

WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

BURNING QUESTIONS OF OUR MOVEMENT

V. I. LENIN



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What Is to Be Done?

*Burning Questions of Our
Movement^a*

“...Party struggles lend a party strength and vitality; the greatest proof of the weakness of a party is diffuseness and the blurring of clearly defined boundaries; a party becomes strong by purging itself...”

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

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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*,^b No. 4, May 1901).¹ And we must first of all apologize to the reader for the delay in fulfilling the promise made in that article (and repeated in reply to many private inquiries and letters). One of the reasons for this delay was the attempt made last June (1901) to unite all the Social Democratic organizations abroad. It was natural to wait for the results of this attempt, for if it were successful it would perhaps have been necessary to expound the *Iskra's* views on organization from a somewhat different angle; and in any case, such a success promised to put a very early end to the existence of the two trends in the Russian Social Democratic movement. As the reader knows, the attempt failed, and, as we shall try to show here, was bound to fail after the new swing of the *Rabocheye Dyelo*,² in its issue No. 10, towards Economism. It proved absolutely essential to commence a determined fight against this diffuse and ill-defined, but very persistent trend, one capable of appearing again in diverse forms. Accordingly, the original plan of the pamphlet was altered and very considerably enlarged.

Its main theme was to have been the three questions raised in the article "Where To Begin?"—viz., the character and principal content of our political agitation, our organizational tasks; and the plan for building, simultaneously and from various ends, a militant, all-Russian organization. These questions have long engaged the mind of the author, who already tried to raise them in the *Rabochaya Gazeta* during one of the unsuccessful attempts to revive that paper (see Chap. V). But the original plan to confine this pamphlet to an analysis of only these three questions and to set forth our views as far as possible in a positive form, without entering, or almost without entering, into polemics, proved quite impracticable for two reasons. One was that Economism proved to be much more tenacious than we had supposed (we employ the term Economism

¹ V. I. Lenin, "Where to Begin?" in *Collected Works*, Vol. V.—Ed.

² *Rabocheye Dyelo* (*Workers' Cause*)—a magazine published by the "Economists" at irregular intervals from April 1899 to February 1902 in Geneva. It was the organ of the Union of Russian Social Democrats Abroad, edited by B.N. Krichevsky, A. S. Martynov and V. P. Ivanshin. Altogether 12 issues (of which three were double issues) appeared.—Ed.

in the broad sense, as explained in the *Iskra*, No. 12 [December 1901], in an article entitled “A Conversation With the Advocates of Economism,” which was a synopsis, so to speak, of the present pamphlet).³ It became clear beyond doubt that the differences as to how these three questions should be answered were due much more to the fundamental antithesis between the two trends in the Russian Social Democratic movement than to differences over details. The second reason was that the perplexity displayed by the Economists over the practical application of our views in the *Iskra* revealed quite clearly that we often speak literally different languages, that therefore we *cannot* come to any understanding without beginning *ab ovo*, and that an attempt must be made, in the simplest possible style and illustrated by numerous and concrete examples, *systematically to “thrash out” all* our fundamental points of difference with *all* the Economists. I resolved to make such an attempt to “thrash out” the differences, fully realizing that it would greatly increase the size of the pamphlet and delay its publication, but at the same time I saw *no other way* of fulfilling the promise I made in the article “Where To Begin?” Thus, in addition to apologizing for the delay, I must apologize for the numerous literary shortcomings of the pamphlet. I had to work in the *greatest of haste* and was moreover frequently interrupted by other work.

The examination of the three questions mentioned above still constitutes the main theme of this pamphlet, but I found it necessary to begin with two questions of a more general nature, viz., why an “innocent” and “natural” slogan like “freedom of criticism” should be a real fighting challenge for us, 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 a trade unionist policy and Social Democratic policy, while the exposition of our views on organizational tasks developed into an explanation of the difference between the amateurish methods which satisfy the Economists, and an organization of revolutionaries which in our opinion is indispensable. Further, I advance the “plan” for an all-Russian political newspaper with all the

³ V. I. Lenin, “A Talk With Defenders of Economism” in *Collected Works*, Vol. V.—Ed.

more insistence because of the flimsiness of the objections raised against it, 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 erect the organization we need. Finally, in the concluding part of this pamphlet, I hope to show that we did all we could to prevent a decisive rupture with the Economists, which nevertheless proved inevitable; that the *Rabocheye Dyelo* has acquired a special significance, a "historical" significance, if you will, because it most fully and most graphically expressed, not consistent Economism, but the confusion and vacillation which constitute the distinguishing feature of *a whole period* in the history of the Russian Social Democratic movement; and that therefore the controversy with the *Rabocheye Dyelo*, which may at first sight seem to be waged in too excessive detail, also acquires significance, for we can make no progress until we finally put an end to this period.

N. Lenin
February 1902

I

Dogmatism and “Freedom of Criticism”

A. What is "Freedom of Criticism?"

"Freedom of criticism" is undoubtedly the most fashionable slogan at the present time, and the one most frequently employed in the controversies between the Socialists and democrats of all countries. At first sight, nothing would appear to be more strange than the solemn appeals by one of the parties to the dispute to freedom of criticism. 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 not yet fully grasped the essence of the disagreements among the disputants, but has heard this fashionable slogan repeated at every crossroad. "Evidently this slogan is one of the conventional phrases which, like a nickname, becomes legitimized by use, and becomes almost an appellative," he will conclude.

In fact, it is no secret that two trends have taken shape in the present-day international⁴ Social Democracy. The fight between these trends now flares up in a bright flame and now dies down and smolders under the ashes of imposing "truce resolutions." What this "new" trend, which adopts a "critical" attitude towards "obsolete dogmatic" Marxism, represents has with sufficient precision been *stated* by Bernstein, and *demonstrated* by Millerand.

Social Democracy must change from a party of the social revolution into a democratic party of social reforms. Bernstein has surrounded this political demand with a whole battery of symmetrically arranged

⁴ Incidentally, this perhaps is the only occasion in the history of modern Socialism in which controversies between various trends within the socialist movement have grown from national into international controversies; and this, in its own way, is extremely encouraging. Formerly, the disputes between the Lassalleans and the Eisenachers,^d between the Guesdites and the Possibilists,^e between the Fabians^f and the Social Democrats, and between the Narodnaya Volyaites^g and Social Democrats, remained purely national disputes, reflected purely national features and proceeded, as it were, on different planes. At the present time (this is quite evident now), 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 come out against "dogmatic" Marxism. Perhaps in this first really international battle with socialist opportunism, international revolutionary Social Democracy will become sufficiently strengthened to put an end to the political reaction that has long reigned in Europe?

“new” arguments and reasonings. The possibility of putting Socialism on a scientific basis and of proving from the point of view of the materialist conception of history that it is necessary and inevitable was denied, as was also the growing impoverishment, proletarianization and the intensification of capitalist contradictions. The very conception, “*ultimate aim*,” was declared to be unsound, and the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat was absolutely rejected. It was denied that there is any counter-distinction in principle between liberalism and Socialism. *The theory of the class struggle* was rejected on the 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 resolute turn from revolutionary Social Democracy to bourgeois social-reformism was accompanied by a no less resolute turn towards bourgeois criticism of all the fundamental ideas of Marxism. As this criticism of Marxism has been going on for a long time now, