concrete, and above all from topical, political facts and events to observe *every* other social class in *all* the manifestations of its intellectual, ethical, and political life; unless they learn to apply in practice the materialist analysis and the materialist estimate of *all* aspects of the life and activity of *all* classes, strata, and groups of the population. Those who concentrate the attention, observation, and consciousness of the working class exclusively, or even mainly, upon itself alone are not social-democrats; for the self-knowledge of the working class is indissolubly bound up, not solely with a fully clear theoretical understanding — or rather, not so much with the theoretical, as with the practical, understanding — of the relationships between *all* the various classes of modern society, acquired through the experience of political life. For this reason the conception of the economic struggle as the most widely applicable means of drawing the masses into the political movement, which our Economists preach, is so extremely harmful and reactionary in its practical significance. In order to become a social-democrat, the worker must have a clear picture in his mind of the economic nature and the social and political features of the landlord and the priest, the high state official and the peasant, the student and the vagabond; he must know their strong and weak points; he must grasp the meaning of all the catchwords and sophisms by which each class and each stratum *camouflages* its selfish strivings and its real “inner workings”; he must understand what interests are reflected by certain institutions and certain laws and how they are reflected. But this “clear picture” cannot be obtained from any book. It can be obtained only from living examples and from exposures that follow close upon what is going on about us at a given moment; upon what is being discussed, in whispers perhaps, by each one in his own way; upon what finds expression in such and such events, in such and such statistics, in such and such court sentences, etc., etc. These comprehensive political exposures are an essential and *fundamental* condition for training the masses in revolutionary activity.

Why do the Russian workers still manifest little revolutionary activity in response

to the brutal treatment of the people by the police, the persecution of religious sects, the flogging of peasants, the outrageous censorship, the torture of soldiers, the persecution of the most innocent cultural undertakings, etc.? Is it because the “economic struggle” does not “stimulate” them to this, because such activity does not “promise palpable results”, because it produces little that is “positive”? To adopt such an opinion, we repeat, is merely to direct the charge where it does not belong, to blame the working masses for one’s own philistinism (or Bernsteinism). We must blame ourselves, our lagging behind the mass movement, for still being unable to organise sufficiently wide, striking, and rapid exposures of all the shameful outrages. When we do that (and we must and can do it), the most backward worker will understand, *or will feel*, that the students and religious sects, the peasants and the authors are being abused and outraged by those same dark forces that are oppressing and crushing him at every step of his life. Feeling that, he himself will be filled with an irresistible desire to react, and he will know how to hoot the censors one day, on another day to demonstrate outside the house of a governor who has brutally suppressed a peasant uprising, on still another day to teach a lesson to the gendarmes in surplices who are doing the work of the Holy Inquisition, etc. As yet we have done very little, almost nothing, *to bring* before the working masses prompt exposures on all possible issues. Many of us as yet do not recognise this as our *bounden duty* but trail spontaneously in the wake of the “drab everyday struggle”, in the narrow confines of factory life. Under such circumstances to say that “*Iskra* displays a tendency to minimise the significance of the forward march of the drab everyday struggle in comparison with the propaganda of brilliant and complete ideas” (Martynov, *op. cit.*, p. 61), means to drag the party back, to defend and glorify our unpreparedness and backwardness.

As for calling the masses to action, that will come of itself as soon as energetic political agitation, live and striking exposures come into play. To catch some criminal red-handed and immediately to brand him publicly in all places is of itself far more effective than any number of “calls”; the effect very often is such as will make it impossible to tell exactly who it was that “called” upon the masses and who suggested this or that plan of demonstration, etc. Calls for action, not in the general, but in the concrete, sense of the term can be made only at the place of action; only those who themselves go into action, and do so immediately, can sound such calls. Our business as social-democratic publicists is to deepen, expand, and intensify political exposures and political agitation.

A word in passing about “calls to action”. The *only newspaper* which *prior* to the spring events *called upon* the workers to intervene actively in a matter that certainly did not *promise any palpable results* whatever for the workers, i.e., the drafting of the students into the army, was *Iskra*. Immediately after the publication of the order of

January 11, on “drafting the 183 students into the army”, *Iskra* published an article on the matter (in its February issue, No. 2),\* and, *before* any demonstration was begun, forthwith *called upon* “the workers to go to the aid of the students”, called upon the “people” openly to take up the government’s arrogant challenge. We ask: how is the remarkable fact to be explained that although Martynov talks so much about “calls to action”, and even suggests “calls to action” as a special form of activity, he said not a word about *this* call? After this, was it not sheer philistinism on Martynov’s part to allege that *Iskra* was *one-sided* because it did not issue sufficient “calls” to struggle for demands “promising palpable results”?

Our Economists, including *Rabocheye Dyelo*, were successful because they adapted themselves to the backward workers. But the social-democratic worker, the revolutionary worker (and the number of such workers is growing) will indignantly reject all this talk about struggle for demands “promising palpable results”, etc., because he will understand that this is only a variation of the old song about adding a kopek to the ruble. Such a worker will say to his counsellors from *Rabochaya Mysl* and *Rabocheye Dyelo*: you are busying yourselves in vain, gentlemen, and shirking your proper duties, by meddling with such excessive zeal in a job that we can very well manage ourselves. There is nothing clever in your assertion that the social-democrats’ task is to lend the economic struggle itself a political character; that is only the beginning, it is not the main task of the social-democrats. For all over the world, including Russia, *the police themselves often take the initiative in lending* the economic struggle a political character, and the workers themselves learn to understand whom the government supports.\*\*

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\* See Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4, pp. 414-419. — *Ed.*

\*\* The demand “to lend the economic struggle itself a political character” most strikingly expresses *subservience to spontaneity* in the sphere of political activity. Very often the economic struggle *spontaneously* assumes a political character, that is to say, without the intervention of the “revolutionary bacilli — the intelligentsia”, without the intervention of the class-conscious social-democrats. The economic struggle of the English workers, for instance, also assumed a political character without any intervention on the part of the socialists. The task of the social-democrats, however, is not exhausted by political agitation on an economic basis; their task is *to convert* trade-unionist politics into social-democratic political struggle, *to utilise* the sparks of political consciousness which the economic struggle generates among the workers, for the purpose of *raising* the workers to the level of *social-democratic* political consciousness. The Martynovs, however, instead of raising and stimulating the spontaneously awakening political consciousness of the workers, *bow to spontaneity* and repeat over and over *ad nauseam*, that the economic struggle “impels” the workers to realise their own lack of political rights. It is unfortunate, gentlemen, that the spontaneously awakening trade-unionist political consciousness does not “*impel*” you to an understanding of your social-democratic tasks.

The “economic struggle of the workers against the employers and the government”, about which you make as much fuss as if you had discovered a new America, is being waged in all parts of Russia, even the most remote, by the workers themselves who have heard about strikes, but who have heard almost nothing about socialism. The “activity” you want to stimulate among us workers, by advancing concrete demands that promise palpable results, we are already displaying and in our everyday, limited trade union work we put forward these concrete demands, very often without any assistance whatever from the intellectuals. But *such* activity is not enough for us; we are not children to be fed on the thin gruel of “economic” politics alone; we want to know everything that others know, we want to learn the details of *all* aspects of political life and to take part *actively* in every single political event. In order that we may do this, the intellectuals must talk to us less of what we already know\* and tell us more about what we do not yet know and what we can never learn from our factory and “economic” experience, namely, political knowledge. You intellectuals can acquire this knowledge, and it is your *duty* to bring it to us in a hundred- and a thousand-fold greater measure than you have done up to now; and you must bring it to us, not only in the form of discussions, pamphlets, and articles (which very often — pardon our frankness — are rather dull), but precisely in the form of vivid *exposures* of what our government and our governing classes are doing at this very moment in all spheres of life. Devote more

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\* To prove that this imaginary speech of a worker to an Economist is based on fact, we shall refer to two witnesses who undoubtedly have direct knowledge of the working-class movement and who are least of all inclined to be partial towards us “doctrinaires”; for one witness is an Economist (who regards even *Rabocheye Dyelo* as a political organ!), and the other is a terrorist. The first witness is the author of a remarkably truthful and vivid article entitled “The St. Petersburg Working-Class Movement and the Practical Tasks of Social-Democracy”, published in *Rabocheye Dyelo* No. 6. He divides the workers into the following categories: (1) class-conscious revolutionaries; (2) intermediate stratum; (3) the remaining masses. The intermediate stratum, he says, “is often more interested in questions of political life than in its own immediate economic interests, the connection between which and the general social conditions it has long understood” ... *Rabochaya Mysl* “is sharply criticised”: “It keeps on repeating the same thing over and over again, things we have long known, read long ago.” “Again nothing in the political review!” (pp. 30-31). But even the third stratum, “the younger and more sensitive section of the workers, less corrupted by the tavern and the church, who hardly ever have the opportunity of getting hold of political literature, discuss political events in a rambling way and ponder over the fragmentary news they get about student riots”, etc. The terrorist writes as follows: “... They read over once or twice the petty details of factory life in other towns, not their own, and then they read no more ... dull, they find it ... To say nothing in a workers’ paper about the government ... is to regard the workers as being little children ... The workers are not little children” (*Svoboda*, published by the Revolutionary-Socialist Group, pp. 69-70).

zeal to carrying out this duty and talk less about “*raising the activity of the working masses*”. We are far more active than you think, and we are quite able to support, by open street fighting, even demands that do not promise any “palpable results” whatever. It is not for you to “raise” our activity, because *activity is precisely the thing you yourselves lack*. Bow less in subservience to spontaneity, and think more about raising your own activity, gentlemen!

#### **D. What is there in common between Economism & terrorism?**

In the last footnote we cited the opinion of an Economist and of a non-social-democratic terrorist, who showed themselves to be accidentally in agreement. Speaking generally, however, there is not an accidental, but a necessary, inherent connection between the two, of which we shall have need to speak later, and which must be mentioned here in connection with the question of education for revolutionary activity. The Economists and the present-day terrorists have one common root, namely, *subservience to spontaneity*, with which we dealt in the preceding chapter as a general phenomenon and which we shall now examine in relation to its effect upon political activity and the political struggle. At first sight, our assertion may appear paradoxical, so great is the difference between those who stress the “drab everyday struggle” and those who call for the most self-sacrificing struggle of individuals. But this is no paradox. The Economists and the terrorists merely bow to different poles of spontaneity; the Economists bow to the spontaneity of “the labour movement pure and simple”, while the terrorists bow to the spontaneity of the passionate indignation of intellectuals, who lack the ability or opportunity to connect the revolutionary struggle and the working-class movement into an integral whole. It is difficult indeed for those who have lost their belief, or who have never believed, that this is possible, to find some outlet for their indignation and revolutionary energy other than terror. Thus, both forms of subservience to spontaneity we have mentioned are nothing but *the beginning of the implementation* of the notorious *Credo* program: Let the workers wage their “economic struggle against the employers and the government” (we apologise to the author of the *Credo* for expressing her views in Martynov’s words. We think we have a right to do so since the *Credo*, too, says that in the economic struggle the workers “come up against the political regime” and let the intellectuals conduct the political struggle by their own efforts — with the aid of terror, of course! This is an absolutely logical and inevitable *conclusion* which must be insisted on — *even though those* who are beginning to carry out this program *do not themselves realise* that it is inevitable. Political activity has its logic quite apart from the consciousness of those who, with the

best intentions, call either for terror or for lending the economic struggle itself a political character. The road to hell is paved with good intentions, and, in this case, good intentions cannot save one from being spontaneously drawn “along the line of least resistance”, along the line of the *purely bourgeois Credo* program. Surely it is no accident either that many Russian liberals — avowed liberals and liberals that wear the mask of Marxism — wholeheartedly sympathise with terror and try to foster the terrorist moods that have surged up in the present time.

The formation of the Revolutionary-Socialist *Svoboda* Group — which set itself the aim of helping the working-class movement in every possible way, but which included in its *program* terror, and emancipation, so to speak, from social-democracy — once again confirmed the remarkable perspicacity of P.B. Axelrod, who *literally foretold* these results of social-democratic waverings *as far back as the end of 1897* (*Present Tasks and Tactics*), when he outlined his famous “two perspectives”. All the subsequent disputes and disagreements among Russian social-democrats are contained, like a plant in the seed, in these two perspectives.\*

From this point of view it also becomes clear why *Rabocheye Dyelo*, unable to withstand the spontaneity of Economism, has likewise been unable to withstand the spontaneity of terrorism. It is highly interesting to note here the specific arguments that *Svoboda* has advanced in defence of terrorism. It “completely denies” the deterrent role of terrorism (*The Regeneration of Revolutionism*, p. 64), but instead stresses its “excitative significance”. This is characteristic, first, as representing one of the stages of the breakup and decline of the traditional (pre-social-democratic) cycle of ideas which insisted upon terrorism. The admission that the government cannot now be “terrified” and hence disrupted, by terror, is tantamount to a complete condemnation of terror as a system of struggle, as a sphere of activity sanctioned by the program. Secondly, it

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\* Martynov “conceives of another, more realistic [?] dilemma” (*Social-Democracy and the Working Class*, p. 19): “Either social-democracy takes over the direct leadership of the economic struggle of the proletariat and by that [!] transforms it into a revolutionary class struggle ...” “By that”, i.e., apparently by the direct leadership of the economic struggle. Can Martynov cite an instance in which leading the trade-union struggle alone has succeeded in transforming a trade-unionist movement into a revolutionary class movement? Can he not understand that in order to bring about this “transformation” we must actively take up the “direct leadership” of all-sided political agitation? ... “Or the other perspective: social-democracy refrains from assuming the leadership of the economic struggle of the workers and so ... clips its own wings ...” In *Rabocheye Dyelo*’s opinion, quoted above, it is *Iskra* that “refrains”. We have seen, however, that the latter *does far more than Rabocheye Dyelo* to lead the economic struggle, but that, moreover, it does not confine itself thereto and *does not narrow down* its political tasks for its sake.

is still more characteristic as an example of the failure to understand our immediate tasks in regard to “education for revolutionary activity”. *Svoboda* advocates terror as a means of “exciting” the working-class movement and of giving it a “strong impetus”. It is difficult to imagine an argument that more thoroughly disproves itself. Are there not enough outrages committed in Russian life without special “excitants” having to be invented? On the other hand, is it not obvious that those who are not, and cannot be, roused to excitement even by Russian tyranny will stand by “twiddling their thumbs” and watch a handful of terrorists engaged in single combat with the government? The fact is that the working masses are roused to a high pitch of excitement by the social evils in Russian life, but we are unable to gather, if one may so put it, and concentrate all these drops and streamlets of popular resentment that are brought forth to a far larger extent than we imagine by the conditions of Russian life, and that must be combined into a *single* gigantic torrent. That this can be accomplished is irrefutably proved by the enormous growth of the working-class movement and the eagerness, noted above, with which the workers clamour for political literature. On the other hand, calls for terror and calls to lend the economic struggle itself a political character are merely two different forms of *evading* the most pressing duty now resting upon Russian revolutionaries, namely, the organisation of comprehensive political agitation. *Svoboda* desires to *substitute* terror for agitation, openly admitting that “as soon as intensified and strenuous agitation is begun among the masses the excitative function of terror will be ended” (*The Regeneration of Revolutionism*, p. 68). This proves precisely that both the terrorists and the Economists *underestimate* the revolutionary activity of the masses, despite the striking evidence of the events that took place in the spring,\* and whereas the one group goes out in search of artificial “excitants”, the other talks about “concrete demands”. But both fail to devote sufficient attention to the development of *their own activity* in political agitation and in the organisation of political exposures. And no other work can serve as a *substitute* for this task either at the present time or at any other.

### E. The working class as vanguard fighter for democracy

We have seen that the conduct of the broadest political agitation and, consequently, of all-sided political exposures is an absolutely necessary and a *paramount* task of our activity, if this activity is to be truly social-democratic. However, we arrived at this conclusion solely on the grounds of the pressing needs of the working class for political

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<sup>a</sup> The big street demonstrations which began in the spring of 1901. [Author's note to the 1907 edition. — *Ed.*]

knowledge and political training. But such a presentation of the question is too narrow, for it ignores the general democratic tasks of social-democracy, in particular of present-day Russian social-democracy. In order to explain the point more concretely we shall approach the subject from an aspect that is “nearest” to the Economist, namely, from the practical aspect. “Everyone agrees” that it is necessary to develop the political consciousness of the working class. The question is *how* that is to be done and what is required to do it. The economic struggle merely “impels” the workers to realise the government’s attitude towards the working class. Consequently, *however much we may try* to “lend the economic struggle itself a political character”, *we shall never be able* to develop the political consciousness of the workers (to the level of social-democratic political consciousness) by keeping within the framework of the economic struggle, for *that framework is too narrow*. The Martynov formula has some value for us, not because it illustrates Martynov’s aptitude for confusing things, but because it pointedly expresses the basic error that all the Economists commit, namely, their conviction that it is possible to develop the class political consciousness of the workers *from within*, so to speak, from their economic struggle, i.e., by making this struggle the exclusive (or, at least, the main) starting-point, by making it the exclusive (or, at least, the main) basis. Such a view is radically wrong. Piqued by our polemics against them, the Economists refuse to ponder deeply over the origins of these disagreements, with the result that we simply cannot understand one another. It is as if we spoke in different tongues.

Class political consciousness can be brought to the workers *only from without*, that is, only from outside the economic struggle, from outside the sphere of relations between workers and employers. The sphere from which alone it is possible to obtain this knowledge is the sphere of relationships of *all* classes and strata to the state and the government, the sphere of the interrelations between *all* classes. For that reason, the reply to the question as to what must be done to bring political knowledge to the workers cannot be merely the answer with which, in the majority of cases, the practical workers, especially those inclined towards Economism, mostly content themselves, namely: “To go among the workers.” To bring political knowledge to the *workers* the social-democrats must *go among all classes of the population*; they must dispatch units of their army *in all directions*.

We deliberately select this blunt formula, we deliberately express ourselves in this sharply simplified manner, not because we desire to indulge in paradoxes, but in order to “impel” the Economists to a realisation of their tasks which they unpardonably ignore, to suggest to them strongly the difference between trade-unionist and social-democratic politics, which they refuse to understand. We therefore beg the reader not

to get wrought up, but to hear us patiently to the end.

Let us take the type of social-democratic study circle that has become most widespread in the past few years and examine its work. It has “contacts with the workers” and rests content with this, issuing leaflets in which abuses in the factories, the government’s partiality towards the capitalists, and the tyranny of the police are strongly condemned. At workers’ meetings the discussions never, or rarely ever, go beyond the limits of these subjects. Extremely rare are the lectures and discussions held on the history of the revolutionary movement, on questions of the government’s home and foreign policy, on questions of the economic evolution of Russia and of Europe, on the position of the various classes in modern society, etc. As to systematically acquiring and extending contact with other classes of society, no one even dreams of that. In fact, the ideal leader, as the majority of the members of such circles picture him, is something far more in the nature of a trade union secretary than a socialist political leader. For the secretary of any, say English, trade union always helps the workers to carry on the economic struggle, he helps them to expose factory abuses, explains the injustice of the laws and of measures that hamper the freedom to strike and to picket (i.e., to warn all and sundry that a strike is proceeding at a certain factory), explains the partiality of arbitration court judges who belong to the bourgeois classes, etc., etc. In a word, every trade union secretary conducts and helps to conduct “the economic struggle against the employers and the government”. It cannot be too strongly maintained that *this is still not* social-democracy, that the social-democrat’s ideal should not be the trade union secretary, but *the tribune of the people*, who is able to react to every manifestation of tyranny and oppression, no matter where it appears, no matter what stratum or class of the people it affects; who is able to generalise all these manifestations and produce a single picture of police violence and capitalist exploitation; who is able to take advantage of every event, however small, in order to set forth *before all* his socialist convictions and his democratic demands, in order to clarify for *all* and everyone the world-historic significance of the struggle for the emancipation of the proletariat. Compare, for example, a leader like Robert Knight (the well-known secretary and leader of the Boiler-Makers’ Society, one of the most powerful trade unions in England), with Wilhelm Liebknecht, and try to apply to them the contrasts that Martynov draws in his controversy with *Iskra*. You will see — I am running through Martynov’s article — that Robert Knight engaged more in “calling the masses to certain concrete actions” (Martynov, *op. cit.*, p. 39), while Wilhelm Liebknecht engaged more in “the revolutionary elucidation of the whole of the present system or partial manifestations of it” (38-39); that Robert Knight “formulated the immediate demands of the proletariat and indicated the means by which they can be achieved”

(41), whereas Wilhelm Liebknecht, while doing this, did not hold back from “simultaneously guiding the activities of various opposition strata”, “dictating a positive program of action for them”\* (41); that Robert Knight strove “as far as possible to lend the economic struggle itself a political character” (42) and was excellently able “to submit to the government concrete demands promising certain palpable results” (43), whereas Liebknecht engaged to a much greater degree in “one-sided” “exposures” (40); that Robert Knight attached more significance to the “forward march of the drab everyday struggle” (61), whereas Liebknecht attached more significance to the “propaganda of brilliant and completed ideas” (61); that Liebknecht converted the paper he was directing into “an organ of revolutionary opposition that exposed the state of affairs in our country, particularly the political state of affairs, insofar as it affected the interests of the most varied strata of the population” (63), whereas Robert Knight “worked for the cause of the working class in close organic connection with the proletarian struggle” (63) — if by “close and organic connection” is meant the subservience to spontaneity which we examined above, by taking the examples of Krichevsky and Martynov — and “restricted the sphere of his influence”, convinced, of course, as is Martynov, that “by doing so he deepened that influence” (63). In a word, you will see that *de facto* Martynov reduces social-democracy to the level of trade-unionism, though he does so, of course, not because he does not desire the good of social-democracy, but simply because he is a little too much in a hurry to render Plekhanov more profound, instead of taking the trouble to understand him.

Let us return, however, to our theses. We said that a social-democrat, if he really believes it necessary to develop comprehensively the political consciousness of the proletariat, must “go among all classes of the population”. This gives rise to the questions: how is this to be done? have we enough forces to do this? is there a basis for such work among all the other classes? will this not mean a retreat, or lead to a retreat, from the class point of view? Let us deal with these questions.

We must “go among all classes of the population” as theoreticians, as propagandists, as agitators, and as organisers. No one doubts that the theoretical work of social-democrats should aim at studying all the specific features of the social and political condition of the various classes. But extremely little is done in this direction as compared with the work that is done in studying the specific features of factory life. In the committees and study circles, one can meet people who are immersed in the study even of some special branch of the metal industry; but one can hardly ever find

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\* For example, during the Franco-Prussian War, Liebknecht dictated a program of action for *the whole of democracy*; to an even greater extent Marx and Engels did this in 1848.

members of organisations (obliged, as often happens, for some reason or other to give up practical work) who are especially engaged in gathering material on some pressing question of social and political life in our country which could serve as a means for conducting social-democratic work among other strata of the population. In dwelling upon the fact that the majority of the present-day leaders of the working-class movement lack training, we cannot refrain from mentioning training in this respect also, for it too is bound up with the Economist conception of "close organic connection with the proletarian struggle". The principal thing, of course, is *propaganda* and *agitation* among all strata of the people. The work of the West European social-democrat is in this respect facilitated by the public meetings and rallies which *all* are free to attend, and by the fact that in parliament he addresses the representatives of *all* classes. We have neither a parliament nor freedom of assembly; nevertheless, we are able to arrange meetings of workers who desire to listen to *a social-democrat*. We must also find ways and means of calling meetings of representatives of all social classes that desire to listen to *a democrat*; for he is no social-democrat who forgets in practice that "the communists support every revolutionary movement", that we are obliged for that reason to expound and emphasise *general democratic tasks before the whole people*, without for a moment concealing our socialist convictions. He is no social-democrat who forgets in practice his obligation to be *ahead of all* in raising, accentuating, and solving *every* general democratic question.

"But everyone agrees with this!" the impatient reader will exclaim, and the new instructions adopted by the last conference of the Union Abroad for the editorial board of *Rabocheye Dyelo* definitely say: 'All events of social and political life that affect the proletariat either directly as a special class or as *the vanguard of all the revolutionary forces in the struggle for freedom* should serve as subjects for political propaganda and agitation" (*Two Conferences*, p. 17, our italics). Yes, these are very true and very good words, and we would be fully satisfied if *Rabocheye Dyelo* understood them *and if it refrained from saying in the next breath things that contradict them*. For it is not enough to call ourselves the "vanguard", the advanced contingent; we must act in such a way that *all* the other contingents recognise and are obliged to admit that we are marching in the vanguard. And we ask the reader: Are the representatives of the other "contingents" such fools as to take our word for it when we say that we are the "vanguard"? Just picture to yourselves the following: a social-democrat comes to the "contingent" of Russian educated radicals, or liberal constitutionalists, and says, We are the vanguard; "the task confronting us now is, as far as possible, to lend the economic struggle itself a political character". The radical, or constitutionalist, if he is at all intelligent (and there are many intelligent men among Russian radicals and

constitutionalists), would only smile at such a speech and would say (to himself, of course, for in the majority of cases he is an experienced diplomat): “Your ‘vanguard’ must be made up of simpletons. They do not even understand that it is our task, the task of the progressive representatives of bourgeois democracy to lend the workers’ economic struggle *itself* a political character. Why, we too, like the West-European bourgeois, want to draw the workers into politics, *but only into trade-unionist, not into social-democratic politics*. Trade-unionist politics of the working class is precisely *bourgeois politics* of the working class, and this ‘vanguard’s’ formulation of its task is the formulation of trade-unionist politics! Let them call themselves social-democrats to their heart’s content, I am not a child to get excited over a label. But they must not fall under the influence of those pernicious orthodox doctrinaires, let them allow ‘freedom of criticism’ to those who unconsciously are driving social-democracy into trade-unionist channels.”

And the faint smile of our constitutionalist will turn into Homeric laughter when he learns that the social-democrats who talk of social-democracy as the vanguard, today, when spontaneity almost completely dominates our movement, fear nothing so much as “belittling the spontaneous element”, as “underestimating the significance of the forward movement of the drab everyday struggle, as compared with the propaganda of brilliant and completed ideas”, etc., etc.! A “vanguard” which fears that consciousness will outstrip spontaneity, which fears to put forward a bold “plan” that would compel general recognition even among those who differ with us. Are they not confusing “vanguard” with “rearguard”?

Indeed, let us examine the following piece of reasoning by Martynov. On page 40 he says that *Iskra* is one-sided in its tactics of exposing abuses, that “however much we may spread distrust and hatred of the government, we shall not achieve our aim until we have succeeded in developing sufficient active social energy for its overthrow”. This, it may be said parenthetically, is the familiar solicitude for the activation of the masses, with a simultaneous striving to restrict one’s own activity. But that is not the main point at the moment. Martynov speaks here, accordingly, of *revolutionary* energy (“for overthrowing”). And what conclusion does he arrive at? Since in ordinary times various social strata inevitably march separately, “it is therefore, clear that we social-democrats cannot simultaneously guide the activities of various opposition strata, we cannot dictate to them a positive program of action, we cannot point out to them in what manner they should wage a day-to-day struggle for their interests . . . The liberal strata will themselves take care of the active struggle for their immediate interests, the struggle that will bring them face to face with our political regime” (p. 41). Thus, having begun with talk about revolutionary energy, about the active struggle for the overthrow

of the autocracy, Martynov immediately turns toward trade union energy and active struggle for immediate interests! It goes without saying that we cannot guide the struggle of the students, liberals, etc., for their “immediate interests”; but this was not the point at issue, most worthy Economist! The point we were discussing was the possible and necessary participation of various social strata in the overthrow of the autocracy; and not only are we *able*, but it is our bounden duty, to guide *these* “activities of the various opposition strata”, if we desire to be the “vanguard”. Not only will our students and liberals, etc., themselves take care of “the struggle that brings them face to face with our political regime”; the police and the officials of the autocratic government will see to this first and foremost. But if “we” desire to be front-rank democrats, we must make it our concern to *direct* the thoughts of those who are dissatisfied only with conditions at the university, or in the Zemstvo, etc., to the idea that the entire political system is worthless. *We* must take upon ourselves the task of organising an all-round political struggle under the leadership of *our* party in such a manner as to make it possible for all oppositional strata to render their fullest support to the struggle and to our party. *We* must train our social-democratic practical workers to become political leaders, able to guide all the manifestations of this all-round struggle, able at the right time to “dictate a positive program of action” for the aroused students, the discontented Zemstvo people, the incensed religious sects, the offended elementary schoolteachers, etc., etc. For that reason, Martynov’s assertion that “with regard to these, we can function *merely in the negative* role of exposers of abuses . . . we can *only* dissipate their hopes in various government commissions” is *completely false* (our italics). By saying this, Martynov shows that he *absolutely fails to understand* the role that the revolutionary “vanguard” must really play. If the reader bears this in mind, he will be clear as to the *real meaning* of Martynov’s concluding remarks: “*Iskra* is the organ of the revolutionary opposition which exposes the state of affairs in our country, particularly the political state of affairs, insofar as it affects the interests of the most varied strata of the population. We, however, work and will continue to work for the cause of the working class in close organic contact with the proletarian struggle. By restricting the sphere of our active influence we deepen that influence” (63). The true sense of this conclusion is as follows: *Iskra* desires to *elevate* the trade-unionist politics of the working class (to which, through misconception, through lack of training, or through conviction, our practical workers frequently confine themselves) to the level of social-democratic politics. *Rabocheye Dyelo*, however, desires to *degrade* social-democratic politics to trade-unionist politics. Moreover, it assures the world that the two positions are “entirely compatible within the common cause” (63). *O, sancta simplicitas!*

To proceed. Have we sufficient forces to direct our propaganda and agitation

among *all* social classes? Most certainly. Our Economists, who are frequently inclined to deny this, lose sight of the gigantic progress our movement has made from (approximately) 1894 to 1901. Like real “tail-enders” they often go on living in the bygone stages of the movement’s inception. In the earlier period, indeed, we had astonishingly few forces, and it was perfectly natural and legitimate then to devote ourselves exclusively to activities among the workers and to condemn severely any deviation from this course. The entire task then was to consolidate our position in the working class. At the present time, however, gigantic forces have been attracted to the movement. The best representatives of the younger generation of the educated classes are coming over to us. Everywhere in the provinces there are people, resident there by dint of circumstance, who have taken part in the movement in the past or who desire to do so now and who are gravitating towards social-democracy (whereas in 1894 one could count the social-democrats on the fingers of one’s hand). A basic political and organisational shortcoming of our movement is our *inability* to utilise all these forces and give them appropriate work (we shall deal with this more fully in the next chapter). The overwhelming majority of these forces entirely lack the opportunity of “going among the workers”, so that there are no grounds for fearing that we shall divert forces from our main work. In order to be able to provide the workers with real, comprehensive, and live political knowledge, we must have “our own people”, social-democrats, everywhere, among all social strata, and in all positions from which we can learn the inner springs of our state mechanism. Such people are required, not only for propaganda and agitation, but in a still larger measure for organisation.

Is there a basis for activity among all classes of the population? Whoever doubts this lags in his consciousness behind the spontaneous awakening of the masses. The working-class movement has aroused and is continuing to arouse discontent in some, hopes of support for the opposition in others, and in still others the realisation that the autocracy is unbearable and must inevitably fall. We would be “politicians” and social-democrats in name only (as all too often happens in reality), if we failed to realise that our task is to utilise every manifestation of discontent, and to gather and turn to the best account every protest, however small. This is quite apart from the fact that the millions of the labouring peasantry, handicraftsmen, petty artisans, etc., would always listen eagerly to the speech of any social-democrat who is at all qualified. Indeed, is there a single social class in which there are no individuals, groups, or circles that are discontented with the lack of rights and with tyranny and, therefore, accessible to the propaganda of social-democrats as the spokesmen of the most pressing general democratic needs? To those who desire to have a clear idea of what the political agitation of a social-democrat among *all* classes and strata of the population should be

like, we would point to *political exposures* in the broad sense of the word as the principal (but, of course, not the sole) form of this agitation.

“We must arouse in every section of the population that is at all politically conscious a passion for *political exposure*”, I wrote in my article “Where to Begin?” [*Iskra*, May (No. 4), 1901], with which I shall deal in greater detail later. “We must not be discouraged by the fact that the voice of political exposure is today so feeble, timid, and infrequent. This is not because of a wholesale submission to police despotism, but because those who are able and ready to make exposures have no tribune from which to speak, no eager and encouraging audience, they do not see anywhere among the people that force to which it would be worth while directing their complaint against the ‘omnipotent’ Russian government ... We are now in a position to provide a tribune for the nationwide exposure of the tsarist government, and it is our duty to do this. That tribune must be a social-democratic newspaper.”\*

The ideal audience for political exposure is the working class, which is first and foremost in need of all-round and live political knowledge, and is most capable of converting this knowledge into active struggle, even when that struggle does not promise “palpable results”. A tribune for *nationwide* exposures can be only an all-Russia newspaper. “Without a political organ, a political movement deserving that name is inconceivable in the Europe of today”; in this respect Russia must undoubtedly be included in present-day Europe. 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. And it is no novelty in autocratic Russia for the underground press to break through the wall of censorship and *compel* the legal and conservative press to speak openly of it. This was the case in the '70s and even in the '50s. 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).<sup>32</sup> Political exposures are as much a declaration of war against the *government* as economic exposures are a declaration of war against the factory owners. The moral significance of this declaration of war will be all the greater, the wider and more powerful the campaign of exposure will be and the more numerous and determined the social *class* that has *declared war in order to begin the war*. Hence, political exposures in themselves serve as a powerful instrument for *disintegrating* the system we oppose, as a means for diverting from the enemy his casual or temporary allies, as a means for spreading hostility and distrust among the permanent partners of the autocracy.

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\* See this volume, pp. 70-71. — *Ed.*

In our time only a party that will *organise* really *nationwide* exposures can become the vanguard of the revolutionary forces. The word “nationwide” has a very profound meaning. The overwhelming majority of the non-working-class expositors (be it remembered that in order to become the vanguard, we must attract other classes) are sober politicians and level-headed men of affairs. They know perfectly well how dangerous it is to “complain” even against a minor official, let alone against the “omnipotent” Russian government. And they will come *to us* with their complaints only when they see that these complaints can really have effect, and that we represent *a political force*. In order to become such a force in the eyes of outsiders, much persistent and stubborn work is required *to raise* our own consciousness, initiative, and energy. To accomplish this it is not enough to attach a “vanguard” label to rearguard theory and practice.

But if we have to undertake the organisation of a really nationwide exposure of the government, in what way will then the class character of our movement be expressed? — the overzealous advocate of “close organic contact with the proletarian struggle” will ask us, as indeed he does. The reply is manifold: we social-democrats will organise these nationwide exposures; all questions raised by the agitation will be explained in a consistently social-democratic spirit, without any concessions to deliberate or undeliberate distortions of Marxism; the all-round political agitation will be conducted by a party which unites into one inseparable whole the assault on the government in the name of the entire people, the revolutionary training of the proletariat, and the safeguarding of its political independence, the guidance of the economic struggle of the working class, and the utilisation of all its spontaneous conflicts with its exploiters which rouse and bring into our camp increasing numbers of the proletariat.

But a most characteristic feature of Economism is its failure to understand this connection, more, this identity of the most pressing need of the proletariat (a comprehensive political education through the medium of political agitation and political exposures) with the need of the general democratic movement. This lack of understanding is expressed, not only in “Martynovite” phrases, but in the references to a supposedly class point of view identical in meaning with these phrases. Thus, the authors of the Economist letter in *Iskra*, No. 12, state:\* “This basic drawback of *Iskra*

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<sup>a</sup> Lack of space has prevented us from replying in detail, in *Iskra*, to this letter, which is highly characteristic of the Economists. We were very glad at its appearance, for the allegations that *Iskra* did not maintain a consistent class point of view had reached us long before that from various sources, and we were waiting for an appropriate occasion, or for a formulated expression of this fashionable charge, to give our reply. Moreover, it is our habit to reply to attacks, not by defence, but by counterattack.

[overestimation of ideology] is also the cause of its inconsistency on the question of the attitude of social-democracy to the various social classes and tendencies. By theoretical reasoning [not by “the growth of party tasks, which grow together with the party”], *Iskra* solved the problem of the immediate transition to the struggle against absolutism. In all probability it senses the difficulty of such a task for the workers under the present state of affairs [not only senses, but knows full well that this task appears less difficult to the workers than to the “Economist” intellectuals with their nursemaid concern, for the workers are prepared to fight even for demands which, to use the language of the never-to-be-forgotten Martynov, do not “promise palpable results”] but lacking the patience to wait until the workers will have gathered sufficient forces for this struggle, *Iskra* begins to seek allies in the ranks of the liberals and intellectuals” ...

Yes, we have indeed lost all “patience” “waiting” for the blessed time, long promised us by diverse “conciliators”, when the Economists will have stopped charging the workers with *their own* backwardness and justifying their own lack of energy with allegations that the workers lack strength. We ask our Economists: What do they mean by “the gathering of working-class strength for the struggle”? Is it not evident that this means the political training of the workers, so that *all* the aspects of our vile autocracy are revealed to them? And is it not clear that *precisely for this work* we need “allies in the ranks of the liberals and intellectuals”, who are prepared to join us in the exposure of the political attack on the Zemstvos, on the teachers, on the statisticians, on the students, etc.? Is this surprisingly “intricate mechanism” really so difficult to understand? Has not P.B. Axelrod constantly repeated since 1897 that “the task before the Russian social-democrats of acquiring adherents and direct and indirect allies among the non-proletarian classes will be solved principally and primarily by the character of the propagandist activities conducted among the proletariat itself”? But the Martynovs and the other Economists continue to imagine that “by economic struggle against the employers and the government” the workers must *first* gather strength (for trade-unionist politics) and *then* “go over” — we presume from trade-unionist “training for activity” to social-democratic activity!

“... In this quest”, continue the Economists, “*Iskra* not infrequently departs from the class point of view, obscures class antagonisms, and puts into the forefront the common nature of the discontent with the government, although the causes and the degree of the discontent vary considerably among the ‘allies’. Such, for example, is *Iskra*’s attitude towards the Zemstvo ...” *Iskra*, it is alleged, “promises the nobles that are dissatisfied with the government’s sops the assistance of the working class, but it does not say a word about the class antagonism that exists between these social

strata". If the reader will turn to the article "The Autocracy and the Zemstvo" (*Iskra*, Nos. 2 and 4), to which, *in all probability*, the authors of the letter refer, he will find that they\* deal with the attitude of the *government* towards the "mild agitation of the bureaucratic Zemstvo, which is based on the social-estates", and towards the "independent activity of even the propertied classes". The article states that the workers cannot look on indifferently while the government is waging a struggle against the Zemstvo, and the Zemstvos are called upon to stop making mild speeches and to speak firmly and resolutely when revolutionary social-democracy confronts the government in all its strength. What the authors of the letter do not agree with here is not clear. Do they think that the workers will "not understand" the phrases "propertied classes" and "bureaucratic Zemstvo based on the social-estates"? Do they think that *urging* the Zemstvo to abandon mild speeches and to speak firmly is "overestimating ideology"? Do they imagine the workers can "gather strength" for the struggle against the autocracy if they know nothing about the attitude of the autocracy towards the Zemstvo *as well*? All this too remains unknown. One thing alone is clear and that is that the authors of the letter have a very vague idea of what the political tasks of social-democracy are. This is revealed still more clearly by their remark: "Such, too, is *Iskra's* attitude towards the student movement" (i.e., it also "obscures the class antagonisms"). Instead of calling on the workers to declare by means of public demonstrations that the real breeding-place of unbridled violence, disorder, and outrage is not the university youth but the Russian government (*Iskra*, No. 2\*\*) we ought probably to have inserted arguments in the spirit of *Rabochaya Mysl!* Such ideas were expressed by social-democrats in the autumn of 1901, after the events of February and March, on the eve of a fresh upsurge of the student movement, which reveals that even in this sphere the "spontaneous" protest against the autocracy is *outstripping* the conscious social-democratic leadership of the movement. The spontaneous striving of the workers to defend the students who are being assaulted by the police and the Cossacks surpasses the conscious activity of the social-democratic organisation!

"And yet in other articles", continue the authors of the letter, "*Iskra* sharply condemns all compromise and defends, for instance, the intolerant conduct of the Guesdists." We would advise those who are wont so conceitedly and frivolously to declare that the present disagreements among the social-democrats are unessential and do not justify a split, to ponder these words. Is it possible for people to work together in the same

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\* "In the interval between these articles there was one (*Iskra*, No. 3), which dealt especially with class antagonisms in the countryside. [See Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4, pp. 420-428. — *Ed.*]

\*\* See Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4, pp. 414-419. — *Ed.*

organisation, when some among them contend that we have done extremely little to explain the hostility of the autocracy to the various classes and to inform the workers of the opposition displayed by the various social strata to the autocracy, while others among them see in this clarification a “compromise” — evidently a compromise with the theory of “economic struggle against the employers and the government”?

We urged the necessity of carrying the class struggle into the rural districts in connection with the fortieth anniversary of the emancipation of the peasantry (issue No. 3\*) and spoke of the irreconcilability of the local government bodies and the autocracy in relation to Witte's secret Memorandum (No. 4). In connection with the new law we attacked the feudal landlords and the government which serves them (No. 8\*\*) and we welcomed the illegal Zemstvo congress. We urged the Zemstvo to pass over from abject petitions (No. 8\*\*\*) to struggle. We encouraged the students, who had begun to understand the need for the political struggle, and to undertake this struggle (No. 3), while, at the same time, we lashed out at the “outrageous incomprehension” revealed by the adherents of the “purely student” movement, who called upon the students to abstain from participating in the street demonstrations (No. 3, in connection with the manifesto issued by the executive committee of the Moscow students on February 25). We exposed the “senseless dreams” and the “lying hypocrisy” of the cunning liberals of *Rossiia*<sup>33</sup> (No. 5), while pointing to the violent fury with which the government-gaoler persecuted “peaceful writers, aged professors, scientists, and well-known liberal Zemstvo members” (No. 5, “Police Raid on Literature”). We exposed the real significance of the program of “state protection for the welfare of the workers” and welcomed the “valuable admission” that “it is better, by granting reforms from above, to forestall the demand for such reforms from below than to wait for those demands to be put forward” (No. 6\*\*\*\*). We encouraged the protesting statisticians (No. 7) and censured the strikebreaking statisticians (No. 9). He who sees in these tactics an obscuring of the class-consciousness of the proletariat and a *compromise with liberalism* reveals his utter failure to understand the true significance of the program of the *Credo* and carries out that program *de facto*, however much he may repudiate it. For by *such an approach* he drags social-democracy towards the “economic struggle against the employers and the government” and *yields to liberalism*, abandons the task of actively intervening in every “liberal” issue and of determining *his own*, social-democratic, attitude towards this question.

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\* *Ibid.*, pp. 420-428. — *Ed.*

\*\* See Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 5, pp. 95-100. — *Ed.*

\*\*\* See Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 5, pp. 101-102. — *Ed.*

\*\*\*\* See *ibid.*, pp. 87-88. — *Ed.*

## F. Once more 'slanderers', once more 'mystifiers'

These polite expressions, as the reader will recall, belong to *Rabocheye Dyelo*, which in this way answers our charge that it "is indirectly preparing the ground for converting the working-class movement into an instrument of bourgeois democracy". In its simplicity of heart *Rabocheye Dyelo* decided that this accusation was nothing more than a polemical sally: these malicious doctrinaires are bent on saying all sorts of unpleasant things about us, and, what can be more unpleasant than being an instrument of bourgeois democracy? And so they print in bold type a "refutation": "Nothing but downright slander", "mystification", "mummery" (*Two Conferences*, pp. 30, 31, 33). Like Jove, *Rabocheye Dyelo* (although bearing little resemblance to that deity) is wrathful because it is wrong, and proves by its hasty abuse that it is incapable of understanding its opponents' mode of reasoning. And yet, with only a little reflection it would have understood why *any* subservience to the spontaneity of the mass movement and *any* degrading of social-democratic politics to the level of trade-unionist politics mean preparing the ground for converting the working-class movement into an instrument of bourgeois democracy. The spontaneous working-class movement is by itself able to create (and inevitably does create) only trade-unionism, and working-class trade-unionist politics is precisely working-class bourgeois politics. The fact that the working class participates in the political struggle, and even in the political revolution, does not in itself make its politics social-democratic politics. Will *Rabocheye Dyelo* make bold to deny this? Will it, at long last, publicly, plainly, and without equivocation explain how it understands the urgent questions of international and of Russian social-democracy? Hardly. It will never do anything of the kind, because it holds fast to the trick, which might be described as the "not here" method — "It's not me, it's not my horse, I'm not the driver. We are not Economists; *Rabochaya Mysl* does not stand for Economism; there is no Economism at all in Russia." This is a remarkably adroit and "political" trick, which suffers from the slight defect, however, that the publications practising it are usually nicknamed, "At your service, sir".

*Rabocheye Dyelo* imagines that bourgeois democracy in Russia is, in general, merely a "phantom" (*Two Conferences*, p. 32).<sup>\*</sup> Happy people! Ostrich-like, they bury their

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<sup>\*</sup> There follows a reference to the "concrete Russian conditions which fatalistically impel the working-class movement on to the revolutionary path". But these people refuse to understand that the revolutionary path of the working-class movement might not be a social-democratic path. When absolutism reigned, the entire West-European bourgeoisie "impelled", deliberately impelled, the workers on to the path of revolution. We social-democrats, however, cannot be satisfied with that. And if we, by any means whatever, degrade social-democratic politics to the level of spontaneous trade-unionist politics, we thereby play into the hands of bourgeois democracy.

heads in the sand and imagine that everything around has disappeared. Liberal publicists who month after month proclaim to the world their triumph over the collapse and even the disappearance of Marxism; liberal newspapers (*S. Peterburgskiy Vedomosti*,<sup>34</sup> *Russkiye Vedomosti*, and many others) which encourage the liberals who bring to the workers the Brentano conception of the class struggle and the trade-unionist conception of politics; the galaxy of critics of Marxism, whose real tendencies were so very well disclosed by the *Credo* and whose literary products alone circulate in Russia without let or hindrance; the revival of revolutionary *non-social-democratic* tendencies, particularly after the February and March events — all these, apparently, are just phantoms! All these have nothing at all to do with bourgeois democracy!

*Rabocheye Dyelo* and the authors of the Economist letter published in *Iskra*, No. 12, should “ponder over the reason why the events of the spring brought about such a revival of revolutionary *non-social-democratic* tendencies instead of increasing the authority and the prestige of social-democracy”.

The reason lies in the fact that we failed to cope with our tasks. The masses of the workers proved to be more active than we. We lacked adequately trained revolutionary leaders and organisers possessed of a thorough knowledge of the mood prevailing among all the opposition strata and able to head the movement, to turn a spontaneous demonstration into a political one, broaden its political character, etc. Under such circumstances, our backwardness will inevitably be utilised by the more mobile and more energetic *non-social-democratic* revolutionaries, and the workers, however energetically and self-sacrificingly they may fight the police and the troops, however revolutionary their actions may be, will prove to be merely a force supporting those revolutionaries, the rearguard of bourgeois democracy, and not the social-democratic vanguard. Let us take, for example, the German social-democrats, whose weak aspects alone our Economists desire to emulate. Why is there *not a single* political event in Germany that does not add to the authority and prestige of social-democracy? Because social-democracy is always found to be in advance of all others in furnishing the most revolutionary appraisal of every given event and in championing every protest against tyranny. It does not lull itself with arguments that the economic struggle brings the workers to realise that they have no political rights and that the concrete conditions unavoidably impel the working-class movement on to the path of revolution. It intervenes in every sphere and in every question of social and political life; in the matter of Wilhelm's refusal to endorse a bourgeois progressist as city mayor (our Economists have not yet managed to educate the Germans to the understanding that such an act is, in fact, a compromise with liberalism!); in the matter of the law against “obscene” publications and pictures; in the matter of governmental influence on the

election of professors, etc., etc. Everywhere the social-democrats are found in the forefront, rousing political discontent among all classes, rousing the sluggards, stimulating the laggards, and providing a wealth of material for the development of the political consciousness and the political activity of the proletariat. As a result, even the avowed enemies of socialism are filled with respect for this advanced political fighter, and not infrequently an important document from bourgeois, and even from bureaucratic and court circles, makes its way by some miraculous means into the editorial office of *Vorwärts*.

This, then, is the resolution of the seeming “contradiction” that surpasses *Rabocheye Dyelo*’s powers of understanding to such an extent that it can only throw up its hands and cry, “Mummery!” Indeed, just think of it: We, *Rabocheye Dyelo*, regard the *mass* working-class movement as the *cornerstone* (and say so in bold type!); we warn all and sundry against belittling the significance of the element of spontaneity; we desire to lend the economic struggle itself — *itself* — a political character; we desire to maintain close and organic contact with the proletarian struggle. And yet we are told that we are preparing the ground for the conversion of the working-class movement into an instrument of bourgeois democracy! And who are they that presume to say this? People who “compromise” with liberalism by intervening in every “liberal” issue (what a gross misunderstanding of “organic contact with the proletarian struggle”!), by devoting so much attention to the students and even (oh horror!) to the *Zemstvos*! People who in general wish to devote a greater percentage (compared with the Economists) of their efforts to activity among non-proletarian classes of the population! What is this but “mummery”?

Poor *Rabocheye Dyelo*! Will it ever find the solution to this perplexing puzzle? ■

## IV. The Primitiveness of the Economists & the Organisation of the Revolutionaries

*Rabocheye Dyelo's* assertions, which we have analysed, that the economic struggle is the most widely applicable means of political agitation and that our task now is to lend the economic struggle itself a political character, etc., express a narrow view, not only of our political, but also of our organisational tasks. The "economic struggle against the employers and the government" does not at all require an all-Russia centralised organisation, and hence this struggle can never give rise to such an organisation as will combine, in one general assault, all the manifestations of political opposition, protest, and indignation, an organisation that will consist of professional revolutionaries and be led by the real political leaders of the entire people. This stands to reason. The character of any organisation is naturally and inevitably determined by the content of its activity. Consequently, *Rabocheye Dyelo*, by the assertions analysed above, sanctifies and legitimises not only narrowness of political activity, but also of organisational work. In this case, *Rabocheye Dyelo*, as always, proves itself an organ whose consciousness yields to spontaneity. Yet subservience to spontaneously developing forms of organisation, failure to realise the narrowness and primitiveness of our organisational work, of our "handicraft" methods in this most important sphere, failure to realise this, I say, is a veritable ailment from which our movement suffers. It is not an ailment that comes with decline, but one, of course, that comes with growth. It is however at the present time, when the wave of spontaneous indignation, as it were, is sweeping over us, leaders and organisers of the movement, that an irreconcilable struggle must be waged against all defence of backwardness, against any legitimisation of narrowness in this matter. It is particularly necessary to arouse in all who participate in practical work, or are preparing to take up that work, discontent with the *amateurism* prevailing among us and an unshakable determination to rid ourselves of it.

## A. What is primitiveness?

We shall try to answer this question by giving a brief description of the activity of a typical social-democratic study circle of the period 1894-1901. We have noted that the entire student youth of the period was absorbed in Marxism. Of course, these students were not only, or even not so much, interested in Marxism as a theory; they were interested in it as an answer to the question, "What is to be done?", as a call to take the field against the enemy. These new warriors marched to battle with astonishingly primitive equipment and training. In a vast number of cases they had almost no equipment and absolutely no training. They marched to war like peasants from the plough, armed only with clubs. A students' circle establishes contacts with workers and sets to work, without any connection with the old members of the movement, without any connection with study circles in other districts, or even in other parts of the same city (or in other educational institutions), without any organisation of the various divisions of revolutionary work, without any systematic plan of activity covering any length of time. The circle gradually expands its propaganda and agitation; by its activities it wins the sympathies of fairly large sections of workers and of a certain section of the educated strata, which provide it with money and from among whom the "committee" recruits new groups of young people. The attractive power of the committee (or League of Struggle) grows, its sphere of activity becomes wider, and the committee expands this activity quite spontaneously; the very people who a year or a few months previously spoke at the students' circle gatherings and discussed the question, "Whither?", who established and maintained contacts with the workers and wrote and published leaflets, now establish contacts with other groups of revolutionaries, procure literature, set to work to publish a local newspaper, begin to talk of organising a demonstration, and finally turn to open warfare (which may, according to circumstances, take the form of issuing the first agitational leaflet or the first issue of a newspaper, or of organising the first demonstration). Usually the initiation of such actions ends in an immediate and complete fiasco. Immediate and complete, because this open warfare was not the result of a systematic and carefully thought-out and gradually prepared plan for a prolonged and stubborn struggle, but simply the result of the spontaneous growth of traditional study circle work; because, naturally, the police, in almost every case, knew the principal leaders of the local movement, since they had already "gained a reputation" for themselves in their student days, and the police waited only for the right moment to make their raid. They deliberately allowed the study circle sufficient time to develop its work so that they might obtain a palpable *corpus delicti*, and they always permitted several of the persons known to them to remain at liberty "for breeding" (which, as far as I know, is the technical term

used both by our people and by the gendarmes). One cannot help comparing this kind of warfare with that conducted by a mass of peasants, armed with clubs, against modern troops. And one can only wonder at the vitality of the movement which expanded, grew, and scored victories despite the total lack of training on the part of the fighters. True, from the historical point of view, the primitiveness of equipment was not only inevitable at first, but *even legitimate* as one of the conditions for the wide recruiting of fighters, but as soon as serious war operations began (and they began in fact with the strikes in the summer of 1896), the defects in our fighting organisations made themselves felt to an ever-increasing degree. The government, at first thrown into confusion and committing a number of blunders (e.g., its appeal to the public describing the misdeeds of the socialists, or the banishment of workers from the capitals to provincial industrial centres), very soon adapted itself to the new conditions of the struggle and managed to deploy well its perfectly equipped detachments of *agents provocateurs*, spies, and gendarmes. Raids became so frequent, affected such a vast number of people, and cleared out the local study circles so thoroughly that the masses of the workers lost literally all their leaders, the movement assumed an amazingly sporadic character, and it became utterly impossible to establish continuity and coherence in the work. The terrible dispersion of the local leaders; the fortuitous character of the study circle memberships; the lack of training in, and the narrow outlook on, theoretical, political, and organisational questions were all the inevitable result of the conditions described above. Things have reached such a pass that in several places the workers, because of our lack of self-restraint and the inability to maintain secrecy, begin to lose faith in the intellectuals and to avoid them; the intellectuals, they say, are much too careless and cause police raids!

Anyone who has the slightest knowledge of the movement is aware that all thinking social-democrats have at last begun to regard these amateurish methods as a disease. In order that the reader who is not acquainted with the movement may have no grounds for thinking that we are “inventing” a special stage or special disease of the movement, we shall refer once again to the witness we have quoted. We trust we shall be forgiven for the length of the passage:

While the gradual transition to more extensive practical activity [writes B—v in *Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 6], a transition that is directly dependent on the general transitional period through which the Russian working-class movement is now passing, is a characteristic feature ... there is, however, another, no less interesting feature in the general mechanism of the Russian workers' revolution. *We refer to the general lack of revolutionary forces fit for action,\** which is felt not only in St. Petersburg, but throughout Russia. With the general revival of the working-class movement, with the

general development of the working masses, with the growing frequency of strikes, with the increasingly open mass struggle of the workers and with the intensified government persecution, arrests, deportation, and exile, this *lack of highly skilled revolutionary forces is becoming more and more marked* and, without a doubt, *cannot but affect the depth and the general character of the movement*. Many strikes take place without any strong and direct influence upon them by the revolutionary organisations ... A shortage of agitational leaflets and illegal literature is felt ... The workers' study circles are left without agitators ... In addition, there is a constant dearth of funds. In a word, *the growth of the working class movement is outstripping the growth and development of the revolutionary organisations*. The numerical strength of the active revolutionaries is too small to enable them to concentrate in their own hands the influence exercised upon the whole mass of discontented workers, or to give this discontent even a shadow of coherence and organisation ... The separate study circles, the separate revolutionaries, scattered, uncombined, do not represent a single, strong, and disciplined organisation with proportionately developed parts ...” Admitting that the immediate organisation of fresh study circles to replace those that have been broken up merely proves the vitality of the movement ... but does not prove the existence of an adequate number of adequately prepared revolutionary workers, the author concludes: “The lack of practical training among the St. Petersburg revolutionaries is seen in the results of their work. The recent trials, especially that of the Self-Emancipation Group and the Labour Against Capital group,<sup>35</sup> clearly showed that the young agitator, lacking a detailed knowledge of working class conditions and, consequently, of the conditions under which agitation can be carried on in a given factory, ignorant of the principles of secrecy, and understanding only the general principles of social-democracy [if he does], is able to carry on his work for perhaps four, five, or six months. Then come arrests, which frequently lead to the break-up of the entire organisation, or at all events, of part of it. The question arises, therefore, can the group conduct successful activity if its existence is measured by months? ... Obviously, the defects of the existing organisations cannot be wholly ascribed to the transitional period ... Obviously, the numerical, and above all the qualitative, make-up of the functioning organisations is no small factor, and the first task our social-democrats must undertake ... is that of *effectively combining the organisations and making a strict selection of their membership*.”

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\* All italics ours.

## B. Primitiveness & Economism

We must now deal with a question that has undoubtedly come to the mind of every reader. Can a connection be established between primitiveness as growing pains that affect the *whole* movement, and Economism, which is *one* of the currents in Russian social-democracy? We think that it can. Lack of practical training, of ability to carry on organisational work is certainly common *to us all*, including those who have from the very outset unswervingly stood for revolutionary Marxism. Of course, were it only lack of practical training, no one could blame the practical workers. But the term “primitiveness” embraces something more than lack of training; it denotes a narrow scope of revolutionary work generally, failure to understand that a good organisation of revolutionaries cannot be built on the basis of such narrow activity, and lastly — and this is the main thing — attempts to justify this narrowness and to elevate it to a special “theory”, i.e., subservience to spontaneity on this question too. Once such attempts were revealed, it became clear that primitiveness is connected with Economism and that we shall never rid ourselves of this narrowness of our organisational activity until we rid ourselves of Economism generally (i.e., the narrow conception of Marxist theory, as well as of the role of social-democracy and of its political tasks). These attempts manifested themselves in a twofold direction. Some began to say that the working masses themselves have not yet advanced the broad and militant political tasks which the revolutionaries are attempting to “impose” on them; that they must continue to struggle for *immediate* political demands, to conduct “the economic struggle against the employers and the government”\* (and, naturally, corresponding to this struggle which is “accessible” to the mass movement there must be an organisation that will be “accessible” to the most untrained youth). Others, far removed from any theory of “gradualness”, said that it is possible and necessary to “bring about a political revolution”, but that this does not require building a strong organisation of revolutionaries to train the proletariat in steadfast and stubborn struggle. All we need do is to snatch up our old friend, the “accessible” cudgel. To drop metaphor, it means that we must organise a general strike,\*\* or that we must stimulate the “spiritless” progress of the working-class movement by means of “excitative terror”\*\*\*. Both these trends, the opportunists and the “revolutionists”, bow to the prevailing amateurism; neither believes that it can be eliminated, neither understands our primary and imperative practical task to establish *an organisation of revolutionaries* capable of

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\* *Rabochaya Mysl* and *Rabocheye Dyelo*, especially the *Reply* to Plekhanov.

\*\* See “Who Will Bring About the Political Revolution?” in the collection published in Russia, entitled *The Proletarian Struggle*. Re-issued by the Kiev Committee.

\*\*\* *Regeneration of Revolutionism* and the journal *Svoboda*.

lending energy, stability, and continuity to the political struggle.

We have quoted the words of B—v: “The growth of the working-class movement is outstripping the growth and development of the revolutionary organisations.” This “valuable remark of a close observer” (*Rabocheye Dyelo’s* comment on B—v’s article) has a twofold value for us. It shows that we were right in our opinion that the principal cause of the present crisis in Russian social-democracy is the *lag of the leaders* (“ideologists”, revolutionaries, social-democrats) behind *the spontaneous upsurge of the masses*. It shows that all the arguments advanced by the authors of the Economist letter (in *Iskra*, No. 12), by Krichevsky and by Martynov, as to the danger of belittling the significance of the spontaneous element, of the drab everyday struggle, as to tactics-as-process, etc., are nothing more than a glorification and a defence of primitiveness. These people who cannot pronounce the word “theoretician” without a sneer, who describe their genuflections to common lack of training and backwardness as a “sense for the realities of life”, reveal in practice a failure to understand our most imperative *practical* tasks. To laggards they shout: Keep in step! Don’t run ahead! To people suffering from a lack of energy and initiative in organisational work, from a lack of “plans” for wide and bold activity, they prate about “tactics-as-process”! The worst sin we commit is that we *degrade* our political *and organisational* tasks to the level of the immediate, “palpable”, “concrete” interests of the everyday economic struggle; yet they keep singing to us the same refrain: Lend the economic struggle itself a political character! We repeat: this kind of thing displays as much “sense for the realities of life” as was displayed by the hero in the popular fable who cried out to a passing funeral procession, “Many happy returns of the day!”

Recall the matchless, truly “Narcissus-like” superciliousness with which these wiseacres lectured Plekhanov on the “workers’ circles generally” (sic!) being “unable to cope with political tasks in the real and *practical* sense of the word, i.e., in the sense of the expedient and successful *practical* struggle for political demands” (*Rabocheye Dyelo’s Reply*, p. 24). There are circles and circles, gentlemen! Circles of “amateurs” are not, of course, capable of coping with political tasks so long as they have not become aware of their amateurism and do not abandon it. If, besides this, these amateurs are enamoured of their primitive methods, and insist on writing the word “practical” in italics, and imagine that being practical demands that one’s tasks be reduced to the level of understanding of the most backward strata of the masses, then they are hopeless amateurs and, of course, certainly cannot *in general cope with any political tasks*. But a circle of leaders, of the type of Alexeyev and Myshkin, of Khalturin and Zhelyabov, is capable of coping with political tasks in the genuine and most practical sense of the term, for the reason and to the extent that their impassioned propaganda meets with

response among the spontaneously awakening masses, and their sparkling energy is answered and supported by the energy of the revolutionary class. Plekhanov was profoundly right, not only in pointing to this revolutionary class and proving that its spontaneous awakening was inevitable, but in setting even the “workers’ circles” a great and lofty political task. But you refer to the mass movement that has sprung up since that time in order to *degrade* this task, to *curtail* the energy and scope of activity of the “workers’ circles”. If you are not amateurs enamoured of your primitive methods, what are you then? You boast that you are practical, but you fail to see what every Russian practical worker knows, namely, the miracles that the energy, not only of a circle, but even of an individual person is able to perform in the revolutionary cause. Or do you think that our movement cannot produce leaders like those of the ’70s? If so, why do you think so? Because we lack training? But we are training ourselves, we will go on training ourselves, and we will be trained! Unfortunately it is true that the surface of the stagnant waters of the “economic struggle against the employers and the government” is overgrown with fungus; people have appeared among us who kneel in prayer to spontaneity, gazing with awe (to take an expression from Plekhanov) upon the “posterior” of the Russian proletariat. But we will get rid of this fungus. The time has come when Russian revolutionaries, guided by a genuinely revolutionary theory, relying upon the genuinely revolutionary and spontaneously awakening class, can at last — at long last! — rise to full stature in all their giant strength. All that is required is for the masses of our practical workers, and the still larger masses of those who dreamed of practical work when they were still at school, to pour scorn and ridicule upon any suggestion that may be made to degrade our political tasks and to restrict the scope of our organisational work. And we will achieve that, rest assured, gentlemen!

In the article “Where to Begin?”, I wrote in opposition to *Rabocheye Dyelo*: “The tactics of agitation in relation to some special question, or the tactics with regard to some detail of party organisation may be changed in 24 hours; but only people devoid of all principle are capable of changing, in 24 hours, or, for that matter, in 24 months, their view on the necessity — in general, constantly, and absolutely — of an organisation of struggle and of political agitation among the masses.”\* To this *Rabocheye Dyelo* replied: “This, the only one of *Iskra*’s charges that makes a pretence of being based on facts, is totally without foundation. Readers of *Rabocheye Dyelo* know very well that from the outset we not only called for political agitation, without waiting for the appearance of *Iskra* ... [saying at the same time that not only the workers’ study

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\* See this volume, p. 69. — *Ed.*

circles, “but also the mass working-class movement could not regard as its first political task the overthrow of absolutism”, but only the struggle for immediate political demands, and that “the masses begin to understand immediate political demands after one, or at all events, after several strikes”] ... but that with our publications which we furnished from abroad for the comrades working in Russia, we provided the *only* social-democratic political and agitational material ... [and in this sole material you not only based the widest political agitation exclusively on the economic struggle, but you even went to the extent of claiming that this restricted agitation was the “most widely applicable”. And do you not observe, gentlemen, that your own argument — that this was the *only* material provided — proves the necessity for *Iskra*’s appearance, and its struggle against *Rabocheye Dyelo*?) ... On the other hand, our publishing activity actually prepared the ground for the tactical unity of the party ... [unity in the conviction that tactics is a process of growth of party tasks that grow together with the party? A precious unity indeed!] ... and by that rendered possible the creation of a ‘militant organisation’ for which the Union Abroad did all that an organisation abroad could do” (*Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 10, p. 15). A vain attempt at evasion! I would never dream of denying that you did all you possibly could. I have asserted and assert now that the *limits* of what is “possible” for you to do are restricted by the narrowness of your outlook. It is ridiculous to talk of a “militant organisation” to fight for “immediate political demands”, or to conduct the economic struggle against the employers and the government”.

But if the reader wishes to see the pearls of “Economist” infatuation with amateurism, he must, of course, turn from the eclectic and vacillating *Rabocheye Dyelo* to the consistent and determined *Rabochaya Mysl*. In its *Separate Supplement*, p. 13, R.M. wrote: “Now two words about the so-called revolutionary intelligentsia proper. True, on more than one occasion it has proved itself prepared ‘to enter into determined battle with tsarism’. The unfortunate thing, however, is that our revolutionary intelligentsia, ruthlessly persecuted by the political police, imagined the struggle against the political police to be the political struggle against the autocracy. That is why, to this day, it cannot understand ‘where the forces for the struggle against the autocracy are to be obtained’.”

Truly matchless is the lofty contempt for the struggle against the police displayed by this worshipper (in the worst sense of the word) of the *spontaneous* movement! He is prepared *to justify* our inability to organise secret activity by the argument that with the spontaneous mass movement it is not at all important for us to struggle against the political police! Very few people indeed would subscribe to this appalling conclusion; to such an extent have our deficiencies in revolutionary organisations become a matter

of acute importance. But if Martynov, for example, refuses to subscribe to this, it will only be because he is unable, or lacks the courage, to think out his ideas to their logical conclusion. Indeed, does the “task” of advancing concrete demands by the masses, demands that promise palpable results, call for special efforts to create a stable, centralised, militant organisation of revolutionaries? Cannot such a “task” be carried out even by masses that do not “struggle against the political police” at all? Could this task, moreover, be fulfilled if, in addition to the few leaders, it were not undertaken by such workers (the overwhelming majority) as are quite *incapable* of “struggling against the political police”? Such workers, average people of the masses, are capable of displaying enormous energy and self-sacrifice in strikes and in street battles with the police and the troops, and are capable (in fact, are alone capable) of *determining* the outcome of our entire movement — but the struggle against the *political* police requires special qualities; it requires *professional* revolutionaries. And we must see to it, not only that the masses “advance” concrete demands, but that the masses of the workers “advance” an increasing number of such professional revolutionaries. Thus, we have reached the question of the relation between an organisation of professional revolutionaries and the labour movement pure and simple. Although this question has found little reflection in literature, it has greatly engaged us “politicians” in conversations and polemics with comrades who gravitate more or less towards Economism. It is a question meriting special treatment. But before taking it up, let us offer one further quotation by way of illustrating our thesis on the connection between primitiveness and Economism.

In his *Reply*, Mr. N.N.<sup>36</sup> wrote: “The Emancipation of Labour group demands direct struggle against the government without first considering where the material forces for this struggle are to be obtained, and without indicating the *path of the struggle*.” Emphasising the last words, the author adds the following footnote to the word “path”: “This cannot be explained by purposes of secrecy, because the program does not refer to a plot but to a *mass movement*. And the masses cannot proceed by secret paths. Can we conceive of a secret strike? Can we conceive of secret demonstrations and petitions?” (*Vademecum*, p. 59.) Thus, the author comes quite close to the question of the “material forces” (organisers of strikes and demonstrations) and to the “paths” of the struggle, but, nevertheless, is still in a state of consternation, because he “worships” the mass movement, i.e., he regards it as something that *relieves* us of the necessity of conducting revolutionary activity and not as something that should encourage us and *stimulate* our revolutionary activity. It is impossible for a strike to remain a secret to those participating in it and to those immediately associated with it, but it may (and in the majority of cases does) remain a “secret” to the masses

of the Russian workers, because the government takes care to cut all communication with the strikers, to prevent all news of strikes from spreading. Here indeed is where a special “struggle against the political police” is required, a struggle that can never be conducted actively by such large masses as take part in strikes. This struggle must be organised, according to “all the rules of the art”, by people who are professionally engaged in revolutionary activity. The fact that the masses are spontaneously being drawn into the movement does not make the organisation of this struggle *less necessary*. On the contrary, it makes it *more necessary*; for we socialists would be failing in our direct duty to the masses if we did not prevent the police from making a secret of every strike and every demonstration (and if we did not ourselves from time to time secretly prepare strikes and demonstrations). And we *will succeed in doing this*, because the spontaneously awakening masses will *also produce* increasing numbers of “professional revolutionaries” *from their own ranks* (that is, if we do not take it into our heads to advise the workers to keep on marking time).

### C. Organisation of workers & organisation of revolutionaries

It is only natural to expect that for a social-democrat whose conception of the political struggle coincides with the conception of the “economic struggle against the employers and the government”, the “organisation of revolutionaries” will more or less coincide with the “organisation of workers”. This, in fact, is what actually happens; so that when we speak of organisation, we literally speak in different tongues. I vividly recall, for example, a conversation I once had with a fairly consistent Economist, with whom I had not been previously acquainted. We were discussing the pamphlet, *Who Will Bring About the Political Revolution?* and were soon of a mind that its principal defect was its ignoring of the question of organisation. We had begun to assume full agreement between us; but, as the conversation proceeded, it became evident that we were talking of different things. My interlocutor accused the author of ignoring strike funds, mutual benefit societies, etc., whereas I had in mind an organisation of revolutionaries as an essential factor in “bringing about” the political revolution. As soon as the disagreement became clear, there was hardly, as I remember, a single question of principle upon which I was in agreement with the Economist!

What was the source of our disagreement? It was the fact that on questions both of organisation and of politics the Economists are forever lapsing from social-democracy into trade-unionism. The political struggle of social-democracy is far more extensive and complex than the economic struggle of the workers against the employers and the government. Similarly (indeed for that reason), the organisation of the revolutionary

social-democratic party must inevitably be of a *kind different* from the organisation of the workers designed for this struggle. The workers' organisation must in the first place be a trade union organisation; secondly, it must be as broad as possible; and thirdly, it must be as public as conditions will allow (here, and further on, of course, I refer only to absolutist Russia). On the other hand, the organisation of the revolutionaries must consist first and foremost of people who make revolutionary activity their profession (for which reason I speak of the organisation of *revolutionaries*, meaning revolutionary social-democrats). In view of this common characteristic of the members of such an organisation, *all distinctions as between workers and intellectuals*, not to speak of distinctions of trade and profession, in both categories, *must be effaced*. Such an organisation must perforce not be very extensive and must be as secret as possible. Let us examine this threefold distinction.

In countries where political liberty exists the distinction between a trade union and a political organisation is clear enough, as is the distinction between trade unions and social-democracy. The relations between the latter and the former will naturally vary in each country according to historical, legal, and other conditions; they may be more or less close, complex, etc. (in our opinion they should be as close and as little complicated as possible); but there can be no question in free countries of the organisation of trade unions coinciding with the organisation of the social-democratic party. In Russia, however, the yoke of the autocracy appears at first glance to obliterate all distinctions between the social-democratic organisation and the workers' associations, since *all* workers' associations and *all* study circles are prohibited, and since the principal manifestation and weapon of the workers' economic struggle — the strike — is regarded as a criminal (and sometimes even as a political!) offence. Conditions in our country, therefore, on the one hand, strongly "impel" the workers engaged in economic struggle to concern themselves with political questions, and, on the other, they "impel" social-democrats to confound trade-unionism with social-democracy (and our Krichevskys, Martynovs, and Co., while diligently discussing the first kind of "impulsion", fail to notice the second). Indeed, picture to yourselves people who are immersed 99% in "the economic struggle against the employers and the government". Some of them will never, during the *entire* course of their activity (from four to six months), be impelled to think of the need for a more complex organisation of revolutionaries. Others, perhaps, will come across the fairly widely distributed Bernsteinian literature, from which they will become convinced of the profound importance of the forward movement of "the drab everyday struggle". Still others will be carried away, perhaps, by the seductive idea of showing the world a new example of "close and organic contact with the proletarian struggle" — contact between

the trade union and the social-democratic movements. Such people may argue that the later a country enters the arena of capitalism and, consequently, of the working-class movement, the more the socialists in that country may take part in, and support, the trade union movement, and the less the reason for the existence of non-social-democratic trade unions. So far the argument is fully correct; unfortunately, however, some go beyond that and dream of a complete fusion of social-democracy with trade-unionism. We shall soon see, from the example of the rules of the St. Petersburg League of Struggle, what a harmful effect such dreams have upon our plans of organisation.

The workers' organisations for the economic struggle should be trade union organisations. Every social-democratic worker should as far as possible assist and actively work in these organisations. But, while this is true, it is certainly not in our interest to demand that only social-democrats should be eligible for membership in the "trade" unions, since that would only narrow the scope of our influence upon the masses. Let every worker who understands the need to unite for the struggle against the employers and the government join the trade unions. The very aim of the trade unions would be impossible of achievement, if they did not unite all who have attained at least this elementary degree of understanding, if they were not very *broad* organisations. The broader these organisations, the broader will be our influence over them — an influence due, not only to the "spontaneous" development of the economic struggle, but to the direct and conscious effort of the socialist trade union members to influence their comrades. But a broad organisation cannot apply methods of strict secrecy (since this demands far greater training than is required for the economic struggle). How is the contradiction between the need for a large membership and the need for strictly secret methods to be reconciled? How are we to make the trade unions as public as possible? Generally speaking, there can be only two ways to this end: either the trade unions become legalised (in some countries this preceded the legalisation of the socialist and political unions), or the organisation is kept secret, but so "free" and amorphous, *lose\** as the Germans say, that the need for secret methods becomes almost negligible as far as the bulk of the members is concerned.

The legalisation of non-socialist and non-political labour unions in Russia has begun, and there is no doubt that every advance made by our rapidly growing social-democratic working-class movement will multiply and encourage attempts at legalisation — attempts proceeding for the most part from supporters of the existing order, but partly also from the workers themselves and from liberal intellectuals. The banner of

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\* *Lose* (German): loose. — *Ed.*

legality has already been hoisted by the Vasilyevs and the Zubatovs. Support has been promised and rendered by the Ozerovs and the Wormses, and followers of the new tendency are now to be found among the workers. Henceforth, we cannot but reckon with this tendency. How we are to reckon with it, on this there can be no two opinions among social-democrats. We must steadfastly expose any part played in this movement by the Zubatovs and the Vasilyevs, the gendarmes and the priests, and explain their real intentions to the workers. We must also expose all the conciliatory, "harmonious" notes that will be heard in the speeches of liberal politicians at legal meetings of the workers, irrespective of whether the speeches are motivated by an earnest conviction of the desirability of peaceful class collaboration, by a desire to curry favour with the powers that be, or whether they are simply the result of clumsiness. Lastly, we must warn the workers against the traps often set by the police, who at such open meetings and permitted societies spy out the "fiery ones" and try to make use of legal organisations to plant their *agents provocateurs* in the illegal organisations.

Doing all this does not at all mean forgetting that *in the long* run the legalisation of the working-class movement will be to our advantage, and not to that of the Zubatovs. On the contrary, it is precisely our campaign of exposure that will help us to separate the tares from the wheat. What the tares are, we have already indicated. By the wheat we mean attracting the attention of ever larger numbers, including the most backward sections, of the workers to social and political questions, and freeing ourselves, the revolutionaries, from functions that are essentially legal (the distribution of legal books, mutual aid, etc.), the development of which will inevitably provide us with an increasing quantity of material for agitation. In this sense, we may, and should, say to the Zubatovs and the Ozerovs: Keep at it, gentlemen, do your best! Whenever you place a trap in the path of the workers (either by way of direct provocation, or by the "honest" demoralisation of the workers with the aid of "Struivism") we will see to it that you are exposed. But whenever you take a real step forward, though it be the most "timid zigzag", we will say: Please continue! And the only step that can be a real step forward is a real, if small, extension of the workers' field of action. Every such extension will be to our advantage and will help to hasten the advent of legal societies of the kind in which it will not be *agents provocateurs* who are detecting socialists, but socialists who are gaining adherents. In a word, our task is to fight the tares. It is not our business to grow wheat in flower-pots. By pulling up the tares, we clear the soil for the wheat. And while the Afanasy Ivanoviches and Pulkheria Ivanovnas<sup>37</sup> are tending their flower-pot crops, we must prepare the reapers, not only to cut down the tares of today, but to reap the wheat of tomorrow.\*

Thus, we cannot by means of legalisation *solve* the problem of creating a trade

union organisation that will be as little secret and as extensive as possible (but we should be extremely glad if the Zubatovs and the Ozerovs disclosed to us even a partial opportunity for such a solution — to this end, however, we must strenuously combat them). There remain secret trade union organisations, and *we must* give all possible assistance to the workers who (as we definitely know) are adopting this course. Trade union organisations, not only can be of tremendous value in developing and consolidating the economic struggle, but can also become a very important auxiliary to political agitation and revolutionary organisation. In order to achieve this purpose, and in order to guide the nascent trade union movement in the channels desired by social-democracy, we must first understand clearly the absurdity of the plan of organisation the St. Petersburg Economists have been nursing for nearly five years. That plan is set forth in the “Rules for a Workers’ Mutual Benefit Fund” of July 1897 (“*Listok*” *Rabotnika*, No. 9-10, p. 46, taken from *Rabochaya Mysl*, No. 1), as well as in the “Rules for a Trade Union Workers’ Organisation” of October 1900 (special leaflet printed in St. Petersburg and referred to in *Iskra*, No. 1). Both these sets of rules have one main shortcoming: they set up the broad workers’ organisation in a rigidly specified structure and confound it with the organisation of revolutionaries. Let us take the last-mentioned set of rules, since it is drawn up in greater detail. The body consists of 52 paragraphs. Twenty-three deal with the structure, the method of functioning, and the competence of the “workers’ circles”, which are to be organised in every factory (“a maximum of 10 persons”) and which elect “central (factory) groups”. “The central group”, says paragraph 2, “observes all that goes on in its factory or workshop and keeps a record of events.” “The central group presents to subscribers a monthly financial account” (par. 17), etc. Ten paragraphs are devoted to the “district organisation”, and nineteen to the highly complex interconnection between the Committee of the Workers’ Organisation and the Committee of the St. Petersburg League of Struggle (elected representatives of each district and of the “executive groups” — “groups of propagandists, groups for maintaining contact with the provinces, and

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<sup>a</sup> *Iskra*’s campaign against the tares evoked the following angry outburst from *Rabocheye Dyelo*: “For *Iskra*, the signs of the times lie not so much in great events [of the spring], as in the miserable attempts of the agents of Zubatov to ‘legalise’ the working-class movement. It fails to see that these facts tell against it; for they testify that the working-class movement has assumed menacing proportions in the eyes of the government” (*Two Conferences*, p. 27). For all this we have to blame the “dogmatism” of the orthodox who “turn a deaf ear to the imperative demands of life”. They obstinately refuse to see the yard-high wheat and are combating inch-high tares! Does this not reveal a “distorted sense of perspective in regard to the Russian working-class movement” (*ibid.*, p. 27)?

with the organisation abroad, groups for managing stores; publications, and funds”).

Social-democracy = “executive groups” in relation to the economic struggle of the workers! It would be difficult to show more glaringly how the Economists’ ideas deviate from social-democracy to trade-unionism, and how alien to them is any idea that a social-democrat must concern himself first and foremost with an organisation of revolutionaries capable of guiding the *entire* proletarian struggle for emancipation. To talk of “the political emancipation of the working class” and of the struggle against “tsarist despotism”, and at the same time to draft rules like these, means to have no idea whatsoever of the real political tasks of social-democracy. Not one of the 50 or so paragraphs reveals even a glimmer of understanding that it is necessary to conduct the widest possible political agitation among the masses, an agitation highlighting every aspect of Russian absolutism and the specific features of the various social classes in Russia. Rules like these are of no use even for the achievement of trade union, let alone political, aims, since trade unions are organised by *trades*, of which no mention is made.

But most characteristic, perhaps, is the amazing top-heaviness of the whole “system”, which attempts to bind each single factory and its “committee” by a permanent string of uniform and ludicrously petty rules and a three-stage system of election. Hemmed in by the narrow outlook of Economism, the mind is lost in details that positively reek of red tape and bureaucracy. In practice, of course, three-fourths of the clauses are never applied; on the other hand, a “secret” organisation of this kind, with its central group in each factory, makes it very easy for the gendarmes to carry out raids on a vast scale. The Polish comrades have passed through a similar phase in their movement, with everybody enthusiastic about the extensive organisation of workers’ benefit funds; but they very quickly abandoned this idea when they saw that such organisations only provided rich harvests for the gendarmes. If we have in mind broad workers’ organisations, and not widespread arrests, if we do not want to provide satisfaction to the gendarmes, we must see to it that these organisations remain without any rigid formal structure. But will they be able to function in that case?

Let us see what the functions are: “... To observe all that goes on in the factory and keep a record of events” (par. 2 of the rules). Do we really require a formally established group for this purpose? Could not the purpose be better served by correspondence conducted in the illegal papers without the setting up of special groups? “... To lead the struggles of the workers for the improvement of their workshop conditions” (par. 3). This, too, requires no set organisational form. Any sensible agitator can in the course of ordinary conversation gather what the demands of the workers are and transmit them to a narrow — not a broad — organisation of revolutionaries for

expression in a leaflet. "... To organise a fund ... to which subscriptions of two kopeks per ruble\* should be made" (par. 9) — and then to present to subscribers a monthly financial account (par. 17), to expel members who fail to pay their contributions (par. 10), and so forth. Why, this is a very paradise for the police; for nothing would be easier for them than to penetrate into such a secrecy of a "central factory fund", confiscate the money, and arrest the best people. Would it not be simpler to issue one-kopek or two-kopek coupons bearing the official stamp of a well-known (very narrow and very secret) organisation, or to make collections without coupons of any kind and to print reports in a certain agreed code in an illegal paper? The object would thereby be attained, but it would be a hundred times more difficult for the gendarmes to pick up clues.

I could go on analysing the rules, but I think that what has been said will suffice. A small, compact core of the most reliable, experienced, and hardened workers, with responsible representatives in the principal districts and connected by all the rules of strict secrecy with the organisation of revolutionaries, can, with the widest support of the masses and without any formal organisation, perform *all* the functions of a trade union organisation, in a manner, moreover, desirable to social-democracy. Only in this way can we secure the *consolidation* and development of a *social-democratic* trade union movement, despite all the gendarmes.

It may be objected that an organisation which is so *lose* that it is not even definitely formed, and which has not even an enrolled and registered membership, cannot be called an organisation at all. Perhaps so. Not the name is important. What is important is that this "organisation without members" shall do everything that is required, and from the very outset ensure a solid connection between our future trade unions and socialism. Only an incorrigible utopian would have a *broad* organisation of workers, with elections, reports, universal suffrage, etc., under the autocracy.

The moral to be drawn from this is simple. If we begin with the solid foundation of a strong organisation of revolutionaries, we can ensure the stability of the movement as a whole and carry out the aims both of social-democracy and of trade unions proper. If, however, we begin with a broad workers' organisation, which is supposedly most "accessible" to the masses (but which is actually most accessible to the gendarmes and makes revolutionaries most accessible to the police), we shall achieve neither the one aim nor the other; we shall not eliminate our rule-of-thumb methods, and, because we remain scattered and our forces are constantly broken up by the police, we shall only make trade unions of the Zubatov and Ozerov type the more accessible to the

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\* Of wages earned. — *Ed.*

masses.

What, properly speaking, should be the functions of the organisation of revolutionaries? We shall deal with this question in detail. First, however, let us examine a very typical argument advanced by our terrorist, who (sad fate!) in this matter also is a next-door neighbour to the Economist. *Svoboda*, a journal published for workers, contains in its first issue an article entitled "Organisation", the author of which tries to defend his friends, the Economist workers of Ivanovo-Voznesensk. He writes:

It is bad when the masses are mute and unenlightened, when the movement does not come from the rank and file. For instance, the students of a university town leave for their homes during the summer and other holidays, and immediately the workers' movement comes to a standstill. Can a workers' movement which has to be pushed on from outside be a real force? No, indeed ... It has not yet learned to walk, it is still in leading-strings. So it is in all matters. The students go off, and everything comes to a standstill. The most capable are seized; the cream is skimmed — and the milk turns sour. If the "committee" is arrested, everything comes to a standstill until a new one can be formed. And one never knows what sort of committee will be set up next — it may be nothing like the former. The first said one thing, the second may say the very opposite. Continuity between yesterday and tomorrow is broken, the experience of the past does not serve as a guide for the future. And all because no roots have been struck in depth, in the masses; the work is carried on not by a hundred fools, but by a dozen wise men. A dozen wise men can be wiped out at a snap, but when the organisation embraces masses, everything proceeds from them, and nobody, however he tries, can wreck the cause. [P. 63.]

The facts are described correctly. The picture of our amateurism is well drawn. But the conclusions are worthy of *Rabochaya Mysl*, both as regards their stupidity and their lack of political tact. They represent the height of stupidity, because the author confuses the philosophical and social-historical question of the "depth" of the "roots" of the movement with the technical and organisational question of the best method in combating the gendarmes. They represent the height of political tactlessness, because, instead of appealing from bad leaders to good leaders, the author appeals from the leaders in general to the "masses". This is as much an attempt to drag us back organisationally as the idea of substituting excitative terrorism for political agitation drags us back politically. Indeed, I am experiencing a veritable *embarras de richesses*, and hardly know where to begin to disentangle the jumble offered up by *Svoboda*. For clarity, let me begin by citing an example. Take the Germans. It will not be denied, I hope, that theirs is a mass organisation, that in Germany everything proceeds from the masses, that the working-class movement there has learned to walk. Yet observe

how these millions value their “dozen” tried political leaders, how firmly they cling to them. Members of the hostile parties in parliament have often taunted the socialists by exclaiming: “Fine democrats you are indeed! Yours is a working-class movement only in name; in actual fact the same clique of leaders is always in evidence, the same Bebel and the same Liebknecht, year in and year out, and that goes on for decades. Your supposedly elected workers’ deputies are more permanent than the officials appointed by the emperor!” But the Germans only smile with contempt at these demagogic attempts to set the “masses” against the “leaders”, to arouse bad and ambitious instincts in the former, and to rob the movement of its solidity and stability by undermining the confidence of the masses in their “dozen wise men”. Political thinking is sufficiently developed among the Germans, and they have accumulated sufficient political experience to understand that without the “dozen” tried and talented leaders (and talented men are not born by the hundreds), professionally trained, schooled by long experience, and working in perfect harmony, no class in modern society can wage a determined struggle. The Germans too have had demagogues in their ranks who have flattered the “hundred fools”, exalted them above the “dozen wise men”, extolled the “horny hand” of the masses, and (like Most and Hasselmann) have spurred them on to reckless “revolutionary” action and sown distrust towards the firm and steadfast leaders. It was only by stubbornly and relentlessly combating all demagogic elements within the socialist movement that German socialism has managed to grow and become as strong as it is. Our wiseacres, however, at a time when Russian social-democracy is passing through a crisis entirely due to the lack of sufficiently trained, developed, and experienced leaders to guide the spontaneously awakening masses, cry out, with the profundity of fools: “It is a bad business when the movement does not proceed from the rank and file.”

“A committee of students is of no use; it is not stable.” Quite true. But the conclusion to be drawn from this is that we must have a committee of professional *revolutionaries*, and it is immaterial whether a student or a worker is capable of becoming a professional revolutionary. The conclusion you draw, however, is that the working-class movement must not be pushed on from outside! In your political innocence you fail to notice that you are playing into the hands of our Economists and fostering our amateurism. Wherein, may I ask, did our students “push on” our workers? *In the sense* that the student brought to the worker the fragments of political knowledge he himself possesses, the crumbs of socialist ideas he has managed to acquire (for the principal intellectual diet of the present-day student, legal Marxism, could furnish only the rudiments, only scraps of knowledge). There has never been too much of *such* “pushing on from outside”; on the contrary, there has so far been all too little of it in our

movement, for we have been stewing too assiduously in our own juice; we have bowed far too slavishly to the elementary “economic struggle of the workers against the employers and the government”. We professional revolutionaries must and will make it our business to engage in *this kind* of “pushing on” a hundred times more forcibly than we have done hitherto. But the very fact that you select so hideous a phrase as “pushing on from outside” — a phrase which cannot but rouse in the workers (at least in the workers who are as unenlightened as you yourselves) a sense of distrust towards *all* who bring them political knowledge and revolutionary experience from outside, which cannot but rouse in them an instinctive desire to resist *all* such people — proves you to be *demagogues*, and demagogues are the worst enemies of the working class.

And, please — don't hasten howling about my “uncomradely methods” of debating. I have not the least desire to doubt the purity of your intentions. As I have said, one may become a demagogue out of sheer political innocence. But I have shown that you have descended to demagogy, and I will never tire of repeating that demagogues are the worst enemies of the working class. The worst enemies, because they arouse base instincts in the masses, because the unenlightened worker is unable to recognise his enemies in men who represent themselves, and sometimes sincerely so, as his friends. The worst enemies, because in the period of disunity and vacillation, when our movement is just beginning to take shape, nothing is easier than to employ demagogic methods to mislead the masses, who can realise their error only later by bitter experience. That is why the slogan of the day for the Russian social-democrat must be — resolute struggle against Svoboda and *Rabocheye Dyelo*, both of which have sunk to the level of demagogy. We shall deal with this further in greater detail.\*

“A dozen wise men can be more easily wiped out than a hundred fools.” This wonderful truth (for which the hundred fools will always applaud you) appears obvious only because in the very midst of the argument you have skipped from one question to another. You began by talking and continued to talk of the unearthing of a “committee”, of the unearthing of an “organisation”, and now you skip to the question of unearthing the movement's “roots” in their “depths”. The fact is, of course, that our movement cannot be unearthed, for the very reason that it has countless thousands of roots deep down among the masses; but that is not the point at issue. As far as “deep roots” are concerned, we cannot be “unearthed” even now, despite all our amateurism,

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\* For the moment let us observe merely that our remarks on “pushing on from outside” and Svoboda's other disquisitions on organisation apply in *their entirety* to *all* the Economists, including the adherents of *Rabocheye Dyelo*; for some of them have actively preached and defended such views on organisation, while others among them have drifted into them.

and yet we all complain, and cannot but complain, that the “*organisations*” are being unearthed and as a result it is impossible to maintain continuity in the movement. But since you raise the question of *organisations* being unearthed and persist in your opinion, I assert that it is far more difficult to unearth a dozen wise men than a hundred fools. This position I will defend, no matter how much you instigate the masses against me for my “antidemocratic” views, etc. As I have stated repeatedly, by “wise men”, in connection with organisation, I mean *professional revolutionaries*, irrespective of whether they have developed from among students or working men. I assert: (1) that no revolutionary movement can endure without a stable organisation of leaders maintaining continuity; (2) that the broader the popular mass drawn spontaneously into the struggle, which forms the basis of the movement and participates in it, the more urgent the need for such an organisation, and the more solid this organisation must be (for it is much easier for all sorts of demagogues to sidetrack the more backward sections of the masses); (3) that such an organisation must consist chiefly of people professionally engaged in revolutionary activity; (4) that in an autocratic state, the more we *confine* the membership of such an organisation to people who are professionally engaged in revolutionary activity and who have been professionally trained in the art of combating the political police, the more difficult will it be to unearth the organisation; and (5) the *greater* will be the number of people from the working class and from the other social classes who will be able to join the movement and perform active work in it.

I invite our Economists, terrorists, and “Economists-terrorists”\* to confute these propositions. At the moment, I shall deal only with the last two points. The question as to whether it is easier to wipe out “a dozen wise men” or “a hundred fools” reduces itself to the question, above considered, whether it is possible to have a mass *organisation* when the maintenance of strict secrecy is essential. We can never give a mass organisation that degree of secrecy without which there can be no question of persistent and continuous struggle against the government. To concentrate all secret

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\* This term is perhaps more applicable to *Svoboda* than the former, for in an article entitled “The Regeneration of Revolutionism” the publication defends terrorism, while in the article at present under review it defends Economism. One might say of *Svoboda* that “it would if it could, but it can’t”. Its wishes and intentions are of the very best — but the result is utter confusion; this is chiefly due to the fact that, while *Svoboda* advocates continuity of organisation, it refuses to recognise continuity of revolutionary thought and social-democratic theory. It wants to revive the professional revolutionary (“The Regeneration of Revolutionism”), and to that end proposes, first, excitative terrorism, and, secondly, “an organisation of average workers” (*Svoboda*, No. 1, p. 66, *et seq.*), as less likely to be “pushed on from outside”. In other words, it proposes to pull the house down to use the timber for heating it.

functions in the hands of as small a number of professional revolutionaries as possible does not mean that the latter will “do the thinking for all” and that the rank and file will not take an active part in the *movement*. On the contrary, the membership will promote increasing numbers of the professional revolutionaries from its ranks; for it will know that it is not enough for a few students and for a few working men waging the economic struggle to gather in order to form a “committee”, but that it takes years to train oneself to be a professional revolutionary; and the rank and file will “think”, not only of amateurish methods, but of such training. Centralisation of the secret functions of the *organisation* by no means implies centralisation of all the functions of the *movement*. Active participation of the widest masses in the illegal press will not diminish because a “dozen” professional revolutionaries centralise the secret functions connected with this work; on the contrary, it will *increase* tenfold. In this way, and in this way alone, shall we ensure that reading the illegal press, writing for it, and to some extent even distributing it, will *almost cease to be secret work*, for the police will soon come to realise the folly and impossibility of judicial and administrative red-tape procedure over every copy of a publication that is being distributed in the thousands. This holds not only for the press, but for every function of the movement, even for demonstrations. The active and widespread participation of the masses will not suffer; on the contrary, it will benefit by the fact that a “dozen” experienced revolutionaries, trained professionally no less than the police, will centralise all the secret aspects of the work — the drawing up of leaflets, the working out of approximate plans; and the appointing of bodies of leaders for each urban district, for each factory district, for each educational institution, etc. (I know that exception will be taken to my “undemocratic” views, but I shall reply below fully to this anything but intelligent objection.) Centralisation of the most secret functions in an organisation of revolutionaries will not diminish, but rather increase the extent and enhance the quality of the activity of a large number of other organisations that are intended for a broad public and are therefore as loose and as non-secret as possible, such as workers’ trade unions; workers’ self-education circles and circles for reading illegal literature; and socialist, as well as democratic, circles among *all* other sections of the population; etc., etc. We must have such circles, trade unions, and organisations everywhere in *as large a number as possible* and with the widest variety of functions; but it would be absurd and harmful *to confound* them with the organisation of *revolutionaries*, to efface the borderline between them, to make still more hazy the all too faint recognition of the fact that in order to “serve” the mass movement we must have people who will devote themselves exclusively to social-democratic activities, and that such people must *train* themselves patiently and steadfastly to be professional revolutionaries.

Yes, this recognition is incredibly dim. Our worst sin with regard to organisation consists in the fact that by *our primitiveness we have lowered the prestige of revolutionaries in Russia*. A person who is flabby and shaky on questions of theory, who has a narrow outlook, who pleads the spontaneity of the masses as an excuse for his own sluggishness, who resembles a trade union secretary more than a spokesman of the people, who is unable to conceive of a broad and bold plan that would command the respect even of opponents, and who is inexperienced and clumsy in his own professional art — the art of combating the political police — such a man is not a revolutionary, but a wretched amateur!

Let no active worker take offence at these frank remarks, for as far as insufficient training is concerned, I apply them first and foremost to myself. I used to work in a study circle<sup>38</sup> that set itself very broad, all-embracing tasks; and all of us, members of that circle, suffered painfully and acutely from the realisation that we were acting as amateurs at a moment in history when we might have been able to say, varying a well-known statement: “Give us an organisation of revolutionaries, and we will overturn Russia.” The more I recall the burning sense of shame I then experienced, the bitterer become my feelings towards those pseudo-social-democrats whose preachings “bring disgrace on the calling of a revolutionary”, who fail to understand that our task is not to champion the degrading of the revolutionary to the level of an amateur, but to *raise* the amateurs to the level of revolutionaries.

#### D. The scope of organisational work

We have heard B—v tell us about “the lack of revolutionary forces fit for action which is felt not only in St. Petersburg, but throughout Russia”. Hardly anyone will dispute this fact. But the question is, how is it to be explained? B—v writes:

We shall not go into an explanation of the historical causes of this phenomenon; we shall merely state that a society, demoralised by prolonged political reaction and split by past and present economic changes, promotes from its own ranks an *extremely small number of persons fit for revolutionary work*; that the working class does produce revolutionary workers who to some extent reinforce the ranks of the illegal organisations, but that the number of such revolutionaries is inadequate to meet the requirements of the times. This is all the more so because the worker who spends eleven and a half hours a day in the factory is in such a position that he can, in the main, perform only the functions of an agitator; but propaganda and organisation, the delivery and reproduction of illegal literature, the issuance of leaflets, etc., are duties which must necessarily fall mainly upon the shoulders of an extremely small force of intellectuals. [*Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 6, pp. 38-39]

On many points we disagree with B—v, particularly with those we have emphasised, which most saliently reveal that, although weary of our amateurism (as is every thinking practical worker), B—v cannot find the way out of this intolerable situation because he is weighted down by Economism. The fact is that society produces very *many* persons fit for “the cause”, but we are unable to make use of them all. The critical, transitional state of our movement in this respect may be formulated as follows: *There are no people — yet there is a mass of people*. There is a mass of people, because the working class and increasingly varied social strata, year after year, produce from their ranks an increasing number of discontented people who desire to protest, who are ready to render all the assistance they can in the struggle against absolutism, the intolerableness of which, though not yet recognised by all, is more and more acutely sensed by increasing masses of the people. At the same time, we have no people, because we have no leaders, no political leaders, no talented organisers capable of arranging extensive and at the same time uniform and harmonious work that would employ all forces, even the most inconsiderable. “The growth and development of the revolutionary organisations” lag, not only behind the growth of the working-class movement, which even B—v admits, but behind that of the general democratic movement among all strata of the people. (In passing, probably B—v would now regard this as supplementing his conclusion.) The scope of revolutionary work is too narrow, as compared with the breadth of the spontaneous basis of the movement. It is too hemmed in by the wretched theory of “economic struggle against the employers and the government”. Yet, at the present time, not only social-democratic political agitators, but social-democratic organisers must “go among all classes of the population”.\* There is hardly a single practical worker who will doubt that the social-democrats could distribute the thousand and one minute functions of their organisational work among individual representatives of the most varied classes. Lack of specialisation is one of the most serious defects of our technique, about which B—v justly and bitterly complains. The smaller each separate “operation” in our common cause the more people we can find capable of carrying out such operations (people who, in the majority of cases, are completely incapable of becoming professional revolutionaries); the more difficult will it be for the police to “net” all these “detail workers”, and the more difficult will it be for them to frame up, out of an arrest for

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\* Thus, an undoubted revival of the democratic spirit has recently been observed among persons in military service, partly as a consequence of the more frequent street battles with “enemies” like workers and students. As soon as our available forces permit, we must without fail devote the most serious attention to propaganda and agitation among soldiers and officers, and to the creation of “military organisations” affiliated to our party.

some petty affair, a “case” that would justify the government’s expenditure on “security”. As for the number of people ready to help us, we referred in the preceding chapter to the gigantic change that has taken place in this respect in the last five years or so. On the other hand, in order to unite all these tiny fractions into one whole, in order not to break up the movement while breaking up its functions, and in order to imbue the people who carry out the minute functions with the conviction that their work is necessary and important, without which conviction they will never do the work,\* it is necessary to have a strong organisation of tried revolutionaries. The more secret such an organisation is, the stronger and more widespread will be the confidence in the party. As we know, in time of war, it is not only of the utmost importance to imbue one’s own army with confidence in its strength, but it is important also to convince the enemy and all *neutral* elements of this strength; friendly neutrality may sometimes decide the issue. If such an organisation existed, one built up on a firm theoretical foundation and possessing a social-democratic organ, we should have no reason to fear that the movement might be diverted from its path by the numerous “outside” elements that are attracted to it. (On the contrary, it is precisely at the present time, with amateurism prevalent, that we see many social-democrats leaning towards the *Credo* and only imagining that they are social-democrats.) In a word, specialisation necessarily presupposes centralisation, and in turn imperatively calls for it.

But B—v himself, who has so excellently described the necessity for specialisation, underestimates its importance, in our opinion, in the second part of the argument we have quoted. The number of working-class revolutionaries is inadequate, he says. This is perfectly true, and once again we stress that the “valuable communication of a

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\* I recall that once a comrade told me of a factory inspector who wanted to help the social-democrats, and actually did, but complained bitterly that he did not know whether his “information” reached the proper revolutionary centre, how much his help was really required, and what possibilities there were for utilising his small and petty services. Every practical worker can, of course, cite many similar instances in which our primitiveness deprived us of allies. These services, each “small” in itself, but invaluable when taken in the mass, could and would be rendered to us by office employees and officials, not only in factories, but in the postal service, on the railways, in the customs, among the nobility, among the clergy, and in *every* other walk of life, including even the police and the court! Had we a real party, a real militant organisation of revolutionaries, we would not make undue demands on every one of these “aides”, we would not hasten always and invariably to bring them right into the very heart of our “illegality”, but, on the contrary, we would husband them most carefully and would even train people especially for such functions, bearing in mind that many students could be of much greater service to the party as “aides” holding some official post than as “short-term” revolutionaries. But, I repeat, only an organisation that is firmly established and has no lack of active forces would have the right to apply such tactics.

close observer” fully confirms our view of the causes of the present crisis in social-democracy, and, consequently, of the means required to overcome it. Not only are revolutionaries in general lagging behind the spontaneous awakening of the masses, but even worker-revolutionaries are lagging behind the spontaneous awakening of the working-class masses. This *fact* confirms with clear evidence, from the “practical” point of view, too, not only the absurdity but even the *politically reactionary nature* of the “pedagogics” to which we are so often treated in the discussion of our duties to the workers. This fact proves that our very first and most pressing duty is to help to train working-class revolutionaries who will be on the same level *in regard to party activity* as the revolutionaries from amongst the intellectuals (we emphasise the words “in regard to party activity”, for, although necessary, it is neither so easy nor so pressingly necessary to bring the workers up to the level of intellectuals in other respects). Attention, therefore, must be devoted *principally to raising* the workers to the level of revolutionaries; it is not at all our task *to descend* to the level of the “working masses” as the Economists wish to do, or to the level of the “average worker” as *Svoboda* desires to do (and by this ascends to the second grade of Economist “pedagogics”). I am far from denying the necessity for popular literature for the workers, and especially popular (of course, not vulgar) literature for the especially backward workers. But what annoys me is this constant confusion of pedagogics with questions of politics and organisation. You, gentlemen, who are so much concerned about the “average worker”, as a matter of fact, rather insult the workers by your desire *to talk down* to them when discussing working-class politics and working-class organisation. Talk about serious things in a serious manner; leave pedagogics to the pedagogues, and not to politicians and organisers! Are there not advanced people, “average people”, and “masses” among the intelligentsia too? Does not everyone recognise that popular literature is also required for the intelligentsia, and is not such literature written? Imagine someone, in an article on organising college or high-school students, repeating over and over again, as if he had made a new discovery, that first of all we must have an organisation of “average students”. The author of such an article would be ridiculed, and rightly so. Give us your ideas on organisation, if you have any, he would be told, and we ourselves will decide who is “average”, who above average, and who below. But if you have no organisational ideas *of your own*, then all your exertions in behalf of the “masses” and “average people” will be simply boring. You must realise that these questions of “politics” and “organisation” are so serious in themselves that they cannot be dealt with in any other but a serious way. We can and must *educate* workers (and university and Gymnasium students) so that we *may be able to discuss* these questions with them. But once you do bring up these questions, you “must give real replies to them; do not

fall back on the “average”, or on the “masses”; do not try to dispose of the matter with facetious remarks and mere phrases.\*

To be fully prepared for his task, the worker-revolutionary must likewise become a professional revolutionary. Hence B—v is wrong in saying that since the worker spends eleven and a half hours in the factory, the brunt of all other revolutionary functions (apart from agitation) “*must necessarily* fall mainly upon the shoulders of an extremely small force of intellectuals”. But this condition does not obtain out of sheer “necessity”. It obtains because we are backward, because we do not recognise our duty to assist every capable worker to become a *professional* agitator, organiser, propagandist, literature distributor, etc., etc. In this respect, we waste our strength in a positively shameful manner; we lack the ability to husband that which should be tended and reared with special care. Look at the Germans: their forces are a hundredfold greater than ours. But they understand perfectly well that really capable agitators, etc., are not often promoted from the ranks of the “average”. For this reason they immediately try to place every capable working man in conditions that will enable him to develop and apply his abilities to the fullest: he is made a professional agitator, he is encouraged to widen the field of his activity, to spread it from one factory to the whole of the industry, from a single locality to the whole country. He acquires experience and dexterity in his profession; he broadens his outlook and increases his knowledge; he observes at close quarters the prominent political leaders from other localities and of other parties; he strives to rise to their level and combine in himself the knowledge of the working-class environment and the freshness of socialist convictions with professional skill, without which the proletariat *cannot* wage a stubborn struggle against its excellently trained enemies. In this way alone do the working masses produce men of the stamp of Bebel and Auer. But what is to a great extent automatic in a politically free country must in Russia be done deliberately and systematically by our organisations. A worker-agitator who is at all gifted and “promising” *must not be left* to work 11 hours a day in a factory. We must arrange that he be maintained by the party; that he may go underground in good time; that he change the place of his activity, if he is to enlarge his experience, widen his outlook, and be able to hold out for at least a few years in the

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\* *Svoboda*, No. 1, p. 66, in the article “Organisation”: “The heavy tread of the army of workers will reinforce all the demands that will be advanced in behalf of Russian Labour” — Labour with a capital L, of course. And the author exclaims: “I am not in the least hostile towards the intelligentsia, but [*but* — the word that Shchedrin translated as meaning: The ears never grow higher than the forehead!] — but I always get frightfully annoyed when a man comes to me uttering beautiful and charming words and demands that they be accepted for their [his?] beauty and other virtues” (p. 62). Yes, I always get “frightfully annoyed”, too.

struggle against the gendarmes. As the spontaneous rise of their movement becomes broader and deeper, the working-class masses promote from their ranks not only an increasing number of talented agitators, but also talented organisers, propagandists, and “practical workers” in the best sense of the term (of whom there are so few among our intellectuals who, for the most part, in the Russian manner, are somewhat careless and sluggish in their habits). When we have forces of specially trained worker-revolutionaries who have gone through extensive preparation (and, of course, revolutionaries “of all arms of the service”), no political police in the world will then be able to contend with them, for these forces, boundlessly devoted to the revolution, will enjoy the boundless confidence of the widest masses of the workers. We are directly to *blame* for doing too little to “stimulate” the workers to take this path, common to them and to the “intellectuals”, of professional revolutionary training, and for all too often dragging them back by our silly speeches about what is “accessible” to the masses of the workers, to the “average workers”, etc.

In this, as in other respects, the narrow scope of our organisational work is without a doubt due directly to the fact (although the overwhelming majority of the “Economists” and the novices in practical work do not perceive it) that we restrict our theories and our political tasks to a narrow field. Subservience to spontaneity seems to inspire a fear of taking even one step away from what is “accessible” to the masses, a fear of rising too high above mere attendance on the immediate and direct requirements of the masses. Have no fear, gentlemen! Remember that we stand so low on the plane of organisation that the very idea that we could rise *too* high is absurd!

### E. ‘Conspiratorial’ organisation & ‘democratism’

Yet there are many people among us who are so sensitive to the “voice of life” that they fear it more than anything in the world and charge the adherents of the views here expounded with following a Narodnaya Volya line, with failing to understand “democratism”, etc. These accusations, which, of course, have been echoed by *Rabocheye Dyelo*, need to be dealt with.

The writer of these lines knows very well that the St. Petersburg Economists levelled the charge of Narodnaya Volya tendencies also against *Rabochaya Gazeta* (which is quite understandable when one compares it with *Rabochaya Mysl*). We were not in the least surprised, therefore, when, soon after the appearance of *Iskra*, a comrade informed us that the social-democrats in the town of X describe *Iskra* as a Narodnaya Volya organ. We, of course, were flattered by this accusation; for what decent social-democrat has not been accused by the Economists of being a Narodnaya Volya sympathiser?

These accusations are the result of a twofold misunderstanding. First, the history

of the revolutionary movement is so little known among us that the name “Narodnaya Volya” is used to denote any idea of a militant centralised organisation which declares determined war upon tsarism. But the magnificent organisation that the revolutionaries had in the '70s, and that should serve us as a model, was not established by the Narodnaya Volya, but by the *Zemlya i Volya*, which split up into the Chorny Peredel and the Narodnaya Volya. Consequently, to regard a militant revolutionary organisation as something specifically Narodnaya Volya in character is absurd both historically and logically; for *no* revolutionary trend, if it seriously thinks of struggle, can dispense with such an organisation. The mistake the Narodnaya Volya committed was not in striving to enlist *all* the discontented in the organisation and to direct this organisation to resolute struggle against the autocracy; on the contrary, that was its great historical merit. The mistake was in relying on a theory which in substance was not a revolutionary theory at all, and the Narodnaya Volya members either did not know how, or were unable, to link their movement inseparably with the class struggle in the developing capitalist society. Only a gross failure to understand Marxism (or an “understanding” of it in the spirit of “Struveism”) could prompt the opinion that the rise of a mass, spontaneous working-class movement *relieves* us of the duty of creating as good an organisation of revolutionaries as the *Zemlya i Volya* had, or, indeed, an incomparably better one. On the contrary, this movement *imposes* the duty upon us; for the spontaneous struggle of the proletariat will not become its genuine “class struggle” until this struggle is led by a strong organisation of revolutionaries.

Secondly, many people, including apparently B. Krichevsky (*Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 10, p. 18), misunderstand the polemics that social-democrats have always waged against the “conspiratorial” view of the political struggle. We have always protested, and will, of course, continue to protest against *confining* the political struggle to conspiracy.\* But this does not, of course, mean that we deny the need for a strong revolutionary organisation. Thus, in the pamphlet mentioned in the preceding footnote, after the polemics against reducing the political struggle to a conspiracy, a description is given (as a social-democratic ideal) of an organisation so strong as to be able to “resort to ... rebellion” and to every “other form of attack, in order to “deliver a smashing blow against absolutism”.\*\* In *form* such a strong revolutionary organisation in an autocratic

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\* Cf. *The Tasks of the Russian Social-Democrats*, p. 21, polemics against P.L. Lavrov. [See Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 2, pp. 340-341. — *Ed.*]

\*\* *The Tasks of the Russian Social-Democrats*, p. 23. [See Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 2, p. 342. — *Ed.*] Apropos, we shall give another illustration of the fact that *Rabocheye Dyelo* either does not understand what it is talking about or changes its views “with the wind”. In No. 1 of *Rabocheye Dyelo*, we find the following passage in italics: “*The substance set forth*

country may also be described as a “conspiratorial” organisation, because the French word “conspiracy” is the equivalent of the Russian word “*zagovar*” (“conspiracy”), and such an organisation must have the utmost secrecy. Secrecy is such a necessary condition for this kind of organisation that all the other conditions (number and selection of members, functions, etc.) must be made to conform to it. It would be extremely naive indeed, therefore, to fear the charge that we social-democrats desire to create a conspiratorial organisation. Such a charge should be as flattering to every opponent of Economism as the charge of following a Narodnaya Volya line.

The objection may be raised that such a powerful and strictly secret organisation, which concentrates in its hands all the threads of secret activities, an organisation which of necessity is centralised, may too easily rush into a premature attack, may thoughtlessly intensify the movement before the growth of political discontent, the intensity of the ferment and anger of the working class, etc., have made such an attack possible and necessary. Our reply to this is: Speaking abstractly, it cannot be denied, of course, that a militant organisation *may* thoughtlessly engage in battle, which *may* end in a defeat entirely avoidable under other conditions. But we cannot confine ourselves to abstract reasoning on such a question, because every battle bears within itself the abstract possibility of defeat, and there is no way of *reducing* this possibility except by organised preparation for battle. If, however, we proceed from the concrete conditions at present obtaining in Russia, we must come to the positive conclusion that a strong revolutionary organisation is absolutely necessary precisely for the purpose of giving stability to the movement and of *safeguarding* it against the possibility of making thoughtless attacks. Precisely at the present time, when no such organisation yet exists, and when the revolutionary movement is rapidly and spontaneously growing, we *already observe* two opposite extremes (which, as is to be expected, “meet”). These are: the utterly unsound Economism and the preaching of moderation, and the equally unsound “excitative terror”, which strives “artificially to call forth symptoms of the end of the movement, which is developing and strengthening itself, when this movement is as yet nearer to the start than to the end” (V. Zasulich, in *Zarya*, No. 2-3, p. 353). And the instance of *Rabocheye Dyelo* shows that *there exist* social-democrats

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*in the pamphlet accords entirely with the editorial program of Rabocheye Dyelo*” (p. 142). Really? Does the view that the overthrow of the autocracy must not be set as the first task of the mass movement accord with the views expressed in *The Tasks of the Russian Social-Democrats*? Do the theory of “the economic struggle against the employers and the government” and the stages theory accord with the views expressed in that pamphlet? We leave it to the reader to judge whether a periodical that understands the meaning of “accordance in opinion” in this peculiar manner can have firm principles.

who give way to both these extremes. This is not surprising, for, apart from other reasons, the “economic struggle against the employers and the government” can *never* satisfy revolutionaries, and opposite extremes will therefore always appear here and there. Only a centralised, militant organisation that consistently carries out a social-democratic policy, that satisfies, so to speak, all revolutionary instincts and strivings, can safeguard the movement against making thoughtless attacks and prepare attacks that hold out the promise of success.

A further objection may be raised, that the views on organisation here expounded contradict the “democratic principle”. Now, while the earlier accusation was specifically Russian in origin, this one *is specifically foreign* in character. And only an organisation abroad (the Union of Russian Social-Democrats Abroad) was capable of giving its editorial board instructions like the following:

*Organisational Principle.* In order to secure the successful development and unification of social-democracy, the broad democratic principle of party organisation must be emphasised, developed, and fought for; this is particularly necessary in view of the antidemocratic tendencies that have revealed themselves in the ranks of our party.

[*Two Conferences*, p. 18.]

We shall see in the next chapter how *Rabocheye Dyelo* combats *Iskra*'s “antidemocratic tendencies”. For the present, we shall examine more closely the “principle” that the Economists advance. Everyone will probably agree that “the broad democratic principle” presupposes the two following conditions: first, full publicity, and secondly, election to all offices. It would be absurd to speak of democracy without publicity, moreover, without a publicity that is not limited to the membership of the organisation. We call the German Socialist Party a democratic organisation because all its activities are carried out publicly; even its party congresses are held in public. But no one would call an organisation democratic that is hidden from every one but its members by a veil of secrecy. What is the use, then, of advancing “the *broad* democratic principle” when the fundamental condition for this principle *cannot be fulfilled* by a secret organisation? “The broad principle” proves itself simply to be a resounding but hollow phrase. Moreover, it reveals a total lack of understanding of the urgent tasks of the moment in regard to organisation. Everyone knows how great the lack of secrecy is among the “broad” masses of our revolutionaries. We have heard the bitter complaints of B—v on this score and his absolutely just demand for a “strict selection of members” (*Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 6, p. 42). Yet, persons who boast a keen “sense of realities” *urge*, in a situation like this, not the strictest secrecy and the strictest (consequently, more restricted) selection, of members, but “the *broad* democratic principle”! This is what you call being wide of the mark.

Nor is the situation any better with regard to the second attribute of democracy, the principle of election. In politically free countries, this condition is taken for granted. "They are members of the party who accept the principles of the party program and render the party all possible support," reads clause 1 of the rules of the German Social-Democratic Party. Since the entire political arena is as open to the public view as is a theatre stage to the audience, this acceptance or nonacceptance, support or opposition, is known to all from the press and from public meetings. Everyone knows that a certain political figure began in such and such a way, passed through such and such an evolution, behaved in a trying moment in such and such a manner, and possesses such and such qualities; consequently, *all* party members, knowing all the facts, can elect or refuse to elect this person to a particular party office. The general control (in the literal sense of the term) exercised over every act of a party man in the political field brings into existence an automatically operating mechanism which produces what in biology is called the "survival of the fittest". "Natural selection" by full publicity, election, and general control provides the assurance that, in the last analysis, every political figure will be "in his proper place", do the work for which he is best fitted by his powers and abilities, feel the effects of his mistakes on himself, and prove before all the world his ability to recognise mistakes and to avoid them.

Try to fit this picture into the frame of our autocracy! Is it conceivable in Russia for all "who accept the principles of the party program and render the party all possible support" to control every action of the revolutionary working in secret? Is it possible for all to elect one of these revolutionaries to any particular office, when, in the very interests of the work, the revolutionary *must* conceal his identity from nine out of ten of these "all"? Reflect somewhat over the real meaning of the high-sounding phrases to which *Rabocheye Dyelo* gives utterance, and you will realise that "broad democracy" in party organisation, amidst the gloom of the autocracy and the domination of gendarmerie, is nothing more than a *useless and harmful* toy. It is a useless toy because, in point of fact, no revolutionary organisation has ever practiced, or could practice, *broad* democracy, however much it may have desired to do so. It is a harmful toy because any attempt to practise "the broad democratic principle" will simply facilitate the work of the police in carrying out large-scale raids, will perpetuate the prevailing primitiveness, and will divert the thoughts of the practical workers from the serious and pressing task of training themselves to become professional revolutionaries to that of drawing up detailed "paper" rules for election systems. Only abroad, where very often people with no opportunity for conducting really active work gather, could this "playing at democracy" develop here and there, especially in small groups.

To show the unseemliness of *Rabocheye Dyelo's* favourite trick of advancing the

plausible “principle” of democracy in revolutionary affairs, we shall again summon a witness. This witness, Y. Serebryakov, editor of the London magazine, *Nakanune*, has a soft spot for *Rabocheye Dyelo* and is filled with a great hatred for Plekhanov and the “Plekhanovites”. In its articles on the split in the Union of Russian Social-Democrats Abroad, *Nakanune* definitely sided with *Rabocheye Dyelo* and poured a stream of petty abuse upon Plekhanov. All the more valuable, therefore, is this witness in the question at issue. In *Nakanune* for July (No. 7) 1899, an article entitled “Concerning the Manifesto of the Self-Emancipation of the Workers Group”, Serebryakov argued that it was “indecent” to talk about such things as “self-deception, leadership, and the so-called Areopagus<sup>39</sup> in a serious revolutionary movement” and, *inter alia*, wrote:

Myshkin, Rogachov, Zhelyabov, Mikhailov, Perovskaya, Figner, and others never regarded themselves as leaders, and no one ever elected or appointed them as such, although in actuality, they were leaders, because, in the propaganda period, as well as in the period of the struggle against the government, they took the brunt of the work upon themselves, they went into the most dangerous places, and their activities were the most fruitful. They became leaders, not because they wished it, but because the comrades surrounding them had confidence in their wisdom, in their energy, in their loyalty. To be afraid of some kind of Areopagus (if it is not feared, why write about it?) that would arbitrarily govern the movement is far too naive. Who would pay heed to it?

We ask the reader, in what way does the “Areopagus” differ from “antidemocratic tendencies”? And is it not evident that *Rabocheye Dyelo*’s “plausible” organisational principle is equally naive and indecent; naive, because no one would pay heed to the “Areopagus”, or people with “antidemocratic tendencies”, if “the comrades surrounding them had” no “confidence in their wisdom, energy, and loyalty”; indecent, because it is a demagogic sally calculated to play on the conceit of some, on the ignorance of others regarding the actual state of our movement, and on the lack of training and the ignorance of the history of the revolutionary movement on the part of still others. The only serious organisational principle for the active workers of our movement should be the strictest secrecy, the strictest selection of members, and the training of professional revolutionaries. Given these qualities, something even more than “democratism” would be guaranteed to us, namely, complete, comradely, mutual confidence among revolutionaries. This is absolutely essential for us, because there can be no question of replacing it by general democratic control in Russia. It would be a great mistake to believe that the impossibility of establishing real “democratic” control renders the members of the revolutionary organisation beyond control altogether. They have not the time to think about toy forms of democratism (democratism within a close and compact body of comrades in which complete, mutual confidence prevails),

but they have a lively sense of their *responsibility*, knowing as they do from experience that an organisation of real revolutionaries will stop at nothing to rid itself of an unworthy member. Moreover, there is a fairly well-developed public opinion in Russian (and international) revolutionary circles which has a long history behind it, and which sternly and ruthlessly punishes every departure from the duties of comradeship (and “democratism”, real and not toy democratism, certainly forms a component part of the conception of comradeship). Take all this into consideration and you will realise that this talk and these resolutions about “antidemocratic tendencies” have the musty odour of the playing at generals which is indulged in abroad.

It must be observed also that the other source of this talk, viz., naivete is likewise fostered by the confusion of ideas concerning the meaning of democracy. In Mr. and Mrs. Webb's book on the English trade unions there is an interesting chapter entitled “Primitive Democracy”. In it the authors relate how the English workers, in the first period of existence of their unions, considered it an indispensable sign of democracy for all the members to do all the work of managing the unions; not only were all questions decided by the vote of all the members, but all official duties were fulfilled by all the members in turn. A long period of historical experience was required for workers to realise the absurdity of such a conception of democracy and to make them understand the necessity for representative institutions, on the one hand, and for full-time officials, on the other. Only after a number of cases of financial bankruptcy of trade union treasuries had occurred did the workers realise that the rates of contributions and benefits cannot be decided merely by a democratic vote, but that this requires also the advice of insurance experts. Let us take also Kautsky's book on parliamentarism and legislation by the people. There we find that the conclusions drawn by the Marxist theoretician coincide with the lessons learned from many years of practical experience by the workers who organised “spontaneously”. Kautsky strongly protests against Rittinghausen's primitive conception of democracy; he ridicules those who in the name of democracy demand that “popular newspapers shall be edited directly by the people”; he shows the need for *professional* journalists, parliamentarians, etc., for the social-democratic leadership of the proletarian class struggle; he attacks the “socialism of anarchists and *littérateurs*” who in their “striving for effect” extol direct legislation by the whole people, completely failing to understand that this idea can be applied only relatively in modern society.

Those who have performed practical work in our movement know how widespread the “primitive” conception of democracy is among the masses of the students and workers. It is not surprising that this conception penetrates also into rules of organisations and into literature. The Economists of the Bernsteinian persuasion

included in their rules the following: “§10. All affairs affecting the interests of the whole of the union organisation shall be decided by a majority vote of all its members.” The Economists of the terrorist persuasion repeat after them. “The decisions of the committee shall become effective only after they have been referred to all the circles” (*Svoboda*, No. 1, p. 67). Observe that this proposal for a widely applied referendum is advanced *in addition* to the demand that *the whole of* the organisation be built on an elective basis! We would not, of course, on this account condemn practical workers who have had too few opportunities for studying the theory and practice of real democratic organisations. But when *Rabocheye Dyelo*, which lays claim to leadership, confines itself, under such conditions, to a resolution on broad democratic principles, can this be described as anything but a mere “striving for effect”?

## F. Local & all-Russia work

The objections raised against the plan of organisation here outlined on the grounds that it is undemocratic and conspiratorial are totally unsound. Nevertheless, there remains a question which is frequently put and which deserves detailed examination. This is the question of the relations between local work and all-Russia work. Fears are expressed that the formation of a centralised organisation may shift the centre of gravity from the former to the latter, damage the movement through weakening our contacts with the working masses and the continuity of local agitation generally. To these fears we reply that our movement in the past few years has suffered precisely from the fact that local workers have been too absorbed in local work; that therefore it is absolutely necessary to shift the centre of gravity somewhat to national work; and that, far from weakening, this would strengthen our ties and the continuity of our local agitation. Let us take the question of central and local newspapers. I would ask the reader not to forget that we cite the publication of newspapers only as *an example* illustrating an immeasurably broader and more varied revolutionary activity in general.

In the first period of the mass movement (1896-98), an attempt was made by local revolutionary workers to publish an all-Russia paper — *Rabochaya Gazeta*. In the next period (1898-1900), the movement made an enormous stride forward, but the attention of the leaders was wholly absorbed by local publications. If we compute the total number of the local papers that were published, we shall find that on the average one issue per month was published.\* Does this not clearly illustrate our amateurism?

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\* See *Report to the Paris Congress*,<sup>40</sup> p. 14. “From that time (1897) to the spring of 1900, 30 issues of various papers were published in various places ... On an average, over one issue per month was published.”

Does this not clearly show that our revolutionary organisation lags behind the spontaneous growth of the movement? If *the same number* of issues had been published, not by scattered local groups, but by a single organisation, we would not only have saved an enormous amount of effort, but we would have secured immeasurably greater stability and continuity in our work. This simple point is frequently lost sight of by those practical workers who work *actively* and almost exclusively on local publications (unfortunately this is true even now in the overwhelming majority of cases), as well as by the publicists who display an astonishing quixotism on this question. The practical workers usually rest content with the argument that “it is difficult”<sup>\*</sup> for local workers to engage in the organisation of an all-Russia newspaper, and that local newspapers are better than no newspapers at all. This argument is, of course, perfectly just, and we, no less than any practical worker, appreciate the enormous importance and usefulness of local newspapers *in general*. But not this is the point. The point is, can we not overcome the fragmentation and primitiveness that are so glaringly expressed in the 30 issues of local newspapers that have been published throughout Russia in the course of two and a half years? Do not restrict yourselves to the indisputable, but too general, statement about the usefulness of local newspapers generally; have the courage frankly to admit their negative aspects revealed by the experience of two and a half years. This experience has shown that under the conditions in which we work, these local newspapers prove, in the majority of cases, to be unstable in their principles, devoid of political significance, extremely costly in regard to expenditure of revolutionary forces, and totally unsatisfactory from a technical point of view (I have in mind, of course, not the technique of printing, but the frequency and regularity of publication). These defects are not accidental; they are the inevitable outcome of the fragmentation which, on the one hand, explains the predominance of local newspapers in the period under review, and, on the other, is *fostered by* this predominance. It is positively *beyond the strength* of a separate local organisation to raise its newspaper to the level of a political organ maintaining stability of principles; it is *beyond its strength* to collect and utilise sufficient material to shed light on the whole of our political life. The argument usually advanced to support the need for numerous local newspapers in free countries that the cost of printing by local workers is low and that the people can be kept more fully and quickly informed — this *argument* as experience has shown, speaks *against* local newspapers in Russia. They turn out to be

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<sup>\*</sup> This difficulty is more apparent than real. In fact, *there is not* a single local study circle that lacks the opportunity of taking up some function or other in connection with all-Russia work. “Don’t say, I can’t; say, I won’t.”

excessively costly in regard to the expenditure of revolutionary forces, and appear *very* rarely, for the simple reason that the publication of an *illegal* newspaper, however small its size, requires an extensive secret apparatus, such as is possible with large-scale factory production; for this apparatus cannot be created in a small, handicraft workshop. Very frequently, the primitiveness of the secret apparatus (every practical worker can cite numerous cases) enables the police to take advantage of the publication and distribution of one or two issues to make *mass* arrests, which result in such a clean sweep that it becomes necessary to start all over again. A well-organised secret apparatus requires professionally well-trained revolutionaries and a division of labour applied with the greatest consistency, but both these requirements are beyond the strength of a separate local organisation, however strong it may be at any given moment. Not only the general interests of our movement as a whole (training of the workers in consistent socialist and political principles) but also specifically local interests are *better served by nonlocal newspapers*. This may seem paradoxical at first sight, but it has been proved to the hilt by the two and a half years of experience referred to. Everyone will agree that had all the local forces that were engaged in the publication of the 30 issues of newspapers worked on a single newspaper, 60, if not 100, issues could easily have been published, with a fuller expression, in consequence, of all the specifically local features of the movement. True, it is no easy matter to attain such a degree of organisation, but we must realise the need for it. Every local study circle must think about it and *work actively* to achieve it, without waiting for an impetus from outside, without being tempted by the popularity and closer proximity of a local newspaper which, as our revolutionary experience has shown, proves to a large extent to be illusory.

And it is a bad service indeed those publicists render to the practical work who, thinking themselves particularly close to the practical workers, fail to see this illusoriness, and make shift with the astoundingly hollow and cheap argument that we must have local newspapers, we must have district newspapers, and we must have all-Russia newspapers. Generally speaking, of course, all these are necessary, but once the solution of a concrete organisational problem is undertaken, surely time and circumstances must be taken into consideration. Is it not quixotic for *Svoboda* (No. 1, p. 68) to write in a special article “dealing with *the question of a newspaper*”: “It seems to us that every locality, with any appreciable number of workers, should have its own workers’ newspaper; not a newspaper imported from somewhere, but its very own.” If the publicist who wrote these words refuses to think of their meaning, then at least the reader may do it for him. How many scores, if not hundreds, of “localities with any appreciable number of workers” there are in Russia, and what a perpetuation of our

amateurish methods this would mean if indeed every local organisation set about publishing its own newspaper! How this diffusion would facilitate the gendarmerie's task of netting — and without “any appreciable” effort — the local revolutionary workers at the very outset of their activity and of preventing them from developing into real revolutionaries. A reader of an all-Russia newspaper, continues the author, would find little interest in the descriptions of the malpractices of the factory owners and the “details of factory life in various towns not his own”. But “an inhabitant of Orel would not find Orel affairs dull reading. In every issue he would learn who had been ‘picked for a lambasting’ and who had been ‘flayed’, and he would be in high spirits” (p. 69). Certainly, the Orel reader is in high spirits, but our publicist's flights of imagination are also high — too high. He should have asked himself whether such concern with trivialities is tactically in order. We are second to none in appreciating the importance and necessity of factory exposures, but it must be borne in mind that we have reached a stage when St. Petersburg folk find it dull reading the St. Petersburg correspondence of the St. Petersburg *Rabochaya Mysl*. Leaflets are the medium through which local factory exposures have always been *and must continue* to be made, but we must raise the level of the *newspaper*, not lower it to the level of a factory leaflet. What we ask of a newspaper is not so much “petty” exposures, as exposures of the major, typical evils of factory life, exposures based on especially striking facts and capable, therefore, of arousing the interest of *all* workers and all leaders of the movement, of really enriching their knowledge, broadening their outlook, and serving as a starting-point for awakening new districts and workers from ever-newer trade areas.

“Moreover, in a local newspaper, all the malpractices of the factory administration and other authorities may be denounced then and there. In the case of a general, distant newspaper, however, by the time the news reaches it the facts will have been forgotten in the source localities. The reader, on getting the paper, will exclaim: ‘When was that — who remembers it?’” (*ibid.*). Precisely — who remembers it! From the same source we learn that the 30 issues of newspapers which appeared in the course of two and a half years were published in six cities. This averages *one issue per city per half-year!* And even if our frivolous publicist *trebled* his estimate of the productivity of local work (which would be wrong in the case of an average town, since it is impossible to increase productivity to any considerable extent by our rule-of-thumb methods), we would still get only one issue every two months, i.e., nothing at all like “denouncing then and there”. It would suffice, however, for ten local organisations to combine and send their delegates to take an active part in organising a general newspaper, to enable us every fortnight to “denounce”, over the *whole of Russia*, not petty, but really outstanding and typical evils. No one who knows the state of affairs in our organisations

can have the slightest doubt on that score. As for catching the enemy red-handed — if we mean it seriously and not merely as a pretty phrase — that is quite beyond the ability of an illegal paper generally. It can be done only by a leaflet, because the time limit for exposures of that nature can be a day or two at the most (e.g., the usual brief strikes, violent factory clashes, demonstrations, etc.).

“The workers live not only at the factory, but also in the city,” continues our author, rising from the particular to the general, with a strict consistency that would have done honour to Boris Krichevsky himself; and he refers to matters like municipal councils, municipal hospitals, municipal schools, and demands that workers’ newspapers should not ignore municipal affairs in general.

This demand — excellent in itself — serves as a particularly vivid illustration of the empty abstraction to which discussions of local newspapers are all too frequently limited. In the first place, if indeed newspapers appeared “in every locality with any appreciable number of workers” with such detailed information on municipal affairs as *Svoboda* desires, this would, under our Russian conditions, inevitably degenerate into actual concern with trivialities, lead to a weakening of the consciousness of the importance of an all-Russia revolutionary assault upon the tsarist autocracy, and strengthen the extremely virile shoots — not uprooted but rather hidden or temporarily suppressed — of the tendency that has become noted as a result of the famous remark about revolutionaries who talk a great deal about nonexistent parliaments and too little about existent municipal councils. We say “inevitably”, in order to emphasise that *Svoboda* obviously does not desire this, but the contrary, to come about. But good intentions are not enough. For municipal affairs to be dealt with in their proper perspective, in relation to our entire work, this perspective must *first* be clearly conceived, firmly established, not only by argument, but by numerous examples, so that it may acquire the stability of a *tradition*. This is still far from being the case with us. Yet this must be done *first*, before we can allow ourselves to think and talk about an extensive local press.

Secondly, to write really well and interestingly about municipal affairs, one must have first-hand knowledge, not book knowledge, of the issues. But there are hardly any social-democrats *anywhere in Russia* who possess such knowledge. To be able to write in newspapers (not in popular pamphlets) about municipal and state affairs, one must have fresh and varied material gathered and written up by able people. And in order to be able to gather and write up such material, we must have something more than the “primitive democracy” of a primitive circle, in which everybody does everything and all entertain themselves by playing at referendums. It is necessary to have a staff of expert writers and correspondents, an army of social-democratic reporters who

establish contacts far and wide, who are able to fathom all sorts of “state secrets” (the knowledge of which makes the Russian government official so puffed up, but the blabbing of which is such an easy matter to him), who are able to penetrate “behind the scenes” — an army of people who must, as their “official duty”, be ubiquitous and omniscient. And we, the party that fights against all economic, political, social, and national oppression, can and must find, gather, train, mobilise, and set into motion such an army of omniscient people — all of which requires still to be done. Not only has not a single step in this direction been taken in the overwhelming majority of localities, but even the *recognition* of its necessity is very often lacking. One will search in vain in our social-democratic press for lively and interesting articles, correspondence, and exposures dealing with our big and little affairs — diplomatic, military, ecclesiastical, municipal, financial, etc., etc. There is *almost nothing*, or very little, about these matters.\* That is why “it always annoys me frightfully when a man comes to me, utters beautiful and charming words” about the need for newspapers in “every locality with any appreciable number of workers” that will expose factory, municipal, and government evils.

The predominance of the local papers over a central press may be a sign of either poverty or luxury. Of poverty, when the movement has not yet developed the forces for large-scale production, continues to flounder in amateurism, and is all but swamped with “the petty details of factory life”. Of luxury, when the movement *has fully mastered* the task of comprehensive exposure and comprehensive agitation, and it becomes necessary to publish numerous local newspapers in addition to the central organ. Let each decide for himself what the predominance of local newspapers implies in present-day Russia. I shall limit myself to a precise formulation of my own conclusion, to leave no grounds for misunderstanding. Hitherto, the majority of our local organisations have thought almost exclusively in terms of local newspapers, and have devoted almost all their activities to this work. This is abnormal; the very opposite should have been

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<sup>a</sup> That is why even examples of exceptionally good local newspapers fully confirm our point of view. For example, *Yuzhny Rabochy*<sup>41</sup> is an excellent newspaper, entirely free of instability of principle. But it has been unable to provide what it desired for the local movement, owing to the infrequency of its publication and to extensive police raids. Principled presentation of the fundamental questions of the movement and wide political agitation, which our party most urgently requires at the present time, has proved too big a job for the local newspaper. The material of particular value it has published, like the articles on the mine-owners' convention and on unemployment, was not strictly local material, *it was required for the whole of Russia*, not for the South alone. No such articles have appeared in any of our social-democratic newspapers.

the case. The majority of the local organisations should think principally of the publication of an all-Russia newspaper and devote their activities chiefly to it. Until this is done, we shall *not* be able to establish a *single* newspaper capable, to any degree, of serving the movement with *comprehensive* press agitation. When this is done, however, normal relations between the necessary central newspaper and the necessary local newspapers will be established automatically.



It would seem at first glance that the conclusion on the necessity for shifting the centre of gravity from local to all-Russia work does not apply to the sphere of the specifically economic struggle. In this struggle, the immediate enemies of the workers are the individual employers or groups of employers, who are not bound by any organisation having even the remotest resemblance to the purely military, strictly centralised organisation of the Russian government — our immediate enemy in the political struggle — which is led in all its minutest details by a single will.

But that is not the case. As we have repeatedly pointed out, the economic struggle is a trade struggle, and for that reason it requires that the workers be organised according to trades, not only according to place of employment. Organisation by trades becomes all the more urgently necessary, the more rapidly our employers organise in all sorts of companies and syndicates. Our fragmentation and our amateurism are an outright hindrance to this work of organisation which requires the existence of a single, all-Russia body of revolutionaries capable of giving leadership to the all-Russia trade unions. We have described above the type of organisation that is needed for this purpose; we shall now add but a few words on the question of our press in this connection.

Hardly anyone will doubt the necessity for every social-democratic newspaper to have a *special department* devoted to the trade union (economic) struggle. But the growth of the trade union movement compels us to think about the creation of a trade union press. It seems to us, however, that with rare exceptions, there can be no question of trade union newspapers in Russia at the present time; they would be a luxury, and many a time we lack even our daily bread. The form of trade union press that would suit the conditions of our illegal work and is already required at the present time is *trade union pamphlets*. In these pamphlets, *legal*\* and illegal material should be gathered and grouped systematically, on the working conditions in a given trade, on

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\* Legal material is particularly important in this connection, and we are particularly behind in our ability to gather and utilise it systematically. It would not be an exaggeration to say that one could somehow compile a trade union pamphlet on the basis solely of legal material, but it could

the differences in this respect in the various parts of Russia; on the main demands advanced by the workers in the given trade; on the inadequacies of legislation affecting that trade; on outstanding instances of economic struggle by the workers in the trade; on the beginnings, the present state, and the requirements of their trade union organisation, etc. Such pamphlets would, in the first place, relieve our social-democratic press of a mass of trade details that are of interest only to workers in the given trade. Secondly, they would record the results of our experience in the trade union struggle, they would preserve the gathered material, which now literally gets lost in a mass of leaflets and fragmentary correspondence; and they would summarise this material. Thirdly, they could serve as guides for agitators, because working conditions change relatively slowly and the main demands of the workers in a given trade are extremely stable (cf., for example, the demands advanced by the weavers in the Moscow district in 1885 and in the St. Petersburg district in 1896). A compilation of such demands and needs might serve for years as an excellent handbook for agitators on economic questions in backward localities or among the backward strata of the workers. Examples of successful strikes in a given region, information on higher living standards, on improved working conditions, in one locality, would encourage the workers in other localities to take up the fight again and again. Fourthly, having made a start in generalising the trade union struggle and in this way strengthening the link between the Russian trade union movement and socialism, the social-democrats would at the same time see to it that our trade union work occupied neither too small nor too large a place in our social-democratic work as a whole. A local organisation that is cut off from

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not be done on the basis of illegal material alone. In gathering illegal material from workers on questions like those dealt with in the publications of *Rabochaya Mysl*, we waste a great deal of the efforts of revolutionaries (whose place in this work could very easily be taken by legal workers), and yet we never obtain good material. The reason is that a worker who very often knows only a single department of a large factory and almost always the economic results, but not the general conditions and standards of his work, cannot acquire the knowledge which is possessed by the office staff of a factory, by inspectors, doctors, etc., and which is scattered in petty newspaper reports and in special industrial, medical, Zemstvo, and other publications.

I vividly recall my "first experiment", which I would never like to repeat. I spent many weeks "examining" a worker, who would often visit me, regarding every aspect of the conditions prevailing in the enormous factory at which he was employed. True, after great effort, I managed to obtain material for a description (of the one single factory!), but at the end of the interview the worker would wipe the sweat from his brow, and say to me smilingly: "I find it easier to work overtime than to answer your questions."

The more energetically we carry on our revolutionary struggle, the more the government will be compelled to legalise part of the "trade union" work, thereby relieving us of part of our burden.

organisations in other towns finds it very difficult, sometimes almost impossible, to maintain a correct sense of proportion (the example of *Rabochaya Mysl* shows what a monstrous exaggeration can be made in the direction of trade-unionism) But an all-Russia organisation of revolutionaries that stands undeviatingly on the basis of Marxism, that leads the entire political struggle and possesses a staff of professional agitators, will never find it difficult to determine the proper proportion. ■

## V. The ‘Plan’ For an All-Russia Political Newspaper

“The most serious blunder *Iskra* committed in this connection”, writes B. Krichevsky (*Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 10, p. 30), charging us with a tendency to “convert theory into a lifeless doctrine by isolating it from practice”, “was its ‘plan’ for a general party organisation” (viz., the article entitled “Where to Begin?”<sup>a</sup>). Martynov echoes this idea in declaring that “*Iskra*’s tendency to belittle the significance of the forward march of the drab everyday struggle in comparison with the propaganda of brilliant and completed ideas ... was crowned with the plan for the organisation of a party which it sets forth in the article entitled ‘Where to Begin?’ in issue No. 4 (*ibid.*, p. 61). Finally, L. Nadezhdin has of late joined in the chorus of indignation against this “plan” (the quotation marks were meant to express sarcasm). In his pamphlet, which we have just received, entitled *The Eve of the Revolution* (published by the “Revolutionary-Socialist Group” *Svoboda*, whose acquaintance we have made), he declares (p. 126): “To speak now of an organisation held together by an all-Russia newspaper means propagating armchair ideas and armchair work” and represents a manifestation of “bookishness”, etc.

That our terrorist turns out to be in agreement with the champions of the “forward march of the drab everyday struggle” is not surprising, since we have traced the roots of this intimacy between them in the chapters on politics and organisation. But we must draw attention here to the fact that Nadezhdin is the only one who has conscientiously tried to grasp the train of thought in an article he disliked and has made an attempt to reply to the point, whereas *Rabocheye Dyelo*, has said nothing that is material to the subject, but has tried merely to confuse the question by a series of unseemly, demagogic sallies. Unpleasant though the task may be, we must first spend some time in cleansing this Augean stable.

### A. Who was offended by the article ‘Where to Begin?’

Let us present a small selection of the expletives and exclamations that *Rabocheye Dyelo* hurled at us. “It is not a newspaper that can create a party organisation, but vice

versa ...” “A newspaper, standing *above* the party, *outside of its control*, and independent of it, thanks to its having its own staff of agents.” “By what miracle has *Iskra* forgotten about the actually existing social-democratic organisations of the party to which it belongs? ...” “Those who possess firm principles and a corresponding plan are the supreme regulators of the real struggle of the party and dictate to it their plan ...” “The plan drives our active and virile organisations into the kingdom of shadows and desires to call into being a fantastic network of agents ...” “Were *Iskra*’s plan carried into effect, every trace of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, which is taking shape, would be obliterated ...” “A propagandist organ becomes an uncontrolled autocratic lawmaker for the entire practical revolutionary struggle ...” “How should our party react to the suggestion that it be *completely* subordinated to an autonomous editorial board?”, etc., etc.

As the reader can see from the contents and the tone of these above quotations, *Rabocheye Dyelo* has taken offence. Offence, not for its own sake, but for the sake of the organisations and committees of our party which it alleges *Iskra* desires to drive into the kingdom of shadows and whose very traces it would obliterate. How terrible! But a curious thing should be noted. The article “Where to Begin?” appeared in May 1901. The articles in *Rabocheye Dyelo* appeared in September 1901. Now we are in mid-January 1902. During these five months (prior to and after September), *not a single* committee and *not a single* organisation of the party protested formally against this monster that seeks to drive them into the kingdom of shadows; and yet scores and hundreds of communications from all parts of Russia have appeared during this period in *Iskra*, as well as in numerous local and nonlocal publications. How could it happen that those who would be driven into the realm of shadows are not aware of it and have not taken offence, though a third party has?

The explanation is that the committees and other organisations are engaged in real work and are not playing at “democracy”. The committees read the article “Where to Begin?”, saw that it represented an attempt “to elaborate a definite plan for an organisation, so *that its formation may be undertaken from all aspects*”; and since they knew and saw very well that *not one* of these “sides” would dream of “setting about to build it” until it was convinced of its necessity, and of the correctness of the architectural plan, it has naturally never occurred to them to take offence at the boldness of the people who said in *Iskra*: “In view of the pressing importance of the question we, on our part, take the liberty of submitting to the comrades a skeleton plan to be developed in greater detail in a pamphlet now in preparation for the print.” With a conscientious approach to the work, was it possible to view things otherwise than that if the comrades *accepted* the plan submitted to them, they would carry it out, not because they are

“subordinate”, but because they would be convinced of its necessity for our common cause, and that if they *did not accept it*, then the “skeleton” (a pretentious word, is it not?) would remain merely a skeleton? Is it not demagogy to fight against the skeleton of a plan, not only by “picking it to pieces” and advising comrades to reject it, but by *inciting* people inexperienced in revolutionary matters against its authors *merely on the grounds* that they *dare* to “legislate” and come out as the “supreme regulators”, i.e., because they dare *to propose* an outline of a plan? Can our party develop and make progress if an attempt *to raise* local functionaries to broader views, tasks, plans, etc., is objected to, not only with the claim that these views are erroneous, but on the grounds that the very “desire” *to “raise”* us gives “offence”? Nadezhdin, too, “picked” our plan “to pieces”, but he did not sink to such demagogy as cannot be explained solely by naivete or by primitiveness of political views. From the outset, he emphatically rejected the charge that we intended to establish an “inspectorship over the party”. That is why Nadezhdin’s criticism of the plan can and should be answered on its merits, while *Rabocheye Dyelo* deserves only to be treated with contempt.

But contempt for a writer who sinks so low as to shout about “autocracy” and “subordination” does not relieve us of the duty of disentangling the confusion that such people create in the minds of their readers. Here we can clearly demonstrate to the world the nature of catchwords like “broad democracy”. We are accused of forgetting the committees, of desiring or attempting to drive them into the kingdom of shadows, etc. How can we reply to these charges when, out of considerations of secrecy, we *can give* the reader *almost no facts* regarding our real relationships with the committees? Persons hurling vehement accusations calculated to provoke the crowd prove to be ahead of us because of their brazenness and their disregard of the duty of a revolutionary to conceal carefully from the eyes of the world the relationships and contacts which he maintains, which he is establishing or trying to establish. Naturally, we refuse once and for all to compete with such people in the field of “democratism”. As to the reader who is not initiated in all party affairs, the only way in which we can discharge our duty to him is to acquaint him, not with what is and what is *im Werden* but with a *particle* of what has taken place and what may be told as a thing of the past.

The Bund hints that we are “impostors”<sup>\*</sup>; the Union Abroad accuses us of attempting to obliterate all traces of the party. Gentlemen, you will get complete satisfaction when we relate to the public *four facts* concerning the past.

First fact.\*\* The members of one of the Leagues of Struggle, who took a direct part

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\* *Iskra*, No. 8. The reply of the central committee of the General Jewish Union of Russia and Poland to our article on the national question.

\*\* We deliberately refrain from relating these facts<sup>42</sup> in the sequence of their occurrence.

in founding our party and in sending a delegate to the Inaugural Party Congress, reached agreement with a member of the *Iskra* group regarding the publication of a series of books for workers that were to serve the entire movement. The attempt to publish the series failed and the pamphlets written for it, *The Tasks of the Russian Social-Democrats* and *The New Factory Law*,\* by a circuitous course and through the medium of third parties, found their way abroad, where they were published.<sup>43</sup>

Second fact. Members of the central committee of the Bund approached a member of the *Iskra* group with the proposal to organise what the Bund then described as a “literary laboratory”. In making the proposal, they stated that unless this was done, the movement would greatly regress. The result of these negotiations was the appearance of the pamphlet *The Working-Class Cause in Russia*.\*\*

Third fact. The central committee of the Bund, via a provincial town, approached a member of the *Iskra* group with the proposal that he undertake the editing of the revived *Rabochaya Gazeta* and, of course, obtained his consent.<sup>45</sup> The offer was later modified: the comrade in question was invited to act as a contributor, in view of a new plan for the composition of the editorial board. Also this proposal, of course, obtained his consent. Articles were sent (which we managed to preserve): “Our Program” which was a direct protest against Bernsteinism, against the change in the line of the legal literature and of *Rabochaya Mysl*; “Our Immediate Task” (“to publish a party organ that shall appear regularly and have close contacts with all the local groups”, the drawbacks of the prevailing “amateurism”), “An Urgent Question” (an examination of the objection that it is necessary *first* to develop the activities of local groups before undertaking the publication of a common organ; an insistence on the paramount importance of a “revolutionary organisation” and on the necessity of “developing organisation, discipline, and the technique of secrecy to the highest degree of perfection”).\*\*\* The proposal to resume publication of *Rabochaya Gazeta* was not carried out, and the articles were not published.

Fourth fact. A member of the committee that was organising the second regular congress of our party communicated to a member of the *Iskra* group the program of the congress and proposed that group as editorial board of the revived *Rabochaya*

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\* See Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 2, pp. 323-351 and 267-315. — *Ed.*

\*\* The author requests me to state that, like his previous pamphlets, this one was sent to the Union Abroad on the assumption that its publications were edited by the Emancipation of Labour group (owing to certain circumstances, he could not then — February 1899 — know of the change in editorship). The pamphlet will be republished by the league<sup>44</sup> at an early date.

\*\*\* See this volume, pp. 34ff. — *Ed.*

*Gazeta*. This preliminary step, as it were, was later sanctioned by the committee to which this member belonged, and by the central committee of the Bund.<sup>46</sup> The *Iskra* group was notified of the place and time of the congress and (uncertain of being able, for certain reasons, to send a delegate) drew up a written report for the congress. In the report, the idea was suggested that the mere election of a central committee would not only fail to solve the question of unification at a time of such complete disorder as the present, but would even compromise the grand idea of establishing a party, in the event of an early, swift, and thorough police round-up, which was more than likely in view of the prevailing lack of secrecy; that therefore, a beginning should be made by inviting all committees and all other organisations to support the revived common organ, which would establish *real* contacts between all the committees and *really* train a group of leaders for the entire movement; and that the committees and the party would very easily be able to transform such a group into a central committee as soon as the group had grown and become strong. In consequence of a number of police raids and arrests, however, the congress could not take place. For security reasons the report was destroyed, having been read only by a few comrades, including the representatives of one committee.

Let the reader now judge for himself the character of the methods employed by the Bund in hinting that we were impostors, or by *Rabocheye Dyelo*, which accuses us of trying to relegate the committees to the kingdom of shadows and to “substitute” for the organisation of a party an organisation disseminating the ideas advocated by a single newspaper. It was to the committees, *on their repeated invitation*, that we reported on the necessity for adopting a definite plan of concerted activities. It was precisely for the party organisation that we elaborated this plan, in articles sent to *Rabochaya Gazeta*, and in the report to the party congress, again on the invitation of those who held such an influential position in the party that they took the initiative in its (actual) restoration. Only after the *twice* repeated attempts of the party organisation, *in conjunction with ourselves, officially* to revive the central organ of the party had failed, did we consider it our bounden duty to publish an *unofficial* organ, in order that with the *third* attempt the comrades might have before them the results of *experience* and not merely conjectural proposals. Now certain results of this experience are present for all to see, and all comrades may now judge whether we properly understood our duties and what should be thought of people that strive to mislead those unacquainted with the immediate past, simply because they are piqued at our having pointed out to some their inconsistency on the “national” question, and to others the inadmissibility of their vacillation in matters of principle.

## B. Can a newspaper be a collective organiser?

The quintessence of the article “Where to Begin?” consists in the fact that it discusses *precisely* this question and gives an affirmative reply to it. As far as we know, the only attempt to examine this question on its merits and to prove that it must be answered in the negative was made by L. Nadezhdin, whose argument we reproduce in full:

It pleased us greatly to see *Iskra* (No. 4) present the question of the need for an all-Russia newspaper; but we cannot agree that this presentation bears relevance to the title “Where to Begin?” Undoubtedly this is an extremely important matter, but neither a newspaper, nor a series of popular leaflets, nor a mountain of manifestoes, can serve as the basis for a militant organisation in revolutionary times. We must set to work to build strong political organisations in the localities. We lack such organisations; we have been carrying on our work mainly among enlightened workers, while the masses have been engaged almost exclusively in the economic struggle. *If strong political organisations are not trained locally, what significance will even an excellently organised all-Russia newspaper have?* It will be a burning bush, burning without being consumed, but firing no one! *Iskra* thinks that around it and in the activities in its behalf people will gather and organise. *But they will find it far easier to gather and organise around activities that are more concrete.* This something more concrete must and should be the extensive organisation of local newspapers, the immediate preparation of the workers' forces for demonstrations, the constant activity of local organisations among the unemployed (indefatigable distribution of pamphlets and leaflets, convening of meetings, appeals to actions of protest against the government, etc.). We must begin live political work in the localities, and when the time comes to unite on this real basis, it will not be an artificial, paper unity; not by means of newspapers can such a unification of local work into an all-Russia cause be achieved! [*The Eve of the Revolution*, p. 54.]

We have emphasised the passages in this eloquent tirade that most clearly show the author's incorrect judgement of our plan, as well as the incorrectness of his point of view in general, which is here contraposed to that of *Iskra*. Unless we train strong political organisations in the localities, even an excellently organised all-Russia newspaper will be of no avail. This is incontrovertible. But the whole point is that *there is no other way of training* strong political organisations except through the medium of an all-Russia newspaper. The author missed the most important statement *Iskra* made *before it proceeded* to set forth its “plan”: that it was necessary “to call for the formation of a revolutionary organisation, capable of uniting all forces and guiding the movement in actual practice and *not in name alone*, that is, *an organisation ready at any time to support every protest and every outbreak* and use it to build up and consolidate the fighting forces suitable for the

decisive struggle". But now after the February and March events, everyone will agree with this in principle, continues *Iskra*. Yet what we need is not a solution of the question in principle, but its *practical solution*; we must immediately advance a definite constructive plan through which all may immediately set to work to build *from every side*. Now we are again being dragged away from the practical solution towards something which in principle is correct, indisputable, and great, but which is entirely inadequate and incomprehensible to the broad masses of workers, namely, "to rear strong political organisations"! This is not the point at issue, most worthy author. The point is how to go about the rearing and how to accomplish it.

It is not true to say that "we have been carrying on our work mainly among enlightened workers, while the masses have been engaged almost exclusively in the economic struggle". Presented in such a form, the thesis reduces itself to *Svoboda's* usual but fundamentally false contraposition of the enlightened workers to the "masses". In recent years, even the enlightened workers have been "engaged almost exclusively in the economic struggle". That is the first point. On the other hand, the masses will never learn to conduct the political struggle until we help *to train* leaders for this struggle, both from among the enlightened workers and from among the intellectuals. Such leaders can acquire training *solely* by systematically evaluating *all* the everyday aspects of our political life, *all attempts* at protest and struggle on the part of the various classes and on various grounds. Therefore, to talk of "rearing political organisations" and at the same time *to contrast* the "paper work" of a political newspaper to "live political work in the localities" is plainly ridiculous. *Iskra* has adapted its "plan" for a newspaper to the "plan" for creating a "militant preparedness" to support the unemployed movement, peasant revolts, discontent among the Zemstvo people, "popular indignation against some tsarist bashi-bazouk on the rampage", etc. Anyone who is at all acquainted with the movement knows fully well that the vast majority of local organisations have *never even dreamed* of these things; that many of the prospects of "live political work" here indicated *have never* been realised by a single organisation; that the attempt, for example, to call attention to the growth of discontent and protest among the Zemstvo intelligentsia rouses feelings of consternation and perplexity in Nadezhdin ("Good Lord, is this newspaper intended for Zemstvo people?" (The *Eve*, p. 129), among the Economists (Letter to *Iskra*, No. 12), and among many practical workers. Under these circumstances, it is possible to "begin" *only* by inducing people *to think* about all these things, to summarise and generalise all the diverse signs of ferment and active struggle. In our time, when social-democratic tasks are being degraded, *the only way* "live political work" can be *begun* is with live political agitation, which is impossible unless we have an all-Russia newspaper, frequently issued and

regularly distributed.

Those who regard the *Iskra* "plan" as a manifestation of "bookishness" have totally failed to understand its substance and take for the goal that which is suggested as the most suitable means for the present time. These people have not taken the trouble to study the two comparisons that were drawn to present a clear illustration of the plan. *Iskra* wrote: The publication of an all-Russia political newspaper must be *the main line* by which we may unswervingly develop, deepen, and expand the organisation (viz., the revolutionary organisation that is ever ready to support every protest and every outbreak). Pray tell me, when bricklayers lay bricks in various parts of an enormous, unprecedentedly large structure, is it "paper" work to use a line to help them find the correct place for the bricklaying; to indicate to them the ultimate goal of the common work; to enable them to use, not only every brick, but even every piece of brick which, cemented to the bricks laid before and after it, forms a finished, continuous line? And are we not now passing through precisely such a period in our party life when we have bricks and bricklayers, but lack the guide line for all to see and follow? Let them shout that in stretching out the line, we want to command. Had we desired to command, gentlemen, we would have written on the title page, not "*Iskra*, No. 1", but "*Rabochaya Gazeta*, No. 3", as we were invited to do by certain comrades, and *as we would have had a perfect right to do* after the events described above. But we did not do that. We wished to have our hands free to wage an irreconcilable struggle against all pseudo-social-democrats; we wanted our line, if properly laid, to be respected because it was correct, and not because it had been laid by an official organ.

"The question of uniting local activity in central bodies runs in a vicious circle," Nadezhdin lectures us; "unification requires homogeneity of the elements, and the homogeneity can be created only by something that unites; but the unifying element may be the product of strong local organisations which at the present time are by no means distinguished for their homogeneity". This truth is as revered and as irrefutable as that we must train strong political organisations. And it is equally barren. *Every* question "runs in a vicious circle" because political life as a whole is an endless chain consisting of an infinite number of links. The whole art of politics lies in finding and taking as firm a grip as we can of the link that is least likely to be struck from our hands, the one that is most important at the given moment, the one that most of all guarantees its possessor the possession of the whole chain.\* If we had a crew of experienced

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\* Comrade Krichevsky and Comrade Martynov! I call your attention to this outrageous manifestation of "autocracy", "uncontrolled authority", "supreme regulating", etc. Just think of it: a desire to *possess* the whole chain!! Send in a complaint at once. Here you have a ready-made topic for two leading articles for No. 12 of *Rabocheye Dyelo!*

bricklayers who had learned to work so well together that they could lay their bricks exactly as required without a guide line (which, speaking abstractly, is by no means impossible), then perhaps we might take hold of some other link. But it is unfortunate that as yet we have no experienced bricklayers trained for teamwork, that bricks are often laid where they are not needed at all, that they are not laid according to the general line, but are so scattered that the enemy can shatter the structure as if it were made of sand and not of bricks.

Another comparison: "A newspaper is not only a collective propagandist and a collective agitator, it is also a collective organiser. In this respect *it may be compared to the scaffolding* erected round a building under construction; it marks the contours of the structure and facilitates communication between the builders, permitting them to distribute the work and to view the common results achieved by their organised labour."\* Does this sound anything like the attempt of an armchair author to exaggerate his role? The scaffolding is not required at all for the dwelling; it is made of cheaper material, is put up only temporarily, and is scrapped for firewood as soon as the shell of the structure is completed. As for the building of revolutionary organisations, experience shows that sometimes they may be built without scaffolding, as the '70s showed. But at the present time we cannot even imagine the possibility of erecting the building we require without scaffolding.

Nadezhdin disagrees with this, saying: "*Iskra* thinks that around it and in the activities in its behalf people will gather and organise. *But they will find it far easier* to gather and organise around *activities that are more concrete!*" Indeed, "far easier around activities that are more concrete". A Russian proverb holds: "Don't spit into a well, you may want to drink from it." But there are people who do not object to drinking from a well that has been spat into. What despicable things our magnificent, legal "Critics of Marxism" and illegal admirers of *Rabochaya Mysl* have said in the name of this something more concrete! How restricted our movement is by our own narrowness, lack of initiative, and hesitation, which are justified with the traditional argument about finding it "far easier to gather around something more concrete"! And Nadezhdin — who regards himself as possessing a particularly keen sense of the "realities of life", who so severely condemns "armchair" authors and (with pretensions to wit) accuses *Iskra* of a weakness for seeing Economism everywhere, and who sees himself standing far above the division between the orthodox and the Critics — fails to see that with his

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\* Martynov, in quoting the first sentence of this passage in *Rabocheye Dyelo* (No. 10, p. 62), omitted the second, as if desiring to emphasise either his unwillingness to discuss the essentials of the question or his inability to understand them.

arguments he contributes to the narrowness that arouses his indignation and that he is drinking from the most spat-in well! The sincerest indignation against narrowness, the most passionate desire to raise its worshippers from their knees, will not suffice if the indignant one is swept along without sail or rudder and, as “spontaneously” as the revolutionaries of the '70s, clutches at such things as “excitative terror”, “agrarian terror”, “sounding the tocsin” etc. Let us take a glance at these “more concrete” activities around which he thinks it will be “far easier” to gather and organise: (1) local newspapers; (2) preparations for demonstrations; (3) work among the unemployed. It is immediately apparent that all these things have been seized upon at random as a pretext for saying something; for, however we may regard them, it would be absurd to see in them anything especially suitable for “gathering and organising”. The self-same Nadezhdin says a few pages further: “It is time we simply stated the fact that activity of a very pitiable kind is being carried on in the localities, the committees are not doing a tenth of what they could do ... the coordinating centres we have at present are the purest fiction, representing a sort of revolutionary bureaucracy, whose members mutually grant generalships to one another; and so it will continue until strong local organisations grow up.” These remarks, though exaggerating the position somewhat, no doubt contain many a bitter truth; but can it be said that Nadezhdin does not perceive the connection between the pitiable activity in the localities and the narrow mental outlook of the functionaries, the narrow scope of their activities, inevitable in the circumstances of the lack of training of party workers confined to local organisations? Has he, like the author of the article on organisation, published in *Svoboda*, forgotten how the transition to a broad local press (from 1898) was accompanied by a strong intensification of Economism and “primitiveness”? Even if a “broad local press” could be established at all satisfactorily (and we have shown this to be impossible, save in very exceptional cases) — even then the local organs could not “gather and organise” *all* the revolutionary forces for a *general* attack upon the autocracy and for leadership of the *united* struggle. Let us not forget that we are here discussing *only* the “rallying”, organising significance of the newspaper, and we could put to Nadezhdin, who defends fragmentation, the question he himself has ironically put: “Have we been left a legacy of 200,000 revolutionary organisers?” Furthermore, “preparations for demonstrations” cannot be *contraposed* to *Iskra's* plan, for the very reason that this plan includes the organisation of the broadest possible demonstrations *as one of its aims*; the point under discussion is the selection of the practical *means*. On this point also Nadezhdin is confused, for he has lost sight of the fact that only forces that are “gathered and organised” can “prepare for” demonstrations (which hitherto, in the overwhelming majority of cases, have taken place spontaneously) and that we *lack* precisely *the ability* to rally and organise.

“Work among the unemployed.” Again the same confusion; for this too represents one of the field operations of the mobilised forces and not a plan for mobilising the forces. The extent to which Nadezhdin here too underestimates the harm caused by our fragmentation, by our lack of “200,000 organisers”, can be seen from the fact that: many people (including Nadezhdin) have reproached *Iskra* for the paucity of the news it gives on unemployment and for the casual nature of the correspondence it publishes about the most common affairs of rural life. The reproach is justified; but *Iskra* is “guilty without sin”. We strive “to stretch a line” through the countryside too, where there are hardly any bricklayers anywhere, and we are *obliged* to encourage *everyone* who informs us even as regards the most common facts, in the hope that this will increase the number of our contributors in the given field and will ultimately *train us all* to select facts that are really the most outstanding. But the material on which we can train is so scanty that, unless we generalise it for the whole of Russia, we shall have very little to train on at all. No doubt, one with at least as much ability as an agitator and as much knowledge of the life of the vagrant as Nadezhdin manifests could render priceless service to the movement by carrying on agitation among the unemployed; but such a person would be simply hiding his light under a bushel if he failed to inform *all* comrades in Russia as regards every step he took in his work, so that others, who, in the mass, still lack the ability to undertake new kinds of work, might learn from his example.

All without exception now talk of the importance of unity, of the necessity for “gathering and organising”; but in the majority of cases what is lacking is a definite idea of where to begin and how to bring about this unity. Probably all will agree that if we “unite”, say, the district circles in a given town, it will be necessary to have for this purpose *common institutions*, i.e., not merely the common title of “league”, but genuinely *common* work, exchange of material, experience, and forces, distribution of functions, not only by districts, but through specialisation on a town-wide scale. All will agree that a big secret apparatus will not pay its way (to use a commercial expression) “with the resources” (in both money and manpower, of course) of a single district, and that this narrow field will not provide sufficient scope for a specialist to develop his talents. But the same thing applies to the coordination of activities of a number of towns, since even a specific locality *will be* and, in the history of our social-democratic movement, has proved to be, far too narrow a field; we have demonstrated this above in detail with regard to political agitation and organisational work. What we require foremost and imperatively is to broaden the field, establish *real* contacts between the towns on the basis of *regular, common* work; for fragmentation weighs down on the people and they are “stuck in a hole” (to use the expression employed by a

correspondent to *Iskra*), not knowing what is happening in the world, from whom to learn, or how to acquire experience and satisfy their desire to engage in broad activities. I continue to insist that we can *start* establishing real contacts only with the aid of a common newspaper, as the only regular, all-Russia enterprise, one which will summarise the results of the most diverse forms of activity and thereby *stimulate* people to march forward untiringly along *all* the innumerable paths leading to revolution, in the same way as all roads lead to Rome. If we do not want unity in name only, we must arrange for all local study circles *immediately to assign*, say, a fourth of their forces to *active* work for the *common* cause, and the newspaper will immediately convey to them\* the general design, scope, and character of the cause; it will give them a precise indication of the most keenly felt shortcomings in the all-Russia activity, where agitation is lacking and contacts are weak, and it will point out which little wheels in the vast general mechanism a given study circle might repair or replace with better ones. A study circle that has not yet begun to work, but which is only just seeking activity, could then start, not like a craftsman in an isolated little workshop unaware of the earlier development in “industry” or of the general level of production methods prevailing in industry, but as a participant in an extensive enterprise that *reflects* the whole general revolutionary attack on the autocracy. The more perfect the finish of each little wheel and the larger the number of detail workers engaged in the common cause, the closer will our network become and the less will be the disorder in the ranks consequent on inevitable police raids.

The mere function of distributing a newspaper would help to establish *actual contacts* (if it is a newspaper worthy of the name, i.e., if it is issued regularly, not once a month like a magazine, but at least four times a month). At the present time, communication between towns on revolutionary business is an extreme rarity, and, at all events, is the exception rather than the rule. If we had a newspaper, however, such communication would become the rule and would secure, not only the distribution of the newspaper, of course, but (what is more important) an exchange of experience, of material, of forces, and of resources. Organisational work would immediately acquire much greater scope, and the success of one locality would serve as a standing encouragement to further perfection; it would arouse the desire to utilise the experience gained by comrades working in other parts of the country. Local work would become

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\* *A reservation*: that is, if a given study circle sympathises with the policy of the newspaper and considers it useful to become a collaborator, meaning by that, not only for literary collaboration, but for revolutionary collaboration generally. *Note for Rabocheye Dyelo*: Among revolutionaries who attach value to the cause and not to playing at democracy, who do not separate “sympathy” from the most active and lively participation, this reservation is taken for granted.

far richer and more varied than it is at present. Political and economic exposures gathered from all over Russia would provide mental food for workers of all trades and *all stages of development*; they would provide material and occasion for talks and readings on the most diverse subjects, which would, in addition, be suggested by hints in the legal press, by talk among the people, and by “shamefaced” government statements. Every outbreak, every demonstration, would be weighed and discussed in its every aspect in all parts of Russia and would thus stimulate a desire to keep up with, and even surpass, the others (we socialists do not by any means flatly reject all emulation or all “competition”!) and consciously prepare that which at first, as it were, sprang up spontaneously, a desire to take advantage of the favourable conditions in a given district or at a given moment for modifying the plan of attack, etc. At the same time, this revival of local work would obviate that desperate, “convulsive” exertion of *all* efforts and risking of *all* forces which every single demonstration or the publication of every single issue of a local newspaper now frequently entails. On the one hand, the police would find it much more difficult to get at the “roots”, if they did not know in what district to dig down for them. On the other hand, regular common work would train our people to adjust the force of a *given* attack to the strength of the given contingent of the common army (at the present time hardly anyone ever thinks of doing that, because in nine cases out of ten these attacks occur spontaneously); such regular common work would facilitate the “transportation” from one place to another, not only of literature, but also of revolutionary forces.

In a great many cases these forces are now being bled white on restricted local work, but under the circumstances we are discussing it would be possible to transfer a capable agitator or organiser from one end of the country to the other, and the occasion for doing this would constantly arise. Beginning with short journeys on party business at the party’s expense, the comrades would become accustomed to being maintained by the party, to becoming professional revolutionaries, and to training themselves as real political leaders.

And if indeed we succeeded in reaching the point when all, or at least a considerable majority, of the local committees local groups, and study circles took up active work for the common cause, we could, in the not distant future, establish a weekly newspaper for regular distribution in tens of thousands of copies throughout Russia. This newspaper would become part of an enormous pair of smith’s bellows that would fan every spark of the class struggle and of popular indignation into a general conflagration. Around what is in itself still a very innocuous and very small, but regular and *common*, effort, in the full sense of the word, a regular army of tried fighters would systematically gather and receive their training. On the ladders and scaffolding of this general

organisational structure there would soon develop and come to the fore social-democratic Zhelyabovs from among our revolutionaries and Russian Bebels from among our workers, who would take their place at the head of the mobilised army and rouse the whole people to settle accounts with the shame and the curse of Russia.

That is what we should dream of!



“We should dream!” I wrote these words and became alarmed. I imagined myself sitting at a “unity conference” and opposite me were the *Rabocheye Dyelo* editors and contributors. Comrade Martynov rises and, turning to me, says sternly: “Permit me to ask you, has an autonomous editorial board the right to dream without first soliciting the opinion of the party committees?” He is followed by Comrade Krichevsky; who (philosophically deepening Comrade Martynov, who long ago rendered Comrade Plekhanov more profound) continues even more sternly: “I go further. I ask, has a Marxist any right at all to dream, knowing that according to Marx, mankind always sets itself the tasks it can solve and that tactics is a process of the growth of party tasks which grow together with the party?”

The very thought of these stern questions sends a cold shiver down my spine and makes me wish for nothing but a place to hide in. I shall try to hide behind the back of Pisarev.

There are rifts and rifts [wrote Pisarev of the rift between dreams and reality]. My dream may run ahead of the natural march of events or may fly off at a tangent in a direction in which no natural march of events will ever proceed. In the first case my dream will not cause any harm; it may even support and augment the energy of the working men ... There is nothing in such dreams that would distort or paralyse labour-power. On the contrary, if man were completely deprived of the ability to dream in this way, if he could not from time to time run ahead and mentally conceive, in an entire and completed picture, the product to which his hands are only just beginning to lend shape, then I cannot at all imagine what stimulus there would be to induce man to undertake and complete extensive and strenuous work in the sphere of art, science, and practical endeavour ... The rift between dreams and reality causes no harm if only the person dreaming believes seriously in his dream, if he attentively observes life, compares his observations with his castles in the air, and if, generally speaking, he works conscientiously for the achievement of his fantasies. If there is some connection between dreams and life then all is well.<sup>47</sup>

Of this kind of dreaming there is unfortunately too little in our movement. And the people most responsible for this are those who boast of their sober views, their “closeness”

to the “concrete”, the representatives of legal criticism and of illegal “tail-ism”.

### C. What type of organisation do we require?

From what has been said the reader will see that our “tactics-as-plan” consists in rejecting an immediate *call* for assault; in demanding “to lay effective siege to the enemy fortress”; or, in other words, in demanding that all efforts be directed towards gathering, organising, and *mobilising* a permanent army. When we ridiculed *Rabocheye Dyelo* for its leap from Economism to shouting for an assault (for which it clamoured in April 1901, in “*Listok*” *Rabochego Dyela*, 157 No. 6) it of course came down on us with accusations of being “doctrinaire”, of failing to understand our revolutionary duty, of calling for caution, etc. Of course, we were not in the least surprised to hear these accusations from those who totally lack principles and who evade all arguments by references to a profound “tactics-as-process”, any more than we were surprised by the fact that these charges were repeated by Nadezhdin, who in general has a supreme contempt for durable programs and the fundamentals of tactics.

It is said that history does not repeat itself. But Nadezhdin exerts every effort to cause it to repeat itself and he zealously imitates Tkachov in strongly condemning “revolutionary culturism”, in shouting about “sounding the tocsin” and about a special “eve-of-the-revolution point of view”, etc., Apparently, he has forgotten the well-known maxim that while an original historical event represents a tragedy, its replica is merely a farce.<sup>48</sup> The attempt to seize power, which was prepared by the preaching of Tkachov and carried out by means of the “terrifying” terror that did really terrify, had grandeur, but the “excitative” terror of a Tkachov the Little is simply ludicrous, particularly so when it is supplemented with the idea of an organisation of average people.

“If *Iskra* would only emerge from its sphere of bookishness”, wrote Nadezhdin, “it would realise that these (instances like the worker’s letter to *Iskra*, No. 7, etc.) are symptoms of the fact that soon, very soon, the ‘assault’ will begin, and to speak now [sic!] of an organisation linked with an all-Russia newspaper means to propagate armchair ideas and armchair activity.” What an unimaginable muddle — on the one hand, excitative terror and an “organisation of average people”, along with the opinion that it is far “easier” to gather around something “more concrete”, like a local newspaper, and, on the other, the view that to talk “now” about an all-Russia organisation means to propagate armchair thoughts, or, bluntly put, “now” it is already too late! But what of the “extensive organisation of local newspapers” — is it not too late for that, my dear L. Nadezhdin? And compare with this *Iskra*’s point of view and tactical line: excitative terror is nonsense; to talk of an organisation of average people and of the

*extensive* publication of local newspapers means to fling the door wide open to Economism. We must speak of a single all-Russia organisation of revolutionaries, and it will never be too late to talk of that until the real, not a paper, assault begins.

Yes, as far as organisation is concerned the situation is anything but brilliant [continues Nadezhdin] Yes, *Iskra* is entirely right in saying that the mass of our fighting forces consists of volunteers and insurgents ... You do well to give such a sober picture of the state of our forces. But why, at the same time, do you forget that *the masses are not ours at all*, and consequently, will *not ask us* when to begin military operations; they will simply go and “rebel” ... When the crowd itself breaks out with its elemental destructive force it *may* overwhelm and sweep aside the ‘regular troops’ among whom we prepared all the time to introduce extremely systematic organisation, but never *managed* to do so. [Our italics.]

Astounding logic! *For the very reason* that the “masses are not ours” it is stupid and unseemly to shout about an immediate “assault”, for assault means attack by regular troops and not a spontaneous mass upsurge. For the very reason that the masses *may* overwhelm and sweep aside the regular troops we must without fail “manage to keep up” with the spontaneous upsurge by our work of “introducing extremely systematic organisation” in the regular troops, for the more we “manage” to introduce such organisation the more probably will the regular troops not be overwhelmed by the masses, but will take their place at their head. Nadezhdin is confused because he imagines that troops in the course of systematic organisation are engaged in something that isolates them from the masses, when in actuality they are engaged exclusively in all-sided and all-embracing political agitation, i.e., precisely in work that *brings closer and merges into a single whole* the elemental destructive force of the masses and the conscious destructive force of the organisation of revolutionaries. You, gentlemen, wish to lay the blame where it does not belong. For it is precisely the *Svoboda* group that, by including terror *in its program*, calls for an organisation of terrorists, and such an organisation would indeed prevent our troops from establishing closer contacts with the masses, which, unfortunately, are still not ours, and which, unfortunately, do not yet ask us, or rarely ask us, when and how to launch their military operations.

“We shall miss the revolution itself,” continues Nadezhdin in his attempt to scare *Iskra*, “in the same way as we missed the recent events, which came upon us like a bolt from the blue.” This sentence, taken in connection with what has been quoted above, clearly demonstrates the absurdity of the “eve-of-the-revolution point of view” invented by *Svoboda*.\* Plainly put, this special “point of view” boils down to this that it is too late

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\* *The Eve of the Revolution*, p. 62.

“now” to discuss and prepare. If that is the case, most worthy opponent of “bookishness”, what was the use of writing a pamphlet of 132 pages on “questions of theory\* and tactics”? Don’t you think it would have been more becoming for the “eve-of-the-revolution point of view” to have issued 132,000 leaflets containing the summary call, “Bang them — knock ’em down!”?

Those who make nationwide political agitation the cornerstone of their program, *their tactics, and their organisational work*, as *Iskra* does, stand the least risk of missing the revolution. The people who are now engaged throughout Russia in weaving the network of connections that spread from the all-Russia newspaper not only did not miss the spring events, but, on the contrary, gave us an opportunity to foretell them. Nor did they miss the demonstrations that were described in *Iskra*, Nos. 13 and 14; on the contrary, they took part in them, clearly realising that it was their duty to come to the aid of the spontaneously rising masses and, at the same time, through the medium of the newspaper, help all the comrades in Russia to inform themselves of the demonstrations and to make use of their gathered experience. And if they live they *will* not miss the revolution, which, first and foremost, will demand of us experience in agitation, ability to support (in a social-democratic manner) every protest, as well as direct the spontaneous movement, while safeguarding it from the mistakes of friends and the traps of enemies.

We have thus come to the last reason that compels us so strongly to insist on the plan of an organisation centred round an all-Russia newspaper, through the common work for the common newspaper. Only such organisation will ensure the *flexibility* required of a militant social-democratic organisation, viz., the ability to adapt itself immediately to the most diverse and rapidly changing conditions of struggle, the ability, “on the one hand, to avoid an open battle against an overwhelming enemy, when the enemy has concentrated all his forces at one spot and yet, on the other, to

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\* In his *Review of Questions of Theory*, Nadezhdin, by the way, made almost no contribution whatever to the discussion of questions of theory, apart, perhaps, from the following passage, a most peculiar one from the “eve-of-the-revolution point of view”: “Bernsteinism, on the whole, is losing its acuteness for us at the present moment, as is the question whether Mr. Adamovich will prove that Mr. Struve has already earned a lacing, or, on the contrary, whether Mr. Struve will refute Mr. Adamovich and will refuse to resign — it really makes no difference, because the hour of revolution has struck (p. 110). One can hardly imagine a more glaring illustration of Nadezhdin’s infinite disregard for theory. We have proclaimed “the eve of the revolution”, therefore “it really makes no difference” whether or not the orthodox will succeed in finally driving the Critics from their positions! Our wiseacre fails to see that it is precisely during the revolution that we shall stand in need of the results of our theoretical battles with the Critics in order to be able resolutely to combat their *practical* positions!

take advantage of his unwieldiness and to attack him when and where he least expects it".\* It would be a grievous error indeed to build the party organisation in anticipation only of outbreaks and street fighting, or only upon the "forward march of the drab everyday struggle". We must *always* conduct our everyday work and always be prepared for every situation, because very frequently it is almost impossible to foresee when a period of outbreak will give way to a period of calm. In the instances, however, when it is possible to do so, we could not turn this foresight to account for the purpose of reconstructing our organisation; for in an autocratic country these changes take place with astonishing rapidity, being sometimes connected with a single night raid by the tsarist janissaries.<sup>49</sup> And the revolution itself must not by any means be regarded as a single act (as the Nadezhdins apparently imagine), but as a series of more or less powerful outbreaks rapidly alternating with periods of more or less complete calm. For that reason, the principal content of the activity of our party organisation, the focus of this activity, should be work that is both possible and essential in the period of a most powerful outbreak as well as in the period of complete calm, namely, work of political agitation, connected throughout Russia, illuminating all aspects of life, and conducted among the broadest possible strata of the masses. But this work *is unthinkable* in present-day Russia without an all-Russia newspaper, issued very frequently. The organisation, which will form round this newspaper, the organisation of its *collaborators* (in the broad sense of the word, i.e., all those working for it), will be ready for *everything*, from upholding the honour, the prestige, and the continuity of the party in periods of acute revolutionary "depression" to preparing for, appointing the time for, and carrying out the *nationwide armed uprising*.

Indeed, picture to yourselves a very ordinary occurrence in Russia — the total roundup of our comrades in one or several localities. In the absence of a *single*, common, regular activity that combines all the local organisations, such roundups frequently result in the interruption of the work for many months. If, however, all the local

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\* *Iskra*, No. 4, "Where To Begin". "Revolutionary culturists, who do not accept the eve-of-the-revolution point of view, are not in the least perturbed by the prospect of working for a long period of time", writes Nadezhdin (p. 62). This brings us to observe: Unless we are able to devise political tactics and an organisational plan for *work over a very long period*, while ensuring, in *the very process of this work*, our party's readiness to be at its post and fulfil its duty in every contingency whenever the march of events is accelerated — unless we succeed in doing this, we shall prove to be but miserable political adventurers. Only Nadezhdin, who began but yesterday to describe himself as a social-democrat, can forget that the aim of social-democracy is to transform radically the conditions of life of the whole of mankind and that for this reason it is not permissible for a social-democrat to be "perturbed" by the question of the duration of the work.

organisations had one common activity, then, even in the event of a very serious roundup, two or three energetic persons could in the course of a few weeks establish contact between the common centre and new youth circles, which, as we know, spring up very quickly even now. And when the common activity, hampered by the arrests, is apparent to all, new circles will be able to come into being and make connections with the centre even more rapidly.

On the other hand, picture to yourselves a popular uprising. Probably everyone will now agree that we must think of this and prepare for it. But how? Surely the central committee cannot appoint agents to all localities for the purpose of preparing the uprising. Even if we had a central committee, it could achieve absolutely nothing by such appointments under present-day Russian conditions. But a network of agents\* that would form in the course of establishing and distributing the common newspaper would not have to “sit about and wait” for the call for an uprising, but could carry on the regular activity that would guarantee the highest probability of success in the event of an uprising. Such activity would strengthen our contacts with the broadest strata of the working masses and with all social strata that are discontented with the autocracy, which is of such importance for an uprising. Precisely such activity would serve to cultivate the ability to estimate correctly the general political situation and, consequently, the ability to select the proper moment for an uprising. Precisely such activity would train *all* local organisations to respond simultaneously to the same political questions, incidents, and events that agitate the whole of Russia and to react to such “incidents” in the most vigorous, uniform, and expedient manner possible; for an uprising is in essence the most vigorous, most uniform, and most expedient “answer” of the entire people to the government. Lastly, it is precisely such activity that would train all revolutionary organisations throughout Russia to maintain the most continuous, and at the same time the most secret, contacts with one another, thus creating *real* party unity; for without such contacts it will be impossible collectively to discuss the plan for the uprising and to take the necessary preparatory measures on the eve, measures that must be kept in the strictest secrecy.

In a word, the “plan for an all-Russia political newspaper”, far from representing the fruits of the labour of armchair workers, infected with dogmatism and bookishness (as it seemed to those who gave but little thought to it), is the most practical plan for immediate and all-round preparation of the uprising, with, at the same time, no loss of sight for a moment of the pressing day-to-day work. ■

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\* Alas, alas! Again I have let slip that awful word “agents”, which jars so much on the democratic ears of the Martynovs! I wonder why this word did not offend the heroes of the '70s and yet

## Conclusion

The history of Russian social-democracy can be distinctly divided into three periods:

The first period embraces about 10 years, approximately from 1884 to 1894. This was the period of the rise and consolidation of the theory and program of social-democracy. The adherents of the new trend in Russia were very few in number. social-democracy existed without a working-class movement, and as a political party it was at the embryonic stage of development.

The second period embraces three or four years — 1894-98. In this period social-democracy appeared on the scene as a social movement, as the upsurge of the masses of the people, as a political party. This is the period of its childhood and adolescence. The intelligentsia was fired with a vast and general zeal for struggle against Narodism and for going among the workers; the workers displayed a general enthusiasm for strike action. The movement made enormous strides. The majority of the leaders were young people who had not reached “the age of 35” which to Mr. N. Mikhailovsky appeared to be a sort of natural borderline. Owing to their youth, they proved to be untrained for practical work and they left the scene with astonishing rapidity. But in the majority of cases the scope of their activity was very wide. Many of them had begun their revolutionary thinking as adherents of Narodnaya Volya. Nearly all had in their early youth enthusiastically worshipped the terrorist heroes. It required a struggle to abandon the captivating impressions of those heroic traditions, and the struggle was accompanied by the breaking off of personal relations with people who were determined to remain loyal to the Narodnaya Volya and for whom the young social-democrats had profound respect. The struggle compelled the youthful leaders to

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offends the amateurs of the '90s? I like the word, because it clearly and trenchantly indicates *the common cause* to which all the agents bend their thoughts and actions, and if I had to replace this word by another, the only word I might select would be the word “collaborator”, if it did not suggest a certain bookishness and vagueness. The thing we need is a military organisation of agents. However, the numerous Martynovs (particularly abroad), whose favourite pastime is “mutual grants of generalships to one another”, may instead of saying “passport agent” prefer to say, “Chief of the Special Department for Supplying Revolutionaries with Passports”, etc.

educate themselves, to read illegal literature of every trend, and to study closely the questions of legal Narodism. Trained in this struggle, social-democrats went into the working-class movement without “for a moment” forgetting either the theory of Marxism, which brightly illumined their path, or the task of overthrowing the autocracy. The formation of the party in the spring of 1898 was the most striking and at the same time the last act of the social-democrats of this period.

The third period, as we have seen, was prepared in 1897 and it definitely cut off the second period in 1898 (1898-?). This was a period of disunity, dissolution, and vacillation. During adolescence a youth's voice breaks. And so, in this period, the voice of Russian social-democracy began to break, to strike a false note — on the one hand, in the writings of Messrs. Struve and Prokopovich, of Bulgakov and Berdyaev, and on the other, in those of V. I—n and R.M., of B. Krichevsky and Martynov. But it was only the leaders who wandered about separately and drew back; the movement itself continued to grow, and it advanced with enormous strides. The proletarian struggle spread to new strata of the workers and extended to the whole of Russia, at the same time indirectly stimulating the revival of the democratic spirit among the students and among other sections of the population. The political consciousness of the leaders, however, capitulated before the breadth and power of the spontaneous upsurge; among the social-democrats, another type had become dominant — the type of functionaries, trained almost exclusively on “legal Marxist” literature, which proved to be all the more inadequate the more the spontaneity of the masses demanded political consciousness on the part of the leaders. The leaders not only lagged behind in regard to theory (“freedom of criticism”) and practice (“primitiveness”), but they sought to justify their backwardness by all manner of high-flown arguments. social-democracy was degraded to the level of trade-unionism by the Brentano adherents in legal literature, and by the tail-enders in illegal literature. The *Credo* program began to be put into operation, especially when the “primitive methods” of the social-democrats caused a revival of revolutionary non social-democratic tendencies.

If the reader should feel critical that I have dealt at too great length with a certain *Rabocheye Dyelo*, I can say only that *Rabocheye Dyelo* acquired “historical” significance because it most notably reflected the “spirit” of this third period.\* It was not the consistent R.M., but the weathercock Krichevskys and Martynovs who were able

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\* I could also reply with the German proverb: *Den Sack schlägt man, den Esel meint man* (you beat the sack, but you mean the donkey). Not *Rabocheye Dyelo* alone, but also *the broad mass* of practical workers *and theoreticians* was carried away by the “criticism” *à la mode*, becoming confused in regard to the question of spontaneity and lapsing from the social-democratic to the trade-unionist conception of our political and organisational tasks

properly to express the disunity and vacillation, the readiness to make concessions to “criticism” to “Economism”, and to terrorism. Not the lofty contempt for practical work displayed by some worshipper of the “absolute” is characteristic of this period, but the combination of pettifogging practice and utter disregard for theory. It was not so much in the direct rejection of “grandiose phrases” that the heroes of this period engaged as in their vulgarisation. Scientific socialism ceased to be an integral revolutionary theory and became a hodgepodge “freely” diluted with the content of every new German textbook that appeared; the slogan “class struggle” did not impel to broader and more energetic activity but served as a balm, since “the economic struggle is inseparably linked with the political struggle”; the idea of a party did not serve as a call for the creation of a militant organisation of revolutionaries, but was used to justify some sort of “revolutionary bureaucracy” and infantile playing at “democratic” forms.

When the third period will come to an end and the fourth (now heralded by many portents) will begin we do not know. We are passing from the sphere of history to the sphere of the present and, partly, of the future. But we firmly believe that the fourth period will lead to the consolidation of militant Marxism, that Russian social-democracy will emerge from the crisis in the full flower of manhood, that the opportunist rearguard will be “replaced” by the genuine vanguard of the most revolutionary class.

In the sense of calling for such a “replacement” and by way of summing up what has been expounded above, we may meet the question, What is to be done? with the brief reply:

*Put an end to the third period.* ■

## Appendix:<sup>50</sup> The Attempt to Unite *Iskra* With *Rabocheye Dyelo*

It remains for us to describe the tactics adopted and consistently pursued by *Iskra* in its organisational relations with *Rabocheye Dyelo*. These tactics were fully expressed in *Iskra*, No. 1, in the article entitled “The Split in the Union of Russian Social-Democrats Abroad”.\* From the outset we adopted the point of view that the *real* Union of Russian Social-Democrats Abroad, which at the First Congress of our party was recognised as its representative abroad, *had split* into two organisations; that the question of the party’s representation remained an open one, having been settled only temporarily and conditionally by the election, at the International Congress in Paris, of two members to represent Russia on the International Socialist Bureau,<sup>51</sup> one from each of the two sections of the divided Union Abroad. We declared that fundamentally *Rabocheye Dyelo was wrong*; in principle we emphatically took the side of the Emancipation of Labour group, at the same time refusing to enter into the details of the split and noting the services rendered by the Union Abroad in the sphere of purely practical work.\*\*

Consequently, ours was, to a certain extent, a waiting policy. We made a concession to the opinions prevailing among the majority of the Russian social-democrats that the most determined opponents of Economism could work hand in hand with the Union Abroad because it had repeatedly declared its agreement in principle with the Emancipation of Labour group, without, allegedly, taking an independent position on fundamental questions of theory and tactics. The correctness of our position was indirectly proved by the fact that almost simultaneously with the appearance of the first issue of *Iskra* (December 1900) three members separated from the union, formed the so-called “Initiators’ Group”, and offered their services: (1) to the foreign section

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\* See Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4, pp. 378-379. — *Ed.*

\*\* Our judgement of the split was based, not only upon a study of the literature on the subject, but also on information gathered abroad by several members of our organisation.

of the *Iskra* organisation, (2) to the revolutionary *Sotsial-Demokrat* organisation, and (3) to the Union Abroad, as mediators in negotiations for reconciliation. The first two organisations at once announced their agreement; *the third turned down* the offer. True, when a speaker related these facts at the “Unity” Conference last year, a member of the administrative committee of the Union Abroad declared the rejection of the offer to have been due *entirely* to the fact that the Union Abroad was dissatisfied with the composition of the Initiators’ Group. While I consider it my duty to cite this explanation, I cannot, however, refrain from observing that it is an unsatisfactory one; for, knowing that two organisations had agreed to enter into negotiations, the Union Abroad could have approached them through another intermediary or directly.

In the spring of 1901 both *Zarya* (No. 1, April) and *Iskra* (No. 4, May)\* entered into open polemics with *Rabocheye Dyelo*. *Iskra* particularly attacked the article “A Historic Turn” in *Rabocheye Dyelo*, which, in its *April* supplement, that is, after the spring events, revealed instability on the question of terror and the calls for “blood”, with which many had been carried away at the time. Notwithstanding the polemics, the Union Abroad agreed to resume negotiations for reconciliation through the instrumentality of a new group of “conciliators”. A preliminary conference of representatives of the three cited organisations, held in June, framed a draft agreement on the basis of a very detailed “accord on principles”, which the Union Abroad published in the pamphlet *Two Conferences*, and the League Abroad in the pamphlet *Documents of the “Unity” Conference*.

The contents of this accord on principles (more frequently named the Resolutions of the June Conference) make it perfectly clear that we put forward as an absolute condition for unity *the most emphatic* repudiation of any and every manifestation of opportunism generally, and of Russian opportunism in particular. Paragraph 1 reads: “We repudiate all attempts to introduce opportunism into the proletarian class struggle — attempts that have found expression in the so-called Economism, Bernsteinism, Millerandism, etc.” “The sphere of social-democratic activities includes ... ideological struggle against all opponents of revolutionary Marxism” (4, c); “In every sphere of organisational and agitational activity social-democracy must never for a moment forget that the immediate task of the Russian proletariat is the overthrow of the autocracy” (5, a); agitation ... not only on the basis of the everyday struggle between wage-labour and capital” (5, b); “... we do not recognise ... a stage of purely economic struggle and of struggle for partial political demands” (5, c); “... we consider it important for the movement to criticise tendencies that make a principle of the elementariness

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\* See “Where to Begin” in this volume, pp. 68ff. — *Ed.*

... and narrowness of the lower forms of the movement" (5, d). Even a complete outsider, having read these resolutions at all attentively, will have realised from their very formulations that they are directed against people who were opportunists and Economists, who, even for a moment, forgot the task of overthrowing the autocracy, who recognised the theory of stages, who elevated narrowness to a principle, etc. Anyone who has the least acquaintance with the polemics conducted by the Emancipation of Labour group, *Zarya*, and *Iskra* against *Rabocheye Dyelo* cannot doubt for a single moment that these resolutions repudiate, point by point, the very errors into which *Rabocheye Dyelo* strayed. Hence, when a member of the Union Abroad declared at the "Unity" Conference that the articles in No. 10 of *Rabocheye Dyelo* had been prompted, not by a new "historic turn" on the part of the Union Abroad, but by the excessive "abstractness" of the resolutions,\* the assertion was justly ridiculed by one of the speakers. Far from being abstract, he said, the resolutions were incredibly concrete: one could see at a glance that they were "trying to catch somebody".

This remark occasioned a characteristic incident at the conference. On the one hand, Krichevsky, seizing upon the word "catch" in the belief that this was a slip of the tongue which betrayed our evil intentions ("to set a trap"), pathetically exclaimed: "Whom are they out to catch?" "Whom indeed?" rejoined Plekhanov sarcastically. "Let me come to the aid of Comrade Plekhanov's lack of perspicacity", replied Krichevsky. "Let me explain to him that the trap was set *for the editorial board of Rabocheye Dyelo* [general laughter] but we have not allowed ourselves to be caught!" (A remark from the left: "All the worse for you!") On the other hand, a member of the Borba group (a group of conciliators), opposing the amendments of the Union Abroad to the resolutions and desiring to defend our speaker, declared that obviously the word "catch" was dropped by chance in the heat of polemics.

For my part, I think the speaker responsible for uttering the word will hardly be pleased with this "defence". I think the words "trying to catch somebody" were "true words spoken in jest"; we have always accused *Rabocheye Dyelo* of instability and vacillation, and, naturally, we *had* to try to *catch* it in order to put a stop to the vacillation. There is not the slightest suggestion of evil intent in this, for we were discussing instability of principles And we succeeded in "catching" the Union Abroad in such comradely manner\*\* that Krichevsky himself and one other member of the

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\* This assertion is repeated in *Two Conferences*, p. 25.

\*\* Precisely: In the introduction to the June resolutions we said that Russian social-democracy as a whole always stood by the principles of the Emancipation of Labour group and that the particular service of the Union Abroad was its publishing and organising activity. In other words, we expressed our complete readiness to forget the past and to recognise the usefulness

Administrative Committee of the Union signed the June resolutions.

The articles in *Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 10 (our comrades saw the issue for the first time when they arrived at the Conference, a few days before the meetings started) clearly showed that a new turn had taken place in the Union Abroad in the period between the summer and the autumn: the Economists had once more gained the upper hand, and the editorial board, which veered with every “wind”, again set out to defend “the most pronounced Bernsteinians” and “freedom of criticism”, to defend “spontaneity”, and through the lips of Martynov to preach the “theory of restricting” the sphere of our political influence (for the alleged purpose of rendering this influence more complex). Once again Parvus’ apt observation that it is difficult to catch an opportunist with a formula has been proved correct. An opportunist will readily put his name to *any* formula and as readily abandon it, because opportunism means precisely a lack of definite and firm principles. Today, the opportunists have repudiated *all* attempts to introduce opportunism, repudiated *all* narrowness, solemnly promised “never for a moment to forget about the task of overthrowing the autocracy” and to carry on “agitation not only on the basis of the everyday struggle between wage-labour and capital”, etc., etc. But tomorrow they will change their form of expression and revert to their old tricks on the pretext of defending spontaneity and the forward march of the drab everyday struggle, of extolling demands promising palpable results, etc. By continuing to assert that in the articles in No. 10 “the Union Abroad did not and does not now see any heretical departure from the general principles of the draft adopted at the conference” (*Two Conferences*, p. 26), the Union Abroad merely reveals a complete lack of ability, or of desire, to understand the essential points of the disagreements.

After the 10th issue of *Rabocheye Dyelo*, we could make only one effort: open a general discussion in order to ascertain whether all the members of the Union Abroad agreed with the articles and with the editorial board. The Union Abroad is particularly displeased with us because of this and accuses us of trying to sow discord in its ranks, of interfering in other people’s business, etc. These accusations are obviously unfounded, since with an elected editorial board that “veers” with every wind, however light, everything depends upon the direction of the wind, and we defined the direction

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(for the cause) of the work of our comrades of the Union Abroad *provided* it completely ceased the vacillation we tried to “catch”. Any impartial person reading the June resolutions will only thus interpret them. If the Union Abroad, after having *caused* a split by its new turn towards Economism (in its articles in No. 10 and in the amendments), now solemnly charges us with *untruth* (*Two Conferences*, p. 30), because of what we said about its services, then, of course, such an accusation can only evoke a smile.

at private meetings at which no one was present, except members of the organisations intending to unite. The amendments to the June resolutions submitted in the name of the Union Abroad have removed the last shadow of hope of arriving at agreement. The amendments are documentary evidence of the new turn towards Economism and of the fact that the majority of the Union members are in agreement with *Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 10. It was moved to delete the words “so-called Economism” from the reference to manifestations of opportunism (on the plea that “the meaning” of these words “was vague”; but if that were so, all that was required was a more precise definition of the nature of the widespread error), and to delete “Millerandism” (although Krichevsky had defended it in *Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 2-3, pp. 83-84, and still more openly in *Vorwärts*.\* Notwithstanding the fact that the June resolutions definitely indicated that the task of social-democracy is “to guide every manifestation of the proletarian struggle against all forms of political, economic, and social oppression”, thereby calling for the introduction of system and unity in all these manifestations of the struggle, the Union Abroad added the wholly superfluous words that “the economic struggle is a powerful stimulus to the mass movement” (taken by itself, this assertion cannot be disputed, but with the existence of narrow Economism it could not but give occasion for false interpretations). Moreover, even the direct *constriction* of “politics” was suggested for the June resolutions, both by the deletion of the words “not for a moment” (to forget the aim of overthrowing the autocracy) and by the addition of the words “the economic struggle is the *most widely* applicable means of drawing the masses into active political struggle”. Naturally, upon the submission of such amendments, the speakers on our side refused, one after another, to take the floor, considering it hopeless to continue negotiations with people who were again turning towards Economism and were striving to secure for themselves freedom to vacillate.

‘It was precisely the preservation of the independent features and the autonomy of *Rabocheye Dyelo*, considered by the union to be the *sine qua non* of the durability of our future agreement, that *Iskra* regarded as the stumbling-block to agreement” (*Two Conferences*, p. 25). This is most inexact. We never had any designs against *Rabocheye Dyelo*’s autonomy.\*\* We did indeed *absolutely refuse to recognise* the independence of its features, if by “independent features” is meant independence on questions of

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\* A polemic on the subject started in *Vorwärts* between its present editor, Kautsky, and the editorial board of *Zarya*. We shall not fail to acquaint the Russian reader with this controversy.<sup>52</sup>

\*\* That is, if the editorial consultations in connection with the establishment of a joint supreme council of the combined organisations are not to be regarded as a restriction of autonomy. But in June *Rabocheye Dyelo* agreed to this.

principle in theory and tactics. The June resolutions contain an utter repudiation of *such* independence of features, because, in practice, such “independence of features” has always meant, as we have pointed out, all manner of vacillations fostering the disunity which prevails among us and which is intolerable from the party point of view. *Rabocheye Dyelo*’s articles in its tenth issue, together with its “amendments” clearly revealed its desire to preserve this kind of independence of features, and such a desire naturally and inevitably led to a rupture and a declaration of war. But all of us were ready to recognise *Rabocheye Dyelo*’s “independence of features” in the sense that it should concentrate on definite literary functions. A proper distribution of these functions naturally called for: (1) a theoretical magazine, (2) a political newspaper, and (3) popular collections of articles and popular pamphlets. Only by agreeing to such a distribution of functions would *Rabocheye Dyelo* have proved that it *sincerely* desired to abandon once and for all its errors, against which the June resolutions were directed. Only such a distribution of functions would have removed all possibility of friction, effectively guaranteed a durable agreement, and, at the same time, served as a basis for a revival and for new successes of our movement.

At present not a single Russian social-democrat can have any doubts that the final rupture between the revolutionary and the opportunist tendencies was caused, not by any “organisational” circumstances, but by the desire of the opportunists to consolidate the independent features of opportunism and to continue to cause confusion of mind by the disquisitions of the Krichevskys and Martynovs. ■

## Correction to *What Is to Be Done?*

The Initiators' Group of whom I speak in the pamphlet *What Is to Be Done?* have asked me to make the following correction to my description of the part they played in the attempt to reconcile the social-democratic organisations abroad: "Of the three members of this group, only one left the Union Abroad at the end of 1900; the others left in 1901, only after becoming convinced that it was impossible to obtain the union's consent to a conference with the *Iskra* organisation abroad and the revolutionary *Sotsial-Demokrat* organisation, which the Initiators' Group had proposed. The administrative committee of the Union Abroad at first rejected this proposal, contending that the persons comprising the Initiators' Group were 'not competent' to act as mediators, and it expressed the desire to enter into direct contact with the *Iskra* organisation abroad. Soon thereafter, however, the administrative committee of the Union Abroad informed the Initiators' Group that following the appearance of the first number of *Iskra* containing the report of the split in the union, it had altered its decision and no longer desired to maintain relations with *Iskra*. After this, how can one explain the statement made by a member of the administrative committee of the Union Abroad that the latter's rejection of a conference was called forth *entirely* by its dissatisfaction with the composition of the Initiators' Group? It is true that it is equally difficult to explain why the administrative committee of the Union Abroad agreed to a conference in June of last year, for the article in the first issue of *Iskra* still remained in force and *Iskra*'s 'negative' attitude to the Union Abroad was still more strongly expressed in the first issue of *Zarya*, and in No. 4 of *Iskra*, both of which appeared prior to the June Conference."

*N. Lenin*

# A Letter to a Comrade on Our Organisational Tasks<sup>1</sup>

Dear Comrade,

It is with pleasure that I accede to your request for a criticism of your draft for the “Organisation of the St. Petersburg Revolutionary Party”. (Most likely you meant the organisation of the work of the Russian Social-Democratic Party in St. Petersburg.) The question you have raised is so important that all members of the St. Petersburg Committee, and even all Russian social-democrats in general, should take part in its discussion.

First of all, let me express my complete agreement with your explanation of the unsuitableness of the former (“league type”, as you term it) organisation of the “league”. You refer to the lack of serious training and revolutionary education among the progressive workers, to the so-called elective system, which *Rabocheye Dyelo* supporters are championing so proudly and stubbornly on the grounds of “democratic” principles, and to the workers’ alienation from active work.

That precisely is the case: (1) the lack of serious training and revolutionary education (not only among the workers, but among the intellectuals as well), (2) the misplaced and immoderate application of the elective principle, and (3) the workers’ alienation from active *revolutionary* work — that is where the main shortcoming of the St. Petersburg organisation and of many other local organisations of our party really lies.

I fully share your basic view on the organisational tasks, and also subscribe to your organisational plan, so far as I understand its general outlines from your letter.

Specifically, I wholly agree with you that special stress should be laid on the tasks connected with the work on an all-Russian scale and with the work of the party as a whole; in your draft this is expressed in clause 1, which reads: “The newspaper *Iskra*,

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Written in September 1902. First published in 1902 in a hectograph edition. Text taken from Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 6 (Progress Publishers: Moscow, 1977).

which has permanent correspondents among the workers and close contact with the work within the organisation, is the leading centre of the *party* (and not only of a committee or a district).” I should merely like to remark that the newspaper can and should be the *ideological* leader of the party, evolving theoretical truths, tactical principles, general organisational ideas, and the general tasks of the whole party at any given moment. But only a special central group (let us call it the central committee, say) can be the direct *practical* leader of the movement, maintaining *personal* connections with all the committees, embracing all the best revolutionary forces among the Russian social-democrats, and *managing* all the general affairs of the party, such as the distribution of literature, the issuing of leaflets, the allocation of forces, the appointment of individuals and groups to take charge of special undertakings, the preparation of demonstrations and an uprising on an all-Russian scale, etc. Since the strictest secrecy of organisation and preservation of continuity of the movement is essential, our party can and should have *two* leading centres: a CO (central organ) and a CC (central committee). The former should be responsible for ideological leadership, and the latter — for direct and practical leadership. Unity of action and the necessary solidarity between these groups should be ensured, not only by a single party program, but also by the *composition of the two groups* (both groups, the CO and the CC, should be made up of people who are in complete harmony with one another), and by the institution of regular and systematic joint conferences. Only then will the CO, on the one hand, be placed beyond the reach of the Russian gendarmes and assured of consistency and continuity, while, on the other hand, the CC will always be at one with the CO on all essential matters and have sufficient freedom to *take direct charge* of all the practical aspects of the movement.

For this reason it would be desirable that clause 1 of the rules (according to your draft) should not only indicate which party organ is recognised as the leading organ (that, of course, is necessary), but should also state that the given local organisation sets itself the task of working actively for the *creation*, support, and consolidation of those institutions without which our party cannot exist as a party.

Further, in clause 2, you say that the committee should “direct the local organisation” (perhaps it would be better to say: “all local work and all the local organisations of the party”; but I shall not dwell on details of formulation), and that it should consist of both workers and intellectuals, for to divide them into two committees is harmful. This is absolutely and indubitably correct. There should be only one committee of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, and it should consist of fully convinced social-democrats who devote themselves entirely to social-democratic activities, We should particularly see to it that as many workers as possible become

fully class-conscious and professional revolutionaries and members of the committee.\* Once there is a *single* and not a dual committee, the matter of the committee members *personally* knowing many workers is of particular importance. In order to take the lead in whatever goes on in the workers' midst, it is necessary to be able to have access to all quarters, to know very many workers, to have all sorts of channels, etc., etc. The committee should, therefore, include, as far as possible, all the principal *leaders* of the working-class movement from among the workers themselves; it should direct *all* aspects of the local movement and take charge of *all* local institutions, forces and means of the party. You do not say how the committee should be set up — most likely, here too we shall agree with you that it is scarcely necessary to have special regulations about this; how to set up the committee is a matter for the social-democrats on the spot to decide. However, it should perhaps be pointed out that new members should be added to the committee by decision of a majority (or two-thirds, etc.) of its members, and that the committee should see to it that its list of contacts is placed in hands that are reliable (from the revolutionary standpoint) and safe (in the political sense), and that it prepares candidate members in advance. When we have the CO and the CC, new committees should be set up only with their cooperation and their consent. As far as possible, the committees should not have very many members (so that they consist of well-educated people, each well versed in the technique of his particular branch of revolutionary activity), but at the same time they should include a sufficient number to take charge of *all* aspects of the work, and to ensure full representation and binding decisions. Should it happen that the number of members is fairly large and that it is hazardous for them to meet frequently, it might then be necessary to select from the committee a special and very small executive group (consisting of, say, five, or even fewer persons), which should without fail include the secretary and those most capable of giving practical guidance to the work as a whole. It is *particularly important* that candidate members be provided for this group so that the work should not have to stop in case of arrests. The activities of the executive group, its membership, etc., should be subject to approval by a general meeting of the committee.

Further, after the committee, you propose the following institutions under it: (1) discussion meetings (conferences of the "best" revolutionaries), (2) district circles with (3) a propagandists' circle attached to each of these, (4) factory circles, and (5) "meetings of representatives" of delegates from the factory circles of a given district. I fully agree with you that all further institutions (and of these there should be very many and

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<sup>a</sup> We must try and get on the committee revolutionary workers who have the greatest contacts and the best "reputation" among the mass of workers.

extremely diversified ones, besides those mentioned by you) should be subordinated to the committee, and that it is necessary to have district groups (for the very big cities) and factory groups (always and everywhere). But I do not quite agree with you, it seems, on several details. For instance, with regard to “discussion meetings” I think that these are *wholly unnecessary*. The “best revolutionaries” should all be on the committee, or engaged in special work (printing, transport, agitational tours, the organisation, say, of a passport bureau, or of combat squads to deal with spies and *agents provocateurs*, or of groups in the army, etc.).

“Conferences” will be held in the committee and in each district, in each factory, propagandist, trade (weavers, mechanics, tanners, etc.), student, literary, etc., circle. Why should conferences be made a special institution?

Further. You quite justifiably demand that the opportunity to write to *Iskra* directly should be given to “everyone who wants it”. Only “directly” should not be understood to mean that “everyone who wants it” should be given access to the editorial office or its address, but that it should be obligatory to hand over (or forward) to the editors letters from *all who so desire*. The addresses should, of course, be made known to a *fairly wide circle*; however, they should not be given to everyone who wants them, but only to revolutionaries who are reliable and known for their ability to observe the conditions of secrecy — perhaps even not to one person in each district, as you suggest, but to several. It is also necessary that all who take part in our work, each and every circle, *should have the right* to bring their decisions, desires and requests to the attention of the *committee, as well as* of the CO and CC. If we ensure this, then *all conferences of party functionaries* will have the benefit of *full information*, without instituting anything so cumbersome and contrary to the rules of secrecy as “discussion meetings”. Of course, we should also endeavour to arrange *personal conferences* of the greatest possible number of all and sundry functionaries — but then here everything hinges on the observance of secrecy. General meetings and gatherings are possible in Russia only rarely and by way of exception, and it is necessary to be doubly wary about allowing the “best revolutionaries” to attend these meetings, since it is easier in general for *agents provocateurs* to get into them and for spies to trail some participant of the meeting. I think that perhaps it would be better to do as follows: when it is possible to organise a big (say, 30 to 100 people) general meeting (for instance, in the summertime in the woods, or in a secret apartment that has been specially secured for this purpose), the committee should send one or two of the “best revolutionaries” and *make sure* that the meeting is attended by the proper people, i.e., for example, that invitations should be extended to as many as possible of the reliable members of the factory circles, etc. But these meetings should not officially go on record; they should not be put in the

rules, or held regularly; matters should not be arranged in such a way that everyone who attends the meeting knows everyone else there, i.e., knows that everyone is a “representative” of a circle, etc.; that is why I am opposed not only to “discussion meetings” but also to “meetings of representatives”. In place of these two institutions I would propose a rule to the following effect. The committee must see to the organisation of big meetings of as many people as possible who are practical participants in the movement, and of the workers in general. The time, place, and occasion for the meeting and its composition are to be determined by the committee, which is responsible for the secret arrangement of such affairs. It is self-evident that the organisation of workers’ gatherings of a less formal character at outings, in the woods, etc., is in no way restricted by this. Perhaps it would be even better not to say anything about this in the rules.

Further, as regards the district groups, I fully agree with you that it is one of their most important tasks to organise the *distribution* of literature properly. I think the district groups should for the main part act as *intermediaries* between the committees and the factories, intermediaries and even mostly *couriers*. Their chief task should be the proper distribution of the literature received from the committee in accordance with the rules of secrecy. This is an extremely important task, for if we secure regular contact between a special district group of distributors and *all the factories* in that district, as well as the largest possible number of *workers’ homes* in that district, it will be of enormous value, both for demonstrations and for an uprising. Arranging for and organising the speedy and proper delivery of literature, leaflets, proclamations, etc., training a network of agents for this purpose, means performing the *greater* part of the work of preparing for future demonstrations or an uprising. It is too late to start organising the distribution of literature at a time of unrest, a strike, or turmoil; this work can be built up only gradually, by making distributions *obligatory* twice or three times a month. If no newspapers are available, leaflets may and should be distributed, but the distributive machine must in no case be allowed to remain idle. This machine should be brought to such a degree of perfection as to make it possible to inform and mobilise, so to speak, the whole working-class population of St. Petersburg overnight. Nor is this by any means a utopian aim, provided there is a systematic transmission of leaflets from the centre to the narrower intermediary circles and from them to the distributors. In my opinion, the functions of the district groups should not be extended beyond the bounds of purely intermediary and transmission work, or, to put it more accurately, they should be extended only with the utmost caution otherwise this can only increase the risk of discovery and be injurious to the integrity of the work. Of course, conferences to discuss all party questions will take place in the district circles as

well, but *decisions* on all general questions of the local movement should be made only by the committee. The district groups should be permitted to act independently only on questions concerning the technical aspect of transmission and distribution. The composition of the district groups should be determined by the committee, i.e., the committee *appoints* one or two of its members (or even comrades who are not on the committee) as delegates to this or that district and instructs them to *establish a district group*, all the members of which are likewise installed in office, so to speak, by the committee. The district group is a branch of the committee, deriving its powers only from the latter.

I now pass on to the question of propagandists' circles. It is hardly possible to organise such circles separately in every district owing to the scarcity of our propagandist forces, and it is hardly desirable. Propaganda must be carried on in one and the same spirit by the whole committee, and it should be strictly centralised. My idea of the matter is therefore as follows: the committee instructs several of its members to organise a group of propagandists (which will be a branch of the committee or *one of the institutions of the committee*). This group, using for the sake of secrecy the *services* of the district groups, should conduct propaganda *throughout the town*, and in all localities "within the jurisdiction" of the committee. If necessary, this group may set up subgroups, and, so to say, entrust certain of its functions to the latter, but all this can be done only with the sanction of the committee, which must always and unconditionally possess the right of detailing its delegate to any group, subgroup, or circle which has any connection at all with the movement.

The same pattern of organisation, the same type of branches of the committee or its institutions, should be adopted for all the various groups serving the movement — students' groups in the higher and secondary schools; groups, let us say, of supporters among government officials; transport, printing, and passport groups; groups for arranging secret meeting places; groups whose job it is to track down spies; groups among the military; groups for supplying arms; groups for the organisation of "financially profitable enterprises", for example, etc. The whole art of running a secret organisation should consist in making use of *everything possible*, in "giving everyone something to do", at the same time retaining *leadership* of the whole movement, not by virtue of having the power, of course, but by virtue of authority, energy, greater experience, greater versatility, and greater talent. This remark is made to meet the possible and usual objection that strict centralisation may all too easily ruin the movement if the centre *happens* to include an *incapable* person invested with tremendous power. This is, of course, possible, but it cannot be obviated by the elective principle and decentralisation, the application of which is absolutely

impermissible to any wide degree and even altogether detrimental to revolutionary work carried on under an autocracy. Nor can any rules provide means against this; such means can be provided only by measures of “comradely influence”, beginning with the resolutions of each and every subgroup, followed up by their appeals to the CO and the CC, and ending (if the worst comes to the worst) with the *removal* of the persons in authority who are absolutely incapable. The committee should endeavour to achieve the greatest possible division of labour, bearing in mind that the various aspects of revolutionary work require various abilities, and that sometimes a person who is absolutely useless as an organiser may be invaluable as an agitator, or that a person who is not good at strictly secret work may be an excellent propagandist, etc.

Incidentally, while on the subject of propagandists, I should like to say a few words in criticism of the usual practice of *overloading* this profession with incapable people and thus lowering the level of propaganda. It is sometimes the habit among us to regard every student as a propagandist without discrimination, and every *youngster* demands that he should “be given a circle”, etc. This must be countered because it does a great deal of harm. There are *very few* propagandists whose principles are invariably consistent and who are really capable (and to become such one must put in a lot of study and amass experience); such people should therefore be specialised, put wholly on this kind of work, and be given the utmost care. Such persons should deliver several lectures a week and be sent to other towns when necessary, and, in general, capable propagandists should make tours of various towns and cities. But the mass of young beginners should be given mainly practical assignments, which are somewhat neglected in comparison with the students’ conduct of circles, which is optimistically called “propaganda”. Of course, thorough training is also required for serious practical enterprises; nevertheless, work in this sphere can more easily be found for “beginners” too.

Now about the factory circles. These are particularly important to us: the main strength of the movement lies in the organisation of the workers at the *large* factories, for the large factories (and mills) contain not only the predominant part of the working class as regards numbers, but even more as regards influence, development, and fighting capacity. Every factory must be our fortress. For that every “factory” workers’ organisation should be as secret internally as “ramified” externally, i.e., in its outward relationships, it should stretch its feelers as far and in as many directions as any revolutionary organisation. I emphasise that here, too, a group of revolutionary workers should necessarily be the core, the leader, the “master”. We must break completely with the traditional type of purely labour or purely trade-union social-democratic organisation, *including* the “factory” circles. The factory group, or the factory (mill)

committee (to distinguish it from other groups of which there should be a great number) should consist of a very small number of *revolutionaries*, who take their instructions and receive their authority to carry on all social-democratic work in the factory *directly from the committee*. Every member of the factory committee should regard himself as an agent of the committee, obliged to submit to all its orders and to observe all the “laws and customs” of the “army in the field” which he has joined and from which in time of war he has no right to absent himself without official leave. The composition of the factory committee is therefore a matter of very great importance, and one of the chief duties of the committee should be to see to the proper organisation of these subcommittees. This is how I picture it: the committee instructs certain of its members (plus, let us say, certain workers who for some reason or other have not been included in the committee, but who can be very useful by reason of their experience, knowledge of people, intelligence, and connections) to organise factory subcommittees everywhere. This group consults with the district representatives, arranges for a number of meetings, thoroughly checks candidate members of the factory subcommittees, subjects them to close cross-examination, where necessary puts them to the test, endeavouring personally to examine and verify the *largest possible* number of candidate members of the subcommittee of the factory in question, and, finally, submits a list of members for each factory circle to the committee for approval, or proposes that authority be given to some designated worker to set up, nominate or select a complete subcommittee. In this way, the committee will also determine which of these agents is to maintain contact with it *and how* the contact is to be maintained (as a general rule, through the district representatives, but this rule may be supplemented and modified). In view of the importance of these factory subcommittees, we must see to it as far as possible that *every* subcommittee is in possession of an address to which it can direct its communication to the CO and of a *repository* for its list of contacts in some safe place (i.e., that the information required for the immediate re-establishment of the subcommittee in the event of arrests is transmitted as regularly and as fully as possible to the party centre, for safekeeping in a place where the Russian gendarmes are unable to get at it). It is a matter of course that the transmission of addresses must be determined by the committee at its own discretion and on the basis of the facts at its disposal, and not on the basis of some nonexistent right to a “democratic” allocation of these addresses.

Finally, it is perhaps not superfluous to mention that it may sometimes be necessary, or *more convenient*, to confine ourselves to the appointment of one agent from the committee (and an alternate for him) instead of a factory subcommittee consisting of several members. As soon as the factory subcommittee has been formed it should

proceed to organise a number of factory groups and circles with diverse tasks and varying degrees of secrecy and organisational form, as, for instance, circles for delivering and distributing literature (this is one of the most important functions, which must be organised so as to provide us with a real postal service of our own, so as to possess tried and tested methods, not only for distributing literature, but also for delivering it to the homes, and so as to provide a definite knowledge of all the workers' addresses and ways of reaching them); circles for reading illegal literature; groups for tracking down spies;\* circles for giving special guidance to the trade-union movement and the economic struggle; circles of agitators and propagandists who know how to initiate and to carry on long talks in an *absolutely legal* way (on machinery, inspectors, etc.) and so be able to speak safely and publicly, to get to know people and see how the land lies, etc.\*\* The factory subcommittee should endeavour to embrace the whole factory, the largest possible number of the workers, with a network of all kinds of circles (or agents). The success of the subcommittee's activities should be measured by the abundance of such circles, by their accessibility to touring propagandists and, above all, by the correctness of the regular work done in the *distribution of literature* and the collection of information and correspondence.

To sum up, the general type of organisation, in my opinion, should be as follows: a committee should be at the head of the entire local movement, of all the local social-democratic activities. From it should stem the institutions and branches subordinate to it, such as, first, *the network of executive agents* embracing (as far as possible) the whole working-class mass and organised in the form of *district* groups and factory (mill) subcommittees. In times of peace this network will be engaged in distributing literature, leaflets, proclamations and the secret communications from the committee; in times of war it will organise demonstrations and similar collective activities. Secondly, the committee will also branch out into circles and groups of all kinds serving the whole movement (propaganda, transport, all kinds of underground activities, etc.). All groups, circles, subcommittees, etc., should enjoy the status of committee institutions or branches of a committee. Some of them will openly declare their wish to join the

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\* We must get the workers to understand that while the killing of spies, *agents provocateurs*, and traitors may sometimes, of, course, be absolutely unavoidable, it is highly undesirable and mistaken to make a system of it, and that we must strive to create an organisation which will be able to render spies *innocuous* by exposing them and tracking them down. It is impossible to do away with all spies, but to create an organisation which will ferret them out and *educate* the working-class masses is *both possible and necessary*.

\*\* We also need combat groups, in which workers who have had military training or who are particularly strong and agile should be enrolled, to act in the event of demonstrations, in arranging escapes from prison, etc.

Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party and, if endorsed by the committee, will join the party, and will assume definite functions (on the instructions of, or in agreement with, the committee), will undertake to obey the orders of the party organs, receive the same rights as all party members, and be regarded as immediate candidates for membership of the committee, etc. Others will not join the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, and will have the status of circles formed by party members, or associated with one party group or another, etc.

In all *internal* matters, members of *all* these circles are of course on an equal footing, as are all members of a committee. The only exception will be that the right of *personal* contact with the local committee (as well as with the CC and the CO) will be reserved solely to the person (or persons) appointed for that purpose by the committee. In all other respects, this person will be on an equal footing with the rest, who will also have the right to present statements (but not in person) to the local committee and to the CC and CO. It follows that the exception indicated will not at all be an infraction of the principle of equality, but merely a necessary concession to the absolute demands of secrecy. A member of a committee who fails to transmit a communication or his "own" group to the committee, the CC or the CO, will be guilty of a direct breach of party duty. Further, the degree of secrecy and the organisational form of the various circles will depend upon the nature of the functions: accordingly, the organisations will be most varied (ranging from the "strictest", narrowest, and most restricted type of organisation to the "freest", broadest, most loosely constituted, and open type). For instance, strictest secrecy and military discipline must be maintained in the distributing groups. The propagandists' groups must also maintain secrecy, but be under far less military discipline. Workers' groups for reading legal literature, or for organising discussions on trade-union needs and demands call for still less secrecy, and so on. The distributing groups should belong to the RSDLP and know a certain number of its members and functionaries. The groups for studying labour conditions and drawing up trade-union demands need not necessarily belong to the RSDLP. Groups of students, officers, or office employees engaged in self-education *in conjunction with* one or two party members should in some cases not even be aware that these belong to the party, etc. But in one respect we must *absolutely* demand the *maximum degree of organisation* in all these branch groups, namely, that every party member belonging to such a group is formally responsible for the conduct of work in the group and is obliged to take *every* measure in order that the composition of each of these groups, the whole *mechanism* of its work, and the content of that work should be *known as fully as possible* to the CC and the CO. That is necessary in order that the centre may have a *complete* picture of the whole movement, that the selection for

various party posts may be made from the widest possible circle of people; that all groups of a similar nature throughout Russia may learn from one another (through the medium of the centre), and that warning may be given in the event of the appearance of *agents provocateurs* or suspicious characters — in a word, that is absolutely and vitally necessary in all cases.

How is it to be done? By submitting regular reports to the committee, by transmitting to the CO as much of the contents as possible of as large a number of reports as possible, by arranging that members of the CC and the local committee visit the various circles, and, finally, by making it *obligatory* to hand over the list of contacts with these circles, i.e., the names and addresses of several members of each circle, for safekeeping (and to the party bureau of the CO and the CC). Only when reports are submitted and contacts transmitted will it be possible to say of a party member belonging to a given circle that he has done his duty; only then will the party as a whole be in a position *to learn* from every circle that is carrying on practical work; only then will arrests and dragnets lose their terror for us, for if contacts are maintained with the various circles it will always be easy for a delegate of our CC to find substitutes *immediately* and have the work resumed. The arrest of a committee will then not destroy the whole machine, but only remove the leaders, who will always have candidates ready. And let it not be said that the transmission of reports and contacts is impossible because of the need to maintain secrecy: once there is the desire to do so, it is always, and *will always*, be possible to hand over (or forward) reports and contacts, so long as we have committees, a CC or a CO.

This brings us to a highly important principle of all party organisation and all party activity: while *the greatest possible centralisation* is necessary with regard to the ideological and practical *leadership* of the movement and the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat, *the greatest possible decentralisation* is necessary with regard to keeping the party centre (and therefore the party as a whole) *informed* about the movement, and with regard to *responsibility* to the party. The leadership of the movement should be entrusted to the smallest possible number of the most homogeneous possible groups of professional revolutionaries with great practical experience. Participation in the movement should extend to the greatest possible number of the most diverse and heterogeneous groups of the most varied sections of the proletariat (and other classes of the people). The party centre should always have before it, not only exact information regarding the activities of each of these groups, but also the *fullest possible information regarding their composition*. We must centralise the leadership of the movement. We must also (and *for that very reason*, since without information centralisation is impossible) as far as possible *decentralise responsibility to the party* on the part of its

individual members, of every participant in its work, and of every circle belonging to or associated with the party. This decentralisation is an essential prerequisite of revolutionary centralisation and *an essential corrective to it*. Only when centralisation has been carried through to the end and when we have a CO and a CC, will it be possible for every group, however small, to communicate with them — and not only communicate with them, but to do so *regularly* as a result of a system established by years of experience — only then will the possibility of grievous consequences resulting from an accidentally unfortunate composition of a local committee be eliminated. Now that we are coming close to actual unity in the party and to the creation of a real leading centre, we must well remember that *this centre will be powerless* if we do not at the same time introduce the *maximum of decentralisation* both with regard to responsibility to the centre and with regard to keeping it informed of all the cogs and wheels of the party machine. This decentralisation is nothing but the reverse side of the *division of labour* which is generally recognised to be one of the most urgent practical needs of our movement. No official recognition of a given organisation as the leading body, no setting-up of a formal CC will make our movement really united, or create an enduring militant party, if the party centre continues to be *cut off* from direct practical work by the local committees of the old type, i.e., by committees such as are, on the one hand, made up of a regular jumble of persons, each of whom carries on all and every kind of work, without devoting himself to some definite type of revolutionary work, without assuming responsibility for some special duty, without carrying through a piece of work to the end, once it has been undertaken, thoroughly considered and prepared, wasting an enormous amount of time and energy in radicalist noise-making, while, on the other hand, there is a great mass of students' and workers' circles, half of which are altogether unknown to the committee, while the other half are just as cumbersome, just as lacking in specialisation, just as little given to acquiring the experience of professional revolutionaries or to benefiting from the experience of others, just as taken up with endless conferences "about everything" with elections and with drafting rules, as the committee itself. For the centre to be able to work properly, the local committees must reorganise themselves; they must become specialised and more "businesslike" organisations, achieving real "perfection" in one or another practical sphere. For the centre not only to advise, persuade, and argue (as has been the case hitherto), but really conduct the orchestra, it is necessary to know exactly who is playing which fiddle, and where and how; where and how instruction has been or is being received in playing each instrument; who is playing out of tune (when the music begins to jar on the ear), and where and why; and who should be transferred, and how and where to, so that the discord may be remedied, etc. At the

present time — this must be said openly — we either know nothing about the *real internal* work of a committee, except from its proclamations and general correspondence, or we know about it from friends or good acquaintances. But it is ridiculous to think that a huge party, which is capable of leading the Russian working-class movement and which is preparing a general onslaught upon the autocracy, can limit itself to this. The number of committee members should be cut down; each of them, wherever possible, should be entrusted with a definite, special and important function, for which he will be held to account; a special, very small, directing centre must be set up; a network of executive agents must be developed, linking the committee with every large factory, carrying on the regular distribution of literature and giving the centre an exact picture of this distribution and of the entire mechanism of the work; lastly, numerous groups and circles must be formed, which will undertake various functions or unite persons who are close to the social-democrats, who help them and are preparing to become social-democrats, so that the committee and the centre may be constantly informed of the activities (and the composition) of these circles — these are the lines along which the St. Petersburg, and all the other committees of the party, should be reorganised; and this is why the question of rules is of so little importance.

I have begun with an analysis of the draft rules in order to bring out the drift of my proposals more clearly. And as a result it will, I hope, have become clear to the reader that in fact it would perhaps be possible to get along *without rules*, substituting for them regular reports about each circle and every aspect of the work. What can one put in the rules? The committee guides the work of everyone (this is clear as it is). The committee elects an executive group (this is not always necessary, and when it is necessary it is not a matter of rules but of *informing* the centre of the composition of this group and of the candidate members to it). The committee distributes the various fields of work among its members, charging every member to make regular reports to the committee and to keep the CO and CC informed about the progress of the work (here, too, it is more important to inform the centre of whatever assignments have been made than to include in the rules a regulation which *more frequently than not* will go by the board because of scarcity of our forces). The committee must specify exactly who its members are. New members are added to the committee by co-optation. The committee appoints the district groups, factory subcommittees and certain groups (if you wish to enumerate them you will never be done, and there is no point in enumerating them approximately in the rules; it is sufficient to inform the centre about their organisation). The district groups and subcommittees organise the following circles ... It would be all the less useful to draw up such rules at present since we have

practically no general party experience (and in many places none whatever) with regard to the activities of the various groups and subgroups of this sort, and in order to acquire such experience what is needed is not rules but the organisation of party information, if I may put it in this way. Each of our local organisations now spends at least a few evenings on discussing rules. If instead, each member would devote this time to making a detailed and well-prepared report *to the entire party* on his particular function, the work would gain a hundredfold.

And it is not merely because revolutionary work does not always lend itself to definite organisational form that rules are useless. No, definite organisational form is necessary, and we must endeavour to *give such form* to all our work as far as possible. That is permissible to a much greater extent than is generally thought, and achievable not through rules but solely and exclusively (we must keep on reiterating this) through transmitting exact information to the party centre; it is only then that we shall have real organisational form connected with real responsibility and (inner-party) publicity. For who of us does not know that *serious* conflicts and differences of opinion among us are actually decided not by vote “in accordance with the rules”, but by struggle and threats to “resign”? During the last three or four years of party life the history of *most* of our committees has been replete with such internal strife. It is a great pity that this strife has not assumed definite form: it would then have been much more instructive for the party and would have contributed much more to the experience of our successors. But no rules can create *such* useful and essential definiteness of organisational form; this can be done solely through *inner-party publicity*. Under the autocracy we can have no other means or weapon of inner-party publicity than keeping the party centre regularly informed of party events.

And only after we have learned to apply this inner-party publicity on a wide scale shall we actually be able to amass experience in the functioning of the various organisations; only on the basis of such extensive experience over a period of many years shall we be able to draw up rules that will *not be mere paper rules*. ■

# Notes

## Introduction

- 1 G. Plekhanov, *Selected Philosophical Works*, Vol. 1 (Progress Publishers: Moscow, 1977), p. 406.
- 2 V. I. Lenin, “What the ‘Friends of the People’ Are and How They Fight the Social-Democrats”, *Collected Works*, Vol. 1 (Progress Publishers; Moscow, 1977), pp. 290-300.
- 3 Reprinted in Grigory Zinoviev, *History of the Bolshevik Party — A Popular Outline* (New Park Publications: London, 1973), p. 202.

## A Protest by Russian Social-Democrats

- 1 “A Protest by Russian Social-Democrats” was written by Lenin in August 1899 when he was in exile and when he received the manifesto of the Economists which A.I. Ulyanova-Yelizarova sent him from St. Petersburg and which she called the *Credo* of the “Young”. The author of the *Credo* was Y.D. Kuskova, at the time a member of the Union of Russian Social-Democrats Abroad. The manifesto of the Economists was not intended for the press; as Lenin said, it was published “irrespective of, and perhaps even against, the wishes of its authors”, because the Economists feared public criticism of their opportunist views.

The draft of the “Protest” which Lenin prepared to oppose the manifesto of the Russian Bernsteinians was discussed at a meeting of 17 Marxists in exile in Minusinsk Region at the village of Yermakovskoye. The “Protest” was adopted unanimously. A colony of exiles in Turukhansk also subscribed to the “Protest”. Another colony of 17 exiled social-democrats in the town of Orlov, Vyatka Gubernia, also came out against the *Credo*.

The “Protest” was sent abroad and immediately upon its receipt G.V. Plekhanov sent it to the press for inclusion in the current number of *Rabocheye Dyelo*. The “young” members of the Union Abroad, engaged in editing *Rabocheye Dyelo*, however, published the “Protest” as a separate leaflet in December 1899 without Plekhanov’s knowledge. The “Protest” was followed by a postscript stating that the *Credo* represented the opinion of individuals whose position did not constitute a danger to the Russian working-class movement and denying that Economism was current among members of the Union of

Russian Social-Democrats Abroad. Early in 1900 Plekhanov reprinted the "Protest" in the *Vademecum*, a collection of essays against the Economists. Plekhanov welcomed the appearance of the "Protest" as evidence that the Russian social-democrats had recognised the serious danger of Economism and had emphatically declared war on it.

- 2 *Rabocheye Dyelo* (The Workers' Cause) — The magazine of the Economists which appeared irregularly in Geneva between April 1899 and February 1902 as an organ of the Union of Russian Social-Democrats Abroad under the editorship of B.N. Krichevsky, A.S. Martynov, and V.P. Ivanshin. Altogether 12 numbers appeared in nine issues. For a criticism of the *Rabocheye Dyelo* group see Lenin's *What Is to Be Done?* in this volume.
- 3 *Emancipation of Labour* — The first Russian Marxist group. It was founded in Geneva by G.V. Plekhanov in 1883 and included P.B. Axelrod, L.G. Deutsch, V.I. Zasulich, and V.N. Ignatov among its members.

The group did much to spread Marxism in Russia. It translated such Marxist works as *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* by Marx and Engels, *Wage-Labour and Capital* by Marx, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* by Engels, etc., published them abroad and organised their distribution in Russia. Plekhanov and his group seriously undermined Narodism. In 1883 and in 1885 Plekhanov wrote two draft programs of the Russian social-democrats; these were published by the Emancipation of Labour group and marked an important step towards the establishment of a social-democratic party in Russia. Plekhanov's *Socialism and the Political Struggle* (1883), *Our Differences* (1885), and *The Development of the Monist View of History* (1895) played a considerable part in disseminating Marxist ideas. The group, however, made some serious mistakes. It clung to remnants of Narodnik views, underestimated the revolutionary role of the peasantry, and overestimated the part played by the liberal bourgeoisie. These errors were the germs of the future Menshevik ideas espoused by Plekhanov and other members of the group. The group had no practical ties with the working-class movement. Lenin pointed out that the Emancipation of Labour group "only theoretically founded the Social-Democratic Party and took the first step in the direction of the working-class movement".

At the Second Congress of the RSDLP, held in August 1903, the Emancipation of Labour group announced its dissolution.

- 4 *Bernsteinism* — A trend hostile to Marxism in international social-democracy. It emerged in Germany at the end of the 19th century and became connected in name with the social-democrat Eduard Bernstein who attempted to revise Marx's revolutionary theory in the spirit of bourgeois liberalism. The Russian Bernsteinians were the "legal Marxists", the Economists, the Bundists, and the Mensheviks.
- 5 *International Working Men's Association* (First International) — The first international organisation of the proletariat, founded by Karl Marx in 1864 at an international workers'

meeting convened in London by English and French workers. The foundation of the First International was the result of many years of persistent struggle waged by Marx and Engels to establish a revolutionary party of the working class. Lenin said that the First International “laid the foundation of an international organisation of the workers for the preparation of their revolutionary assault on capital”, “laid the foundation for the proletarian, international struggle for socialism” (“The Third International and Its Place in History”, *Collected Works*, Vol. 29 [Progress Publishers: Moscow, 1977], p. 306).

The central, leading body of the International Working Men’s Association was the General Council, of which Marx was a permanent member. In the course of the struggle against the petty bourgeois influences and sectarian tendencies then prevalent in the working-class movement (narrow trade-unionism in England, Proudhonism and anarchism in the Romance countries), Marx rallied around himself the most class-conscious members of the General Council (Friedrich Lessner, Eugène Dupont, Hermann Jung, and others). The First International directed the economic and political struggle of the workers of different countries and strengthened their international solidarity. The First International played a tremendous part in disseminating Marxism, in connecting socialism with the working-class movement.

Following the defeat of the Paris Commune, the working class faced the task of creating mass national parties based on the principles advanced by the First International. “As I view European conditions”, wrote Marx in 1873, “it is quite useful to let the formal organisation of the International recede into the background for the time being” (Marx to Sorge, September 27, 1873 in Marx & Engels, *Selected Correspondence* [Progress Publishers: Moscow, 1975], p. 268). In 1876 the First International was officially disbanded at a convention in Philadelphia.

- 6 Karl Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy* (Foreign Languages Publishing House: Moscow, 1959), pp. 187-197.
- 7 Lenin criticises the well-known Lassallean thesis that all other classes constitute a reactionary mass with respect to the working class. This thesis was included in the program of the German social-democrats that was adopted at the Gotha Congress in 1875, the congress which united the two hitherto separately existing German socialist parties, the Eisenachers and the Lassalleans. Marx exposed the antirevolutionary nature of this thesis in his *Critique of the Gotha Program*.
- 8 *North Russian Workers’ Union* — Organised in 1878 in St. Petersburg, one of the early revolutionary political organisations of the Russian working class. The leaders of the union were Stepan Khalturin, a joiner, and Victor Obnorsky, a mechanic. The union organised strikes and issued a number of proclamations. It had a membership of over 200. In 1879 the union was suppressed by the tsarist government. In February 1880 the members of the

union who remained at liberty published one issue of *Rabochaya Zarya* (Workers' Dawn), the first working-class newspaper in Russia.

- 9 *South Russian Workers' Union* — Founded in 1875 in Odessa by Y.O. Zaslavsky; the first workers' revolutionary political organisation in Russia. The union was suppressed by the tsarist government after having been in existence for eight or nine months.
- 10 *Rabochaya Mysl* (Workers' Thought) — Economist newspaper, organ of the Economist Union of Russian Social-Democrats Abroad, published from October 1897 to December 1902. Altogether 16 issues appeared: numbers 3 to 11 and number 16 were published in Berlin, the remaining numbers in St. Petersburg. It was edited by K.M. Takhtarev and others.

Lenin criticised the views of *Rabochaya Mysl* in his, "A Retrograde Trend in Russian Social-Democracy" (see this volume), in articles published in *Iskra*, and in his work *What Is to Be Done?* (see this volume).

- 11 *S. Peterburgsky Rabochy Listok* (St. Petersburg Workers' Paper) — An illegal newspaper, organ of the St. Petersburg League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class (see note 1 on p. 257). Two numbers appeared: No. 1 in February (dated January) 1897, which was mimeographed in Russia, some 300-400 copies having been run off; No. 2 in September 1897, in Geneva (printed).

The paper advanced the aim of combining the economic struggle of the working class with extensive political demands and stressed the necessity for the foundation of a working-class party.

- 12 *Rabochaya Gazeta* (Workers' Gazette) — The illegal organ of the Kiev group of social-democrats. Two issues appeared — No. 1 in August 1897 and No. 2 in December (dated November) of the same year. The First Congress of the RSDLP adopted *Rabochaya Gazeta* as the party's official organ. The newspaper did not appear after the congress, the printshop having been destroyed by the police and the members of the central committee arrested.

Concerning the attempts to resume its publication made in 1899, see "Letter to the Editorial Group" in this volume, pp. 28-29.

- 13 *The First Congress of the RSDLP* was held in March 1898 in Minsk. The congress was attended by nine delegates from six organisations — the St. Petersburg, Moscow, Ekaterinoslav, and Kiev Leagues for the Emancipation of the Working Class, the *Rabochaya Gazeta* (Kiev) editorial group and the Bund.

The congress elected a central committee, adopted *Rabochaya Gazeta* as the official organ of the party, published a manifesto, and declared the Union of Russian Social-Democrats Abroad to be the party's representative abroad. Soon after the congress the central committee was arrested.

The First Congress of the RSDLP was important for its decisions and its manifesto

which proclaimed the formation of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party.

- 14 *Narodnaya Volya* (People's Will) — A secret political organisation of Narodnik terrorists that came into being in August 1879 as a result of a split in the ranks of the Narodnik organisation *Zemlya i Volya* (Land and Liberty). The *Narodnaya Volya* was headed by an Executive Committee whose membership included A.I. Zhelyabov, A.D. Mikhailov, M.F. Frolenko, N.A. Morozov, V.N. Figner, S.L. Perovskaya, and A.A. Kvyatkovsky. The *Narodnaya Volya* clung to the utopian socialism of the Narodniks, but took the path of political struggle, considering its most important task to be the overthrow of the autocracy and the winning of political liberty. Its program envisaged the organisation of a “permanent popular assembly” elected on the basis of universal suffrage, the proclamation of democratic liberties, the transfer of the land to the people, and the elaboration of measures for the transfer of the factories to the workers. “The Narodovolsti (members and followers of the *Narodnaya Volya*)”, wrote Lenin, “made a step forward in their transition to the political struggle, but they did not succeed in connecting it with socialism” (“Working-Class and Bourgeois Democracy”, *Collected Works*, Vol. 8 [Progress Publishers: Moscow, 1977], p. 72).

The Narodovoltsi carried on a heroic struggle against the autocracy. They based their activities on the fallacious theory of active “heroes” and the passive “mass” and expected to recast society without the participation of the people, employing only their own forces and attempting to overawe and disorganise the government by means of individual terror. After the assassination of Alexander II on March 1, 1881, the government undertook brutal repressions and by executions and provocations broke up the *Narodnaya Volya* organisation. Many attempts were made to reconstitute the *Narodnaya Volya* throughout the '80s, but all were unsuccessful. In 1886, for instance, a group that followed the traditions of the *Narodnaya Volya* was organised under the leadership of A.I. Ulyanov (Lenin's brother) and P.Y. Shevyrev. After an unsuccessful attempt on the life of Alexander III in 1887, the group was exposed and its active members were executed.

Although Lenin criticised the fallacious, utopian program of the *Narodnaya Volya*, he had a great respect for the selfless struggle of its members against tsarism and placed a high value on their techniques of secrecy and their strictly centralised organisation.

### Articles for *Rabochaya Gazeta*

- 1 Lenin wrote “Our Program”, “Our Immediate Task” and “An Urgent Question” during his exile. He intended the articles for *Rabochaya Gazeta*, which had been adopted as official organ of the party at the First Congress of the RSDLP. An attempt to renew the publication of the newspaper was made in 1899 and the editorial group proposed to Lenin that he assume the editorship; later it invited him to collaborate. Lenin sent the articles with the

letter to the editorial group. The attempt to renew publication was unsuccessful and the articles were never printed.

- 2 Russian opportunists, the Economists and the Bundists, were in agreement with Bernstein's views. In his *Premises of Socialism*, Bernstein represented their agreement with his views as being that of the majority of the Russian social-democrats.
- 3 This is a reference to the split in the Union of Russian Social-Democrats Abroad at its first conference held in Zurich in November 1898.
- 4 The collection *Proletarskaya Borba* (Proletarian Struggle), No. 1, published by the social-democratic group of the Urals, was printed in the winter of 1898-99 at the group's own press. The writers who prepared the collection adopted an Economist position, denied the necessity for an independent working-class political party and believed that the political revolution could be effected by a general strike. Lenin characterised the views of the authors of this collection in an assessment in Chapter IV of *What Is to Be Done?*
- 5 The reference is to "A Draft Program of Our Party" (*Collected Works*, Vol. 5).
- 6 This refers to the Second Congress of the RSDLP, which was to have been convened in the spring of 1900.
- 7 *F.P.* — One of Lenin's pen-names.
- 8 The reference is to Plekhanov's article, "Bernstein and Materialism", published in issue No. 44 of *Neue Zeit* (New Times), organ of the German social-democrats, in July 1898.
- 9 The *Hannover Congress* of the German social-democrats was held on October 9-14, 1899. It adopted a resolution on "Attacks on the Fundamental Views and Tactics of the Party". The discussion and adoption of a special resolution were necessitated by the fact that the opportunists, led by Bernstein, launched a revisionist attack on Marxist theory and demanded a reconsideration of social-democratic revolutionary policy and tactics. The resolution adopted by the congress rejected the demands of the revisionists but failed to criticise and expose Bernsteinism. Bernstein's supporters also voted for the resolution.
- 10 The law of June 2 (14), 1897, establishing an 11½-hour day for industrial enterprises and railway workshops. Prior to this the working day in Russia had not been regulated and was as long as 14 or 15 hours. The tsarist government was forced to issue the June 2 law because of pressure on the part of the working-class movement headed by the League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class. Lenin made a detailed analysis and criticism of the law in a pamphlet entitled *The New Factory Law* (*Collected Works*, Vol. 2 [Progress Publishers: Moscow, 1977]).
- 11 Marx and Engels, *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* (Resistance Books: Chippendale, 1998), p. 53.
- 12 The *Exceptional Law Against the Socialists* was promulgated in Germany in 1878. The law suppressed all organisations of the Social-Democratic Party, mass working-class

organisations, and the labour press; socialist literature was confiscated and the banishing of socialists began. The law was annulled in 1890 under pressure of the mass working-class movement.

- 13 *Vorwärts* (Forward) — The central organ of German social-democracy; it was first published in 1876 and was edited by Wilhelm Liebknecht and others. Engels made use of its columns for the struggle against all manifestations of opportunism. From the middle of the 1890s, however, after the death of Engels, *Vorwärts* began regularly to print articles of the opportunists, who predominated in German social-democracy and the Second International.

### A Retrograde Trend in Russian Social-Democracy

- 1 *League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class* — Organised by Lenin in the autumn of 1895, it united about 20 Marxist workers' circles in St. Petersburg. The work of the league was based on the principles of centralism and strict discipline. It was headed by a central group consisting of V.I. Lenin, A.A. Vaneyev, P.K. Zaporozhets, G.M. Krzhizhanovsky, N.K. Krupskaya, L. Martov, M.A. Silvin, V.V. Starkov, and others. The entire work of the league, however, was under the direct leadership of five members of the group headed by Lenin. The league was divided into several district organisations. Such leading class-conscious workers as I.V. Babushkin and V.A. Shelgunov connected the groups with the factories where there were organisers in charge of gathering information and distributing literature. Workers' circles were established in the big factories.

For the first time in Russia the league set about introducing socialism into the working-class movement, effecting a transition from the propagation of Marxism among small numbers of advanced workers attending circles to political agitation among broad masses of the proletariat. It directed the working-class movement and connected the workers' struggle for economic demands with the political struggle against tsarism. It organised a strike in November 1895 at the Thornton Woollen Mill. In the summer of 1896 the famous St. Petersburg textile workers' strike, involving over 30,000 workers, took place under the leadership of the league. The league issued leaflets and pamphlets for the workers and prepared the ground for the issuance of the newspaper *Rabocheye Dyelo*. Its publications were edited by Lenin.

The league's influence spread far beyond St. Petersburg, and workers' circles in Moscow, Kiev, Ekaterinoslav, and other cities, and other parts of Russia followed its example and united to form Leagues of Struggle.

Late in the night of December 8 (20), 1895, the tsarist government dealt the league a severe blow by arresting a large number of its leading members, including Lenin. An issue of *Rabocheye Dyelo* ready for the press was seized. The league replied to the arrest of Lenin and the other members by issuing a leaflet containing political demands in which reference

was made, for the first time, to the existence of the League of Struggle.

While in prison, Lenin continued to guide the league, helped it with his advice, smuggled coded letters and leaflets out of prison, and wrote the pamphlet, *On Strikes* (the original of which has not yet been found), and the "Draft and Explanation of a Program of the Social-Democratic Party".

The league was significant, as Lenin put it, because it was the first real beginning of a revolutionary party based on the working-class movement to guide the class struggle of the proletariat.

- 2 *Kiev League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class* — Formed in March 1897, under the influence of the St. Petersburg League of Struggle, by a resolution adopted at the Kiev conference which proposed that all Russian social-democratic organisations call themselves Leagues of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class, following the example of the St. Petersburg social-democratic organisation. The league united Russian and Polish social-democratic groups and a group of the Polish Socialist Party, altogether more than 30 members. The Kiev League of Struggle maintained connections with the St. Petersburg league (through personal contacts and through acquaintance with the St. Petersburg proclamations and Lenin's writings on programmatic questions; Lenin's "Tasks of the Russian Social-Democrats" was sent to Kiev in manuscript and was known to the leaders of Kiev social-democratic organisations).

The activities of the Kiev League of Struggle began with the May Day proclamation of 1897 which was widely distributed in the southern cities of Russia. In that year the Kiev league distributed 6500 copies of proclamations at more than 25 Kiev factories. That same year a special group of the league published two issues of *Rabochaya Gazeta* as an all-Russian social-democratic newspaper. The First Congress of the RSDLP, in March 1898, adopted *Rabochaya Gazeta* as the party's official organ. The league's illegal literature was distributed mainly in the South Russian towns. In addition to its agitational work the league carried on propaganda in workers' circles and at factory meetings.

The Kiev League of Struggle carried on active preparations for the convening of the First Congress of the RSDLP. Shortly after the congress the league was suppressed by the police (the *Rabochaya Gazeta* printing press that had been transferred from Kiev to Ekaterinoslav and a large quantity of illegal literature was seized). Arrests were carried out in Kiev and in many big Russian cities.

The Kiev League of Struggle played an important role in the development and organisation of the working class in Russia for the formation of a Marxist revolutionary party. The members of the social-democratic groups that remained at liberty soon re-established the underground organisation which took the name of the Kiev Committee of the RSDLP.

- 3 *General Jewish Workers' Union of Lithuania, Poland and Russia* (The Bund) — Formed by a founding congress of Jewish social-democratic groups held in Vilno in 1897; it was an association mainly of semiproletarian Jewish artisans in the Western regions of Russia. The Bund joined the RSDLP at the First Congress (1898) “as an autonomous organisation, independent only so far as questions affecting the Jewish proletariat are concerned”.

The Bund brought nationalism and separatism into the working-class movement of Russia. After the Second Congress of the RSDLP rejected its demand that it be recognised as the only representative of the Jewish proletariat, the Bund left the party. In 1906 the Bund again entered the RSDLP on the basis of a resolution of the Fourth (Unity) Congress.

Within the RSDLP the Bundists persistently supported the opportunist wing of the party (the Economists, the Mensheviks, the liquidators) and struggled against the Bolsheviks and Bolshevism. The Bund countered the Bolsheviks' programmatic demand for the right of nations to self-determination by a demand for cultural national autonomy. During the period of the Stolypin reaction, it adopted a liquidationist position and was active in forming the August antiparty bloc. During World War I (1914-18) it adopted the position of the social-chauvinists. In 1917 it supported the counter-revolutionary Provisional Government and fought on the side of the enemies of the October Socialist Revolution. In the years of foreign military intervention and civil war the Bund leadership joined forces with the counter-revolution. At the same time, a change was taking place among the rank and file of the Bund in favour of collaboration with Soviet power. In 1921 the Bund decided to dissolve itself and part of its membership entered the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) on the basis of the rules of admission.

- 4 The pamphlet referred to is L. Martov's *Red Flag in Russia*, published abroad in October 1900.
- 5 *Sotsial Demokrat* (The Social-Democrat) — A literary and political review, published by the Emancipation of Labour group in London and Geneva between 1890 and 1892. Four issues appeared. *Sotsial Demokrat* played an important part in spreading Marxist ideas in Russia. G.V. Plekhanov, P.B. Axelrod, and V.I. Zasulich were the chief figures associated with its publication.

### Declaration of the Editorial Board of *Iskra*

- 1 *Self-Emancipation of the Working Class* — A small circle of Economists that came into being in St. Petersburg in the autumn of 1898 and existed for a few months only. The group issued a manifesto announcing its aims (printed in the magazine *Nakanune* [On the Eve], published in London), its rules, and several proclamations addressed to workers.

Lenin criticised the views of this group in Chapter 2 of *What Is to Be Done?*

### Where to Begin?

- 1 “Where to Begin?” was published in *Iskra* and reissued by local social-democratic organisations as a separate pamphlet. The Siberian Social-Democratic League printed 5000 copies of the pamphlet and distributed it throughout Siberia. The pamphlet was also distributed in Samara, Tambov, Nizhni-Novgorod and other Russian cities.
- 2 *Rabocheye Dyelo* — See note 2 on p. 252.
- 3 “*Listok*” *Rabochevo Dyela* — *Rabocheye Dyelo* supplement; eight numbers were issued in Geneva, at irregular intervals, between June 1900 and July 1901.
- 4 *Rabochaya Mysl* — See note 10 on p. 254.
- 5 The reference is to the article “The Urgent Tasks of Our Movement”, which was published as the leading article in *Iskra*, No. 1, December 1900 (see *Collected Works*, Vol. 4).

*Iskra* (The Spark) — The first all-Russian illegal Marxist newspaper, founded by Lenin in 1900. The foundation of a militant organ of revolutionary Marxism was the main task confronting Russian social-democrats at the time.

Since the publication of a revolutionary newspaper in Russia was impossible, owing to police persecution, Lenin, while still in exile in Siberia, worked out all the details of a plan to publish the paper abroad. When his term of exile ended in January 1900, he immediately began to put his plan into effect. In February, he conducted negotiations with Vera Zasulich, who had come illegally to St. Petersburg from abroad, on the participation of the Emancipation of Labour group in the publication of an all-Russian Marxist newspaper. The so-called Pskov Conference was held in April, with V.I. Lenin, L. Martov, A.N. Potresov, S.I. Radchenko, and the legal Marxists (P.B. Struve and M.I. Tugan-Baranovsky) participating. The conference heard and discussed Lenin's draft editorial declaration on the program and the aims of the all-Russian newspaper (*Iskra*) and the scientific and political magazine (*Zarya*). Lenin visited a number of Russian cities — St. Petersburg, Riga, Pskov, Nizhni-Novgorod, Ufa, and Samara — establishing contact with social-democratic groups and individual social-democrats and obtaining their support for *Iskra*. In August, when Lenin arrived in Switzerland, he and Potresov held a conference with the Emancipation of Labour group on the program and aims of the newspaper and the magazine, on possible contributors, on the composition of the editorial board, and on the problem of residence. For an account of the founding of *Iskra* see the article “How the ‘Spark’ Was Nearly Extinguished” (*Collected Works*, Vol. 4).

The first issue of Lenin's *Iskra* was published in Leipzig in December 1900; the ensuing issues were published in Munich; from July 1902 it was published in London; and from the spring of 1903 in Geneva.

The editorial board consisted of V.I. Lenin, G.V. Plekhanov, L. Martov, P.B. Axelrod, A.N. Potresov, and V.I. Zasulich. The first secretary of the editorial board was I.G. Smidovich-

Leman. From the spring of 1901 the post was taken over by N.K. Krupskaya, who was also in charge of all correspondence between *Iskra* and Russian social-democratic organisations. Lenin was actually editor-in-chief and the leading figure in *Iskra*. He published his articles on all important questions of party organisation and the class struggle of the proletariat in Russia and dealt with the most important events in world affairs.

*Iskra* became, as Lenin had planned, a rallying centre for the party forces, a centre for the training of leading party workers. In a number of Russian cities (St. Petersburg, Moscow, Samara, and others) groups and committees of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP) were organised along Lenin's *Iskra* line. *Iskra* organisations sprang up and worked under the direct leadership of Lenin's disciples and comrades-in-arms: N.E. Bauman, I.V. Babushkin, S.I. Gusev, M.I. Kalinin, G.M. Krzhizhanovsky, and others. The newspaper played a decisive role in the struggle for the Marxist party, in the defeat of the Economists, and in the unification of the dispersed social-democratic study circles.

On the initiative and with the direct participation of Lenin, the editorial board drew up a draft program of the party (published in *Iskra*, No. 21) and prepared the Second Congress of the RSDLP, which was held in July and August 1903. By the time the congress was convened the majority of the local social-democratic organisations in Russia had joined forces with *Iskra*, approved its program, organisational plan, and tactical line, and accepted it as their leading organ. By a special resolution, which noted the exceptional role played by *Iskra* in the struggle to build the party, the congress adopted the newspaper as the central organ of the RSDLP and approved an editorial board consisting of Lenin, Plekhanov, and Martov. Despite the decision of the congress, Martov refused to participate, and Nos. 46 to 51 were edited by Lenin and Plekhanov. Later Plekhanov went over to the Menshevik position and demanded that all the old Menshevik editors, notwithstanding their rejection by the congress, be placed on the editorial board. Lenin could not agree to this, and on October 19 (November 1, new style), 1903, he left the *Iskra* editorial board to strengthen his position in the central committee and from there to conduct a struggle against the Menshevik opportunists. Issue No. 52 of *Iskra* was edited by Plekhanov alone. On November 13 (26), 1903, Plekhanov, on his own initiative and in violation of the will of the congress, coopted all the old Menshevik editors on to the editorial board. Beginning with issue No. 52, the Mensheviks turned *Iskra* into their own, opportunist, organ.

- 6 This passage refers to the mass revolutionary actions of students and workers — political demonstrations, meetings, strikes — that took place in February and March 1901, in St. Petersburg, Moscow, Kiev, Kharkov, Kazan, Yaroslavl, Warsaw, Belostok, Tomsk, Odessa, and other cities in Russia.

The student movement of 1900-01, which began with academic demands, acquired the character of revolutionary action against the reactionary policy of the autocracy; it was

supported by the advanced workers and it met with a response among all strata of Russian society. The direct cause of the demonstrations and strikes in February and March 1901, was the drafting of 183 Kiev University students into the army as a punitive act for their participation in a students' meeting. The government launched a furious attack on participants in the revolutionary actions; the police and the Cossacks dispersed demonstrations and assaulted the participants; hundreds of students were arrested and expelled from colleges and universities. On March 4 (17), 1901, the demonstration in the square in front of the Kazan Cathedral in St. Petersburg was dispersed with particular brutality. The February-March events were evidence of the revolutionary upsurge in Russia; the participation of workers in the movement under political slogans was of tremendous importance.

- 7 The reference is to Lenin's work *What Is To Be Done?*

### A Talk with Defenders of Economism

- 1 *Yuzhny Rabochy* (Southern Worker) — A social-democratic newspaper published illegally by a group of the same name from January 1900 to April 1903; altogether 12 issues appeared. The newspaper circulated chiefly among social-democratic organisations in the south of Russia.

Lenin said of the *Yuzhny Rabochy* group that it was one of those organisations "which in words accepted *Iskra* as the guiding organ but in deeds followed their own particular plans and were distinguished for their instability on questions of principle". The group existed until the Second Congress of the RSDLP. Subsequently the majority of the leading members of the group became Mensheviks.

- 2 The *Fronde* was a civil war in France in 1648-53 resulting from a revolt of the great nobility against the growing royal power.

### What Is to be Done?

- 1 Lenin's work *What Is To Be Done?* was written at the end of 1901 and early in 1902. In "Where to Begin?", published in *Iskra*, No. 4 (May 1901), Lenin said that the article represented "a skeleton plan to be developed in greater detail in a pamphlet now in preparation for print".

Lenin began the actual writing of the book in the autumn of 1901. In his "Preface to the Pamphlet *Documents of the 'Unity' Conference*" written in November 1901, Lenin said that the book was in preparation "to be published in the near future". In December Lenin published (in *Iskra*, No. 12) his article "A Talk with Defenders of Economism", which he later called a conspectus of *What Is To Be Done?* He wrote the preface to the book in February 1902 and early in March the book was published by Dietz in Stuttgart. An

announcement of its publication was printed in *Iskra*, No. 18, March 10, 1902.

In republishing the book in 1907 as part of the collection *Twelve Years*, Lenin omitted Section A of Chapter V, “Who Was Offended by the Article ‘Where to Begin?’”, stating in the preface that the book was being published with slight abridgements, representing the omission solely of details of the organisational relationships and minor polemical remarks. Lenin added five footnotes to the new edition.

The text of this volume is that of the 1902 edition, verified with the 1907 edition.

- 2 *Rabochaya Gazeta* (Workers’ Gazette) — See note 12 on p. 254.
- 3 *Lassalleans and Eisenachers* — Two parties in the German working-class movement in the ’60s and early ’70s of the 19th century.

*Lassalleans* — Supporters of Ferdinand Lassalle (1825-64) and adherents of his theories; Lassalle was a German petty-bourgeois socialist who played an active part in organising (in 1863) the General Association of German Workers, a political organisation that existed up to 1875. The programmatic demands of the association were formulated by Lassalle in a number of articles and speeches. Lassalle regarded the state as a supraclass organisation and, in conformity with that philosophically idealist view, believed that the Prussian state could be utilised to solve the social problem through the setting up of producers’ cooperatives with its aid. Marx said that Lassalle advocated a “royal Prussian state socialism”. Lassalle directed the workers towards peaceful, parliamentary forms of struggle, believing that the introduction of universal suffrage would make Prussia a “free people’s state”. To obtain universal suffrage he promised Bismarck the support of his association against the liberal opposition and also in the implementation of Bismarck’s plan to reunite Germany “from above” under the hegemony of Prussia. Lassalle repudiated the revolutionary class struggle, denied the importance of trade unions and of strike action, ignored the international tasks of the working class, and infected the German workers with nationalist ideas. His contemptuous attitude towards the peasantry, which he regarded as a reactionary force, did much damage to the German working-class movement. Marx and Engels fought his harmful utopian dogmatism and his reformist views. Their criticism helped free the German workers from the influence of Lassallean opportunism.

*Eisenachers* — Members of the social-democratic Workers’ Party of Germany, founded in 1869 at the Eisenach Congress. The leaders of the Eisenachers were August Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht, who were under the ideological influence of Marx and Engels. The Eisenach program stated that the social-democratic Workers’ Party of Germany considered itself “a section of the International Working Men’s Association and shared its aspirations”. Thanks to the regular advice and criticism of Marx and Engels, the Eisenachers pursued a more consistent revolutionary policy than did Lassalle’s Association of German Workers; in particular, on the question of German reunification, they followed “the democratic and

proletarian road, struggling against the slightest concession to Prussianism, Bismarckism, and nationalism” (Lenin, “August Bebel”, *Collected Works*, Vol. 19 [Progress Publishers: Moscow, 1980], p. 298). Under the influence of the growing working-class movement and of increased government repressions, the two parties united at the Gotha Congress in 1875 to form the Socialist Workers’ Party of Germany, of which the Lassalleans formed the opportunist wing.

- 4 *Guesdists and Possibilists* — Two trends in the French socialist movement arising out of the split in the French Workers’ Party in 1882.

*Guesdists* — Followers of Jules Guesde; constituted the Marxist wing of the movement and advocated an independent revolutionary policy of the proletariat. In 1901 they formed the Socialist Party of France.

*Possibilists* — A petty-bourgeois, reformist trend that sought to divert the proletariat from revolutionary methods of struggle. The Possibilists advocated the restriction of working-class activity to what is “possible” under capitalism. In 1902, in conjunction with other reformist groups, the Possibilists organised the French Socialist Party.

In 1905 the Socialist Party of France and the French Socialist Party united to form a single party. During the imperialist war of 1914-18, Jules Guesde, together with the entire leadership of the French Socialist Party, went over to the camp of social-chauvinism.

- 5 Engels, Preface to the Third German Edition (1885) of Marx, “The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte”, *The Class Struggles in France* (Resistance Books: Chippendale, 2003), p. 127.
- 6 *Cadets* — Constitutional Democratic Party, the principal bourgeois party in Russia, representing the liberal monarchist bourgeoisie. It was formed in October 1905. Parading as democrats and calling themselves the party of “people’s freedom”, the Cadets tried to win the following of the peasantry. Their aim was to preserve tsarism in the form of a constitutional monarchy. After the victory of the October Socialist Revolution, the Cadets organised counter-revolutionary conspiracies and revolts against the Soviet Republic.
- 7 *Bezzaglavtzi* — From the title of the journal *Bez Zaglavivya* (Without a Title); they were organisers of, and contributors to, the journal published in St. Petersburg in 1906 by S.N. Prokopovich, Y.D. Kuskova, V.Y. Bogucharsky, and others. The journal openly advocated revisionism, supported the Mensheviks and liberals, and opposed an independent proletarian policy. Lenin called the group “pro-Menshevik Cadets or pro-Cadet Mensheviks”.
- 8 *Katheder Socialism* — A trend in bourgeois political economy that emerged in Germany in the ’70s and ’80s of the 19th century. Under the guise of socialism the Katheder Socialists preached bourgeois-liberal reformism from university chairs (Katheder). They maintained that the bourgeois state was above classes, that it was capable of reconciling hostile classes and gradually introducing “socialism”, without affecting the interests of the capitalists, while, at the same time, taking the demands of the workers as far as possible into consideration.

In Russia the views of the Katheder Socialists were disseminated by the “legal Marxists”.

- 9 *Hannover resolution* — See note 9 on p. 256.
- 10 The *Stuttgart Congress* of the German Social-Democratic Party held on October 3-8, 1898, was the first congress to discuss the question of revisionism in the German Social-Democratic Party. A statement from Bernstein (who did not attend) was read to the congress; it amplified and defended the opportunist views he had previously set forth in a number of articles. There was, however, no unity among his opponents at the congress. Some (Bebel, Kautsky, and others) called for an ideological struggle and a criticism of Bernstein’s errors, but opposed the adoption of organisational measures against him. The minority, led by Rosa Luxemburg, urged a more vigorous struggle against Bernsteinism.
- 11 *The Author Who Got a Swelled Head* — The title of one of Maxim Gorky’s early stories.
- 12 The reference is to the collection *Material for a Characterisation of Our Economic Development*, printed legally in an edition of 2000 copies in April 1895. The collection included Lenin’s article (signed *K. Tulin*) “The Economic Content of Narodism and the Criticism of It in Mr. Struve’s Book (*The Reflection of Marxism in Bourgeois Literature*)”, directed against the “legal Marxists” (see *Collected Works*, Vol. 1).
- 13 “A Protest by Russian Social-Democrats” was written by Lenin in 1899, in exile. It was a reply to the *Credo* of a group of Economists (S.N. Prokopovich, Y.D. Kuskova, and others, who subsequently became Cadets). On receiving a copy of the *Credo* from his sister, A.I. Ulyanova-Yelizarova, Lenin wrote a sharp protest in which he exposed the real nature of the declaration.

The “Protest” was discussed and unanimously endorsed by a meeting of 17 exiled Marxists convened by Lenin in the village of Yermakovskoye, Minusinsk District (Siberia). Exiles in Turukhansk District (Siberia) and Orlovo (Vyatka Gubernia) subsequently associated themselves with the Protest.

Lenin forwarded a copy of the “Protest” abroad to the Emancipation of Labour group; Plekhanov published it in his *Vademecum [Handbook] for the Editors of Rabocheye Dyelo*.

- 14 *Byloye* (The Past) — A monthly journal on historical problems published in St. Petersburg in 1906-07; in 1908 it changed its name to *Minuvshiye Gody* (Years Past). It was banned by the tsarist government in 1908, but resumed publication in Petrograd in July 1917 and continued in existence until 1926.
- 15 *Vademecum for the Editors of Rabocheye Dyelo* — A collection of articles and documents compiled and prefaced by G.V. Plekhanov and published by the Emancipation of Labour group in Geneva in 1900; it exposed the opportunist views of the Union of Russian Social-Democrats Abroad and of the editorial board of its periodical, *Rabocheye Dyelo*.
- 16 *Profession de foi* (Profession of Faith) — A manifesto setting forth the opportunist views of the Kiev Committee, issued at the end of 1899. It was identical with the Economist *Credo*

on many points. Lenin criticised the document in his article “Apropos of the *Profession de foi*” (*Collected Works*, Vol. 4).

- 17 See Marx, “Critique of the Gotha Program”, Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 3 (Progress Publishers: Moscow, 1970), p. 11.
- 18 *Gotha Program* — The program adopted by the German Social-Democratic Party at the Gotha Congress in 1875 when the Eisenachers and Lassalleans united. The program suffered from eclecticism and opportunism, since the Eisenachers made concessions to the Lassalleans on the most important points and accepted their formulations. Marx and Engels subjected the Gotha Program to scathing criticism and characterised it as a retrograde step as compared with the Eisenach Program of 1869 (See Marx, *op. cit.*)
- 19 See Engels, *The Peasant War in Germany* (Foreign Languages Publishing House: Moscow, 1956), pp. 32-34.
- 20 The pamphlet *On Agitation* was written by A. Kremer (later an organiser of the Bund) and edited by Y.O. Tserderbaum (Martov) in Vilno in 1894; it was at first circulated in handwritten and hectographed copies, but at the end of 1897 it was printed in Geneva and supplied with a preface and a concluding piece by P.B. Axelrod. The pamphlet summarised the experiences gained in social-democratic work in Vilno and exerted a great influence on Russian social-democrats, since it called on them to reject narrow study circle propaganda and to go over to mass agitation among the workers on issues of their everyday needs and demands. It exaggerated the role of the purely economic struggle, however, to the detriment of political agitation on issues of general democratic demands, and was the embryo of the future Economism. P.B. Axelrod noted the one-sidedness of the “Vilno Economism” in his concluding piece to the Geneva edition; G.V. Plekhanov made a critical analysis of the pamphlet in his *Once More on Socialism and the Political Struggle*.
- 21 *Russkaya Starina* (The Russian Antiquary) — A monthly magazine dealing with historical problems published in St. Petersburg from 1870 to 1918.
- 22 *S. Peterburgsky Rabochy Listok* — See note 11 on p. 254.
- 23 *A private meeting* referred to here was held in St. Petersburg between February 14 and 17 (February 26 and March 1), 1897. It was attended by V.I. Lenin, A.A. Vaneyev, G.M. Krzhizhanovsky, and other members of the St. Petersburg League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class, that is, by the “veterans” who had been released from prison for three days before being sent into exile to Siberia, as well as by the “young” leaders of the League of Struggle who had taken over the leadership of the league after Lenin’s arrest in December 1895.
- 24 “*Listok*” *Rabotnika* (The Workingman’s Paper) — Published in Geneva by the Union of Russian Social-Democrats Abroad from 1896 to 1899; altogether there appeared 10 issues. Issues 1-8 were edited by the Emancipation of Labour group. But after the majority of the

Union Abroad went over to Economism, the Emancipation of Labour group refused to continue editing the paper. Nos. 9 and 10 were issued by a new editorial board set up by the Union of Russian Social-Democrats Abroad.

- 25 The “*article by V. I.*” refers to an article by V. P. Ivanshin.
- 26 V.V. — Pseudonym of V.P. Vorontsov, an ideologist of liberal Narodism in the '80s and '90s of the 19th century. By the “*V.V.s of Russian Social-Democracy*” Lenin understands the Economists who represented the opportunist trend in the Russian social-democratic movement.
- 27 *Hirsch-Duncker Unions* — Established in Germany in 1868 by Max Hirsch and Franz Duncker, two bourgeois liberals. They preached the “harmony of class interests”, drew the workers away from the revolutionary class struggle against the bourgeoisie, and restricted the role of the trade unions to that of mutual benefit societies and educational bodies.
- 28 *Self-Emancipation of the Workers* — A small group of Economists formed in St. Petersburg in the autumn of 1898; it existed for only a few months and published a manifesto setting forth its aims (published in *Nakanune* in London), a set of rules and several leaflets addressed to the workers.
- 29 *Nakanune* (On the Eve) — A journal expressing Narodnik views. It was published in Russian in London from January 1899 to February 1902 — altogether 37 issues. The journal was a rallying point for representatives of various petty-bourgeois parties.
- 30 G.V. Plekhanov published his well-known work *The Development of the Monist View of History* legally in St. Petersburg in 1895 under the pseudonym of N. Beltov.
- 31 *Nartsis Tuporylov* (Narcissus Blunt Snout) — Pseudonym under which Y.O. Martov published his satirical poem “Hymn of the Contemporary Russian Socialist” in *Zarya*, No. 1, April 1901.

The “Hymn” ridiculed the Economists and their adaptations to spontaneous events.

- 32 The letter in *Iskra*, No. 7 (August 1901), was from a weaver. It was published in the section “Workers’ Movement and Letters from the Factories”. The letter testified to the great influence of Lenin’s *Iskra* among the advanced workers.

The letter reads in part:

“... I showed *Iskra* to many fellow workers and the copy was read to tatters; but we treasure it ... *Iskra* writes about our cause, about the all-Russian cause which cannot be evaluated in kopeks or measured in hours; when you read the paper you understand why the gendarmes and the police are afraid of us workers and of the intellectuals whom we follow. It is a fact that they are a threat, not only to the bosses’ pockets, but to the tsar, the employers, and all the rest ... It will not take much now to set the working people aflame. All that is wanted is a spark, and the fire will break out. How true are the words ‘The Spark will kindle a flame!’ [The motto of *Iskra*.] In the past every strike was an important event,

but today everyone sees that strikes alone are not enough and that we must now fight for freedom, gain it through struggle. Today everyone, old and young, is eager to read but the sad thing is that there are no books. Last Sunday I gathered 11 people and read to them 'Where to Begin?' We discussed it until late in the evening. How well it expressed everything, how it gets to the very heart of things ... And we would like to write a letter to your *Iskra* and ask you to teach us, not only how to begin, but how to live and how to die."

- 33 *Rossiya* (Russia) — A moderate liberal newspaper published in St. Petersburg from 1899 to 1902.
- 34 *S. Peterburgskiy Vedomosti* (St. Petersburg Recorder) — A newspaper that began publication in St. Petersburg in 1728 as a continuation of the first Russian newspaper *Vedomosti*, founded in 1703.
- From 1728 to 1874 the *S. Peterburgskiy Vedomosti* was published by the Academy of Sciences and from 1875 onwards by the Ministry of Education; it continued publication until the end of 1917.
- 35 The full name of this small organisation was *Workers' Group for the Struggle Against Capital*; its views were close to those of the Economists. The group was formed in St. Petersburg in the spring of 1899; it prepared a mimeographed leaflet, "Our Program", which was never circulated, owing to the arrest of the group.
- 36 *N.N.* — Pseudonym of S.N. Prokopovich, an active Economist who later became a Cadet.
- 37 *Afanasy Ivanovich and Pulkheria Ivanovna* — A patriarchal family of petty provincial landlords in Gogol's *Old-Time Landowners*.
- 38 Lenin refers here to his own revolutionary activity in St. Petersburg in 1893-95.
- 39 *Areopagus* — A rocky hill in ancient Athens, named after Ares, the god of war; famous as the meeting place of the city's leading council. In the Fifth and Sixth centuries BC, this council, also called the Areopagus, was the stronghold of the aristocracy.
- 40 The reference is to the pamphlet *Report on the Russian Social-Democratic Movement* to the International Socialist Congress in Paris, 1900. The report was submitted to the congress by the editorial board of *Rabocheye Dyelo* on behalf of the Union of Russian Social-Democrats Abroad and was published as a separate pamphlet in Geneva in 1901; the pamphlet also contained the report of the Bund ("The History of the Jewish Working-Class Movement in Russia and Poland").
- 41 *Yuzhny Rabochy* — See note 1 on p. 262.
- 42 Lenin added this footnote for purposes of secrecy. The facts are enumerated in the order in which they actually took place.
- 43 The reference is to the negotiations between the St. Petersburg League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class and Lenin who, in the second half of 1897, wrote the two pamphlets mentioned.

44 The reference is to the League of Russian Revolutionary Social-Democracy Abroad. It was founded on Lenin's initiative in October 1901. The *Iskra-Zarya* organisation abroad and the *Sotsial-Demokrat* organisation (which included the Emancipation of Labour group) entered the league. The task of the league was to disseminate the ideas of revolutionary social-democracy and promote the foundation of a militant social-democratic organisation. Actually, the league was the representative of *Iskra* abroad. It recruited supporters for *Iskra* from among social-democrats living abroad, gave it material support, organised its delivery to Russia, and published popular Marxist literature. The league issued several *Bulletins* and pamphlets. The Second Congress of the RSDLP approved the league as the sole party organisation abroad, accorded it the full rights of a committee working under the leadership and control the central committee of the RSDLP.

After the Second Congress the Mensheviks entrenched themselves in the league and launched their struggle against Lenin and the Bolsheviks. At the Second Congress of the league in October 1903, the Mensheviks libelled the Bolsheviks, following which Lenin and his supporters walked out. The Mensheviks adopted new rules for the league that contradicted the rules of the party adopted at the Second Congress of the RSDLP. From that time onwards the league became a bulwark of Menshevism; it continued its existence until 1905.

- 45 The reference is to the negotiations between Lenin and the central committee of the Bund.
- 46 The “*fourth fact*” of which Lenin speaks was the attempt of the Union of Russian Social-Democrats Abroad and the Bund to convene the Second Congress of the RSDLP in the spring of 1900. The “*member of the committee*” referred to was I.H. Lalayants (a member of the Ekaterinoslav social-democratic committee) who came to Moscow in February 1900 for talks with Lenin.
- 47 Lenin cites the article by D.I. Pisarev, “Blunders of Immature Thinking”.
- 48 Lenin refers to the following passage from Marx's *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*: “Hegel remarks somewhere that all facts and personages of great importance in world history occur, as it were, twice. He forgot, to add: the first time as tragedy, the second as farce” (see Marx, *The Class Struggles in France* [Resistance Books: Chippendale, 2003], p. 129).
- 49 *Janissaries* — Privileged Turkish infantry, abolished in 1826. The janissaries plundered the population and were known for their unusual brutality. Lenin called the tsarist police “janissaries”.
- 50 Lenin omitted this appendix when *What Is to Be Done?* was republished in the collection *Twelve Years* in 1907.
- 51 *International Socialist Bureau* — The executive body of the Second International established by decision of the Paris Congress in 1900. From 1905 onwards Lenin was a member of the

bureau as a representative of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party.

- 52 *Iskra*, No. 18 (March 10, 1902) published in the section "From the Party" an item entitled "Zarya's Polemic with *Vorwärts*", summing up the controversy.

### A Letter to a Comrade on Our Organisational Tasks

- 1 "A Letter to a Comrade on Our Organisational Tasks" was a reply to a letter from the St. Petersburg social-democrat A.A. Shneyerson (Yeryoma) criticising the way social-democratic work was organised in that city.

After the arrest of V.I. Lenin and his close associates in December 1895, the Economists gradually gained control of the League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class. Unlike the revolutionary Marxists, who fought for the creation of an underground and centralised organisation of revolutionaries, the Economists derogated the significance of political struggle and came out for creation of a broad working-class organisation based on the elective principle and pursuing the primary aim of immediate defence of the workers' economic interests, formation of mutual aid banks, and the like. The Economists long control of the League of Struggle left an imprint on its organisational structure too: its working-class membership (the so-called Workers' Organisation) was artificially separated from the intellectual members. The league's clumsy organisation was more adapted for a trade union form of struggle than for leadership of the workers' mass revolutionary struggle against the autocracy and the bourgeoisie. The struggle between the *Iskra*-ists and the Economists which developed in the St. Petersburg organisation culminated in the St. Petersburg Committee of the RSDLP going over to the *Iskra* stand in the summer of 1902.

"Two questions were raised", it was reported in *Iskra's* No. 30 of December 15, 1902, "at a meeting held in the outskirts of St. Petersburg in June, which was attended by workers representing all five wards of the Workers' Organisation (who comprised the highest body of the then Workers' Organisation). These questions were: (1) the two trends in Russian social-democracy: the old 'Economist' trend, which hitherto obtained in St. Petersburg, and the revolutionary, as represented by *Iskra* and *Zarya*, and (2) principles of organisation (so-called 'democratism' or an 'organisation of revolutionaries'). On both issues all the workers came out unanimously against 'Economism' and 'democratism' and in favour of the *Iskra* trend."

To reconstruct the St. Petersburg League of Struggle in the spirit of *Iskra* organisational principles, a committee was set up composed of representatives of the *Iskra* organisation, the Workers' Organisation, and the St. Petersburg Committee. However, the Economists, headed by Tokarev, stated that they disagreed with the St. Petersburg Committee's decision on support for the *Iskra* stand, formed the so-called Workers' Organisation's Committee, and launched a struggle against the *Iskra*-ists. The latter, with the support of the workers,

were able to retain their positions and fortify their standing in the St. Petersburg organisation.

*A Letter to a Comrade*, in which Lenin developed and gave concrete shape to his plan for the party's organisation, was received in St. Petersburg at the height of the struggle against the Economists. It was hectographed, copied by hand, and distributed among St. Petersburg social-democrats. In June 1903 it was illegally published by the Siberian Social-Democratic League under the title of *On Revolutionary Work in the Organisations of the RSDLP* (A Letter to a Comrade). This letter was published by the RSDLP's central committee as a separate pamphlet, with a preface and postscript by Lenin, who also prepared the pamphlet for the press. It was widely distributed in social-democratic organisations, police archives for 1902-05 revealing that it was found during police raids in Moscow, Riga, Rostov-on-Don, Nakhichevan, Nikolayev, Krasnoyarsk, Irkutsk, and elsewhere.

Only the the first page of the original manuscript of the letter is extant. It contains the following inscription in Lenin's hand: "To the St. Petersburg Committee in general and to Comrade Yeryoma in particular (from Lenin)." ■

## Glossary of Names

**Aesop** — Probably legendary Greek author of a collection of fables or short moral tales; one account has him as a slave born about 620BC, another as a slave in Samos in the sixth century BC who was eventually freed by his master, etc.

**Alexander II** (1818-81) — Russian tsar 1855-81; assassinated by People's Will terrorist organisation.

**Alexander III** (1845-94) — Russian tsar 1881-94; noted for extreme reactionary politics. In fear of attempts on his life by the revolutionary terrorist People's Will, who assassinated his father in 1881, he shut himself up in his palace at Gatchina and postponed indefinitely his formal coronation.

**Alexeyev, Pyotr Alexeyevich** (1849-91) — Prominent revolutionary of 1870s; a weaver, carried on revolutionary propaganda among the workers, was arrested and in court made a famous speech in which he predicted the fall of the tsarist autocracy.

**Auer, Ignaz** (1846-1907) — German worker, harness-maker; prominent in the social-democratic movement.

**Axelrod, Pavel** (1850-1928) — Social-democrat; a founder of Emancipation of Labour group, the first Russian Marxist organisation; became a Menshevik after Second Congress of RSDLP in 1903; after the February revolution of 1917 he was a member of the executive committee of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' Deputies.

**Babushkin, Ivan Vasilyevich** (1873-1906) — A worker member of the St. Petersburg League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class; took part in organising the distribution in Russia of the Marxist paper *Iskra*; a leader of the Bolsheviks during the 1905 revolution, he was shot without trial by the tsarist authorities.

**Bakunin, Mikhail** (1814-76) — Russian democrat and writer; took part in the 1848-49 revolution in Germany. One of the best-known ideologists of anarchism. He participated in the First International but opposed the Marxists and was expelled at the Hague Congress in 1872.

**Balalaikin** — A character from M.Y. Saltykov-Shchedrin's *Modern Idyll*; a liberal

windbag, adventurer and liar.

**Bebel, August** (1840-1913) — With Wilhelm Liebknecht, a founder in 1869 of the German Social-Democratic Workers Party (Eisenachers); later the leading figure in the German Social-Democratic Party and a leader of the Second International. Author of *Woman and Socialism* (1883). At the turn of the century waged a struggle against reformism and revisionism but towards the end of his life he began drifting to the right, aiming his attacks not against the revisionists but against the revolutionary left (Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht, etc.).

**Belinsky, Vissarion Grigoryevich** (1811-48) — Outstanding Russian revolutionary democrat, literary critic, publicist and materialist philosopher.

**Berdayev, Nikolai** (1874-1948) — Originally a “legal” Marxist; became reactionary idealist philosopher and mystic.

**Bernstein, Eduard** (1850-1932) — A leader of the extreme opportunist wing of the German Social-Democratic Party (SPD) and the Second International; after Engels’ death in 1895 came forward as chief advocate of revising Marxism to accommodate the liberal bourgeois social-reformist practice of the right wing of the SPD.

**Bismarck, Otto von** (1815-98) — Prussian and German politician, championed the interests of Prussian junkers; prime minister of Prussia 1862-71 and then prime minister of the German Empire 1871-90; introduced antisocialist law in 1878.

**Blanqui, August** (1805-81) — Revolutionary socialist prominent in French radical and workers movement of 19th century, he was associated with the idea of the seizure of power by a small, conspiratorial armed group, irrespective of objective conditions or mass consciousness. Despite being in jail during the period of the Paris Commune, he was elected to its leadership. Although he spent almost half his life in prison, he remained devoted to the cause of ordinary people.

**Brentano, Lujo** (1844-1931) — German bourgeois economist, a champion of so-called “state socialism” who tried to prove the possibility of achieving social equality within the framework of capitalism by reforms and through the reconciliation of the interests of the capitalists and the workers. Using Marxist phraseology as a cover, Brentano and his followers tried to subordinate the working-class movement to the interests of the bourgeoisie.

**Bulgakov, Sergei Nikolayevich** (1871-1944) — Bourgeois economist and idealist philosopher; “legal” Marxist in 1890s. After the 1905-07 revolution, joined the Cadets.

**B—v** — Pseudonym of *Boris Savinkov* (1879-1925). Began as Russian revolutionary; member of Socialist-Revolutionary Party; from 1903 directed SR terrorist organisation; chauvinist during World War I; an opponent of Bolsheviks and

advocate of dictatorial authority; took part in Kornilov's revolt; after October Revolution played active role in the White counter-revolution; later returned to Russia illegally and was arrested in 1924; sentenced to 10 years jail, he suicided in 1925.

**Chernyshevsky, Nikolai** (1828-89) — Russian revolutionary democrat and utopian socialist, scientist, writer and literary critic.

**Deutsch, Lev Grigoryevich** (1855-1941) — An organiser of the Emancipation of Labour group, the first Russian Marxist organisation (founded in Geneva in 1883); became a Menshevik in 1903; in 1918 retired from politics.

**Dühring, Eugen** (1833-1921) — German petty-bourgeois philosopher and economist. His views were subjected to a major critique by Engels in *Anti-Dühring* (1878).

**Duncker, Franz** (1822-88) — German bourgeois politician and publisher; one of the founders of the reformist trade unions in the 1860s.

**Dupont, Eugène** (c. 1831-81) — Prominent figure in the international working-class movement; French worker, took part in June 1848 uprising in Paris; member of General Council of First International 1864-72.

**Engels, Frederick** (1820-95) — Co-founder with Karl Marx of the modern socialist workers' movement; co-author of the *Communist Manifesto* (1848), a leader of the revolutionary-democratic movement in Germany in 1848-49, outstanding theorist and populariser of scientific socialism.

**Figner, Vera Nikolayevna** (1852-1942) — Russian revolutionary Narodnik, member of the executive committee of the Narodnaya Volya (People's Will); sentenced to death in 1884, sentence commuted to life imprisonment; left Russia after 1905-07 revolution but returned in 1915.

**Fourier, Charles** (1772-1837) — Outstanding French utopian socialist. Marx and Engels admired his sharp criticism of capitalist society and his ideas influenced their work.

**Gogol, Nikolai Vasilyevich** (1809-52) — Outstanding Russian writer.

**Gorky, Maxim** (1868-1936) — Russian writer and revolutionary; sympathiser of Bolsheviks but opposed to 1917 revolution; went abroad 1921-31; on his return headed Writers Union; supported the Stalin regime.

**Guesde, Jules** (1845-1922) — A veteran of the 1871 Paris Commune and a leader of the left wing of the French Socialist Party, at the outbreak of the World War I he adopted a social-chauvinist stand and accepted a ministry in the bourgeois government of France.

**Gusev, Sergei I.** (1874-1933) — Old Bolshevik; sided with Stalin in civil war military disputes with Trotsky; Comintern representative to US Communist Party 1925.

**Hasselmann, Wilhelm** (b. 1844) — German social-democrat; a leader of the Lassallean

General Association of German Workers; in 1880 was expelled from German Social-Democratic Party as an anarchist.

**Hauptmann, Gerhart** (1862-1946) — Famous German playwright; his 1893 play *The Weavers* dealt powerfully with the 1844 revolt of the Silesian weavers; he won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1912.

**Hegel, Georg** (1770-1831) — The culminating figure of the German idealist school of philosophy that began with Immanuel Kant. An objective idealist, he elaborated a theory of dialectics which is one of the sources of dialectical materialism.

**Herzen, Alexander Ivanovich** (1812-70) — Russian revolutionary democrat, materialist philosopher and writer; with N.P. Ogaryov published the journal *Kolokol*.

**Höchberg, Karl** (1853-85) — German right-wing social-democrat, journalist. When the antisocialist law was in operation (1878-90) he condemned his party's revolutionary tactics and called on the workers to ally with the bourgeoisie. His opportunist views met with a sharp protest from Marx and Engels.

**Ilovaisky, Dimitry Ivanovich** (1832-1920) — Historian; author of numerous official textbooks of history that were extensively used in primary and secondary schools in prerevolutionary Russia. In Ilovaisky's texts history was reduced mainly to acts of kings and generals; the historical process was explained through secondary and fortuitous circumstances.

**Jung, Hermann** (1830-1901) — Prominent figure in international working-class movement; watchmaker; member of the General Council of the First International; after 1872 Hague Congress of the International joined the reformist leaders of the British trade unions.

**Kalinin, Mikhail** (1875-1946) — Old Bolshevik from peasant background; from 1919 head of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee of the Soviets; from 1938 head of the presidium of the Supreme Soviet.

**Karayev, Nikolai Ivanovich** (1850-1931) — Liberal bourgeois historian and writer. From 1905 was a member of the Constitutional Democratic Party and an opponent of Marxism.

**Katkov, Mikhail Nikiforovich** (1818-87) — Reactionary writer; editor and publisher of *Moskovskiy Vedomosti* (Moscow Gazette) (1863-87), the mouthpiece of monarchist reactionaries. Katkov called himself "the faithful watchdog of the autocracy". His name was associated with the most rabid monarchist reaction.

**Kautsky, Karl** (1854-1938) — One of the leaders and theoreticians of the German social-democrats and the Second International; in 1914, when World War I broke out, adopted a pacifist position; chief ideologist of centrism, an opportunist trend that used Marxist terminology to justify the class-collaborationist reformism of

the SPD; founding member of the centrist Independent Social Democratic Party (USPD) in 1917; an undersecretary in German foreign ministry after November 1918 revolution; opponent of the 1917 Russian Revolution; rejoined the SPD in 1922.

**Khalturin, Stepan Nikolayevich** (1856-82) — Russian revolutionary worker; in 1878 founded the Northern Union of Russian Workers, one of the first illegal political revolutionary organisations. When the group was crushed in 1879, associated himself with the Narodnaya Volya (People's Will) and participated in several terrorist acts; in 1882 was arrested and sentenced to death.

**Kinkel, Johann Gottfried** (1815-82) — German poet and democratic journalist; took part in 1849 uprising in Baden-Palatinate; sentenced to life imprisonment by a Prussian court, he escaped to England in 1850; became a petty-bourgeois refugee leader in London and fought against Marx and Engels.

**Knight, Robert** (1833-1911) — Prominent British trade union leader; in 1871-99 was secretary of the Boilermakers Union and the Amalgamated Union of Boilermakers and Shipbuilders.

**Krichevsky, Boris Naumovich** (1866-1919) — Russian social-democrat and writer, a leader of the Economists; in late 1890s was a leader of the Union of Russian Social-Democrats Abroad, editing the groups magazine *Rabocheye Dyelo* (Workers' Cause) in which he supported Berstein's views. Withdrew from the social-democratic movement after Second Congress of the RSDLP in 1903.

**Krupskaya, Nadezhda** (1869-1939) — Old Bolshevik; companion and collaborator of Lenin; after the revolution played leading role in Soviet education; joined with Zinoviev and Trotsky in United Opposition in 1926-27 but later capitulated to Stalin.

**Kuskova, Yekaterina Dmitryevna** (1869-1958) — Russian bourgeois public figure and writer; supporter of Economism in social-democracy; author of the Economist *Credo*; later supported the Cadets.

**Lafargue, Paul** (1842-1911) — Prominent leader of French workers' movement; member of the General Council of the First International; a founder the French Workers Party (1879); collaborated closely with Marx and Engels; husband of Marx's daughter Laura.

**Lassalle, Ferdinand** (1825-64) — German writer and lawyer. Participated in the 1848-49 revolution. In 1863 he founded the General Association of German Workers but his energetic work was compromised by his dealings with the Prussian chancellor Bismarck. He called on the state to provide aid to establish workers' cooperatives.

- Lenin, Vladimir Ilyich** (1870-1924) — Founder and leader of the Bolshevik Party; principal leader of the October 1917 Russian revolution; founder of the Communist International; outstanding Marxist theorist of 20th century.
- Lessner, Friedrich** (1825-1910) — Prominent figure in the German and international working-class movement; tailor; member of Communist League and participant in 1848-49 revolution; friend of Marx and Engels; member of General Council of First International 1864-72; a founder of British Independent Labour Party.
- Liebkecht, Wilhelm** (1826-1900) — Prominent figure in the German workers' movement, a member of the Communist League (1847-1852) and a founder of the Socialist Workers' Party of Germany (SAP) in 1869.
- Lomonosov, Mikhail Vasilevich** (1711-65) — Great Russian materialist scientist and poet.
- Luxemburg, Rosa** (1871-1919) — Outstanding figure in the international working-class movement; author of a number of important works on economic theory, politics and culture; helped initiate Polish social-democratic movement; from 1897 actively participated in the German social-democratic movement and played a leading role in the struggle against Bernstein and the revisionists; from 1910 she led the revolutionary opposition within German Social-Democratic Party; a founder of the Communist Party of Germany and the editor of its paper, *Die Rote Fahne*; in January 1919 she was arrested and murdered by counter-revolutionary troops of the right-wing social-democratic government.
- Martov, Julius** (1873-1923) — Party name of Y.O. Tserdbaum; a founder with Lenin of the League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class in 1890s; then a leader of the RSDLP and of the Mensheviks after 1903; after the February 1917 revolution he led the centrist "Menshevik Internationalist" group; opposed both Bolshevik revolution and counter-revolutionary White Guards; led Menshevik legal opposition to Bolshevik government 1918-20; emigrated from Russia in 1920 for Berlin where he founded the main publication of the Mensheviks in emigration, *Sotsialistichesky Vestnik*.
- Martynov, A.** (1865-1935) — Theoretician and leader of Economism; actively opposed Lenin's *Iskra* and was later one of the ideologists of Menshevism; a liquidator during the years of reaction 1907-10; joined Bolshevik Party in 1923 as a supporter of Stalin; architect of the "bloc of four classes" in China; Comintern functionary.
- Marx, Karl** (1818-83) — Co-founder with Frederick Engels of scientific socialism; leader of the Communist League 1847-52; co-author of the *Communist Manifesto*; central leader of the International Working Men's Association (the First International) 1864-76; author of *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*.

- Meshchersky, Vladimir Petrovich** (1839-1914) — Reactionary journalist and publisher of the Black Hundred journal *Grazhdanin* (The Citizen).
- Mikhailov, Alexander Dimitriyevich** (1855-84) — A founder of the terrorist Narodnaya Volya (People's Will) and organiser of a number of its actions; arrested in 1880 and sentenced to death, but the sentence was commuted to hard labour for life.
- Mikhailovsky, Nikolai Konstantinovich** (1842-1904) — Russian sociologist, writer and literary critic; prominent theoretician of liberal Narodism who waged a bitter struggle against Marxism.
- Millerand, Alexandre Etienne** (1859-1943) — French politician; betrayed the cause of socialism in 1899, becoming a member of the reactionary bourgeois Waldeck-Rousseau government; subsequently expelled from the Socialist Party; formed Independent Socialist Party; president of French Republic 1920-24.
- Most, Johann** (1846-1906) — German anarchist; in 1860s joined working-class movement; emigrated to England after promulgation of antisocialist Law (1878); in 1880, expelled from Social-Democratic Party for anarchist views; in 1882, emigrated to the United States where he achieved some prominence; denounced trade unions and electoral politics as futile, advocated violent revolution.
- Mülberger, Arthur** (1847-1907) — German petty-bourgeois writer; follower of Proudhon.
- Myshkin, Ippolit Nikitich** (1848-85) — Narodnik leader; in 1875 tried to arrange Chernyshevsky's escape from exile but failed and was arrested.
- Nadezhdin, L. (Zelensky, Yevgeny Osipovich)** (1877-1905) — First a Narodnik, then a social-democrat; in his writings supported the Economists while preaching terrorism as an effective means of "stirring things up"; opposed Lenin's *Iskra*, becoming a contributor to Menshevik periodicals after the Second Congress of the RSDLP.
- Napoleon III** (Louis Bonaparte) (1808-73) — Nephew of Napoleon Bonaparte; following 1848 revolutionary events, became president later that year; carried out a *coup d'état* in 1851 and assumed title of emperor (Napoleon III) of Second Empire; based on financial and industrial bourgeoisie, he carried out an antilabor policy and home and supported reaction abroad; declared war on Prussia in 1870 but was crushed, especially at battle of Sedan; his defeat led to formation of republic.
- Nozdryov** — A character in Gogol's *Dead Souls* whom the author called "an historical personage" for the reason that wherever he went he left behind him a scandalous "history".
- Owen, Robert** (1771-1858) — Great English utopian socialist; as a Welsh factory owner, he formed a model industrial community at New Lanark in Scotland; turning

towards communism he immersed himself in the workers' movement; but he remained a pacifist utopian, opposed the Chartist movement and did not understand the need for an independent workers' party; played an active role in promoting labour legislation and pioneered cooperative societies.

**Ozerov, Ivan Khristoforovich** (1869-1942) — Bourgeois economic specialist, professor of Moscow and St. Petersburg Universities. In 1901-02 came out in support of Zubatov's tactics within the working-class movement.

**Perovskaya, Sophia Lvovna** (1853-81) — Russian revolutionary and member of Narodnaya Volya (People's Will) terrorist organisation; executed for her part in the assassination of Tsar Alexander II.

**Pisarev, Dimitry Ivanovich** (1840-68) — Outstanding Russian revolutionary democrat, writer and literary critic; materialist philosopher.

**Plehkanov, Georgi Valentinovich** (1856-1918) — Leader of the Russian and international working-class movement, first propagandist of Marxism in Russia; he formed the Emancipation of Labour group, the first Russian Marxist organisation, in Geneva in 1883. After the Second Congress of the RSDLP he adopted a conciliating stand towards opportunism, and later joined the Mensheviks; during the 1905 Russian revolution he shared the Menshevik view on all the major questions; during World War I he was a social-chauvinist; he adopted a hostile attitude towards the Bolshevik-led October Revolution, but did not take part in the struggle against the Soviet government.

**Potresov, Alexander Nikolayevich** (1869-1934) — An early Russian Marxist; used pseudonym *Starover* (Old Believer); after 1903 a leading Menshevik; social-chauvinist during World War I; emigrated from Russia after 1917 October Revolution.

**Prokopovich, Sergei Nikoloyevich** (1871-1955) — Bourgeois economic specialist and writer; prominent representative of Economism and one of the first champions of Bernsteinism in Russia.

**Proudhon, Pierre-Joseph** (1809-65) — French publicist, economist and sociologist; ideologist of the petty bourgeoisie and one of the founders of anarchism; in 1848, deputy of the Constituent Assembly. Author of *What Is Property?* (1840) and *The Philosophy of Poverty* (1846). An opponent of Marxist communism, he opposed strikes and participation in the political struggle, advocating instead various schemes (such as a people's bank) to overcome the contradictions of capitalist society.

**Rittinghausen, Moritz** (1814-90) — German petty-bourgeois democrat, in 1848-49 wrote for the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, edited by Marx, and was a member of the First International.

- Rogachov, Dmitry Mikhailovich** (1851-84) — Russian revolutionary Narodnik; prominent member of the terrorist Narodnaya Volya (People's Will); arrested in 1876, sentenced to 10 years hard labour and died in prison.
- Ruge, Arnold** (1802-80) — German journalist, Young Hegelian and bourgeois radical. In 1844 in Paris co-published with Marx the *Deutsche-Französische Jahrbücher*; in 1848 was a deputy to the Frankfurt National Assembly; after 1866 became a national-liberal and a supporter of Bismarck.
- Saint-Simon, Henri** (1760-1825) — Great French utopian socialist. He championed industrial society against feudalism and called for the reorganisation of society along industrial lines with scientists as the new spiritual leaders. Only in his last and most important work, *Le Nouveau Christianisme* (1825), does he directly advocate the cause of the workers, declaring their emancipation to be the final aim of his activities.
- Saltykov-Shchedrin** — Shchedrin was the pseudonym of Mikhail Yevgrafovich Saltykov (1851-1920), a Russian satirist and revolutionary democrat.
- Schramm, Karl August** — German social-democrat, reformist, criticised Marxism; withdrew from political activity in 1880s.
- Schulze-Delitzsch, Hermann** (1808-83) — German vulgar economist and public figure; advocated the harmony of the class interests of capitalists and workers.
- Schweitzer, Johann Baptist von** (1834-75) — German lawyer; Lassallean; president of the General Association of German Workers (1867-71), he was against the affiliation of the German workers to the First International; in 1872 he was expelled from the association when his ties with the Prussian authorities became known.
- Serebryakov, Yesper Alexandrovich** (1854-1921) — Russian revolutionary Narodnik, member of Narodnaya Volya (People's Will); emigrated in 1883; from 1899 to 1902 was publisher in London of the magazine *Nakanune* (On the Eve).
- Sorge, Friedrich** (1828-1906) — Close collaborator of Marx and Engels. Following the 1848-49 revolutionary upsurge in Germany, he emigrated to the United States. He was secretary of the International Working Men's Association (the First International) in 1872.
- Starover** — See *Potresov, Alexander Nikolayevich*.
- Struve, Pyotr** (1870-1944) — Russian bourgeois economist and liberal publicist. In the 1890s he was a leading representative of the reformist "legal Marxism", the Russian variety of Bernsteinian reformism; leading member of the liberal-monarchist Constitutional Democratic Party (Cadets) from its inception in 1905; after 1917 Bolshevik revolution, a member of the Wrangel counter-revolutionary government.

- Tkachov, Pyotr Nikitich** (1844-85) — An ideologist of revolutionary Narodism and follower of Auguste Blanqui; writer and literary critic.
- Tugan-Baranovsky, Mikhail** (1865-1919) — Russian bourgeois economist and prominent “legal Marxist”, subsequently a leader of the liberal-monarchist Constitutional-Democratic Party.
- Vaillant, Edouard** (1840-1915) — French socialist; a leader of Paris Commune (1871); member of the General Council of the First International; a founder of the French Socialist Party (1901); a social-chauvinist during World War I.
- Vanayev, Anatoly Alexeyevich** (1872-99) — Russian social-democrat; in 1895 took active part in organising the St. Petersburg League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class and in preparing the publication of the newspaper *Rabocheye Dyelo* (Workers’ Cause); arrested in connection with the League of Struggle case and exiled to Siberia in 1897.
- Vasilyev, Nikita Vasilyevich** (b. 1855) — Colonel in the tsarist gendarmerie and a champion of Zubatov’s “police socialism”.
- Vollmar, Georg Heinrich von** (1850-1922) — A leader of the social-democratic movement in Bavaria; in 1891 he advanced reformist views, predating Bernstein as the pioneer of the revisionist trend.
- V.V.** (Vorontsov, Vasily Pavlovich) (1847-1918) — Economic specialist and writer, an ideologist of liberal Narodism in the 1880s and 1890s; author of *The Destiny of Capitalism in Russia* and other books in which he repudiated the development of capitalism in Russia and extolled small commodity production; advocated a reconciliation with the tsarist government and was strongly opposed to Marxism.
- Webb, Beatrice** (1858-1943) and her husband, **Sidney** (1859-1947) — Founders of the liberal bourgeois Fabian Society and authors of numerous books on the history of the English labour movement.
- Weitling, Wilhelm** (1808-71) — German utopian communist, wrote *Guarantees of Harmony and Freedom* (1842). He believed communist society could be established by a small conspiratorial organisation, irrespective of actual social and economic conditions and the consciousness of the masses.
- Wilhelm II** (Hohenzollern) (1859-1941) — German emperor and king of Prussia (1888-1918).
- Witte, Sergei Yulyevich** (1849-1915) — Russian statesman, chairman of the Council of Ministers in 1905-06; sought to preserve the monarchy through minor concessions and promises to the liberal bourgeoisie and the brutal suppression of the people.
- Woltmann, Ludwig** (1871-1907) — Reactionary German sociologist and anthropologist;

member of Social-Democratic Party; believed that the economic struggle was the main task of the workers' movement; held that the Germans were a super-race and put forward the idea of world-wide racial conflict.

**Worms, Alphonse** (1868-1937) — Lawyer, professor of Moscow University; liberal; in 1901-02 he lectured at meetings of the Zubatov organisations.

**Zasulich, Vera** (1851-1919) — In 1878 shot and wounded Trepov, chief of St. Petersburg police in protest at flogging of prisoner, her trial resulted in a sensational acquittal; fled abroad; founding member of Russian Marxist movement; sided with Mensheviks after Second Congress of RSDLP; opposed Bolshevik revolution.

**Zhelyabov, Andrei Ivanovich** (1850-81) — Outstanding Russian revolutionary; an organiser and leader of the Narodnaya Volya (People's Will); executed for role in the 1881 assassination of Tsar Alexander II.

**Zubatov, Sergey** (1864-1917) — Tsarist police official; in 1901-03 he set up fake workers' organisations under the protection of the police in an effort to divert the workers from the revolutionary movement. ■

This is the first of two volumes published by Resistance Books providing a selection of the key political writings of V.I. Lenin leading up to the birth of Bolshevism as a political trend and a party organisation.

The current volume deals with Lenin's struggle against the "Economist" trend in the Russian socialist movement. Emerging in the late 1890s, the Economists argued that Russian socialists should restrict their activity to assisting the economic struggles of the workers and not strive to lead the political struggle for democracy in Russia, but should simply assist the bourgeoisie in its attempts to pressure the tsarist autocracy to grant a liberal-democratic constitution.

The centrepiece of the collection presented here is Lenin's famous 1902 polemic, *What Is to Be Done?* In arguing against the Economists Lenin sets out his conception of revolutionary socialist activity, in which the revolutionary party acts as the tribune of the people, striving to lead all the popular struggles of the day and generalise them into a challenge to the whole system.

This requires a party organisation made up of people who, regardless of their class origin, made revolutionary political activity their profession — who are trained by the party to be professional Marxist propagandists, agitators and organisers.

It was this conception of revolutionary party organisation that was to prove spectacularly successful in 1917 and was later generalised by Lenin as a goal of Marxist revolutionary parties everywhere.

*Resistance books*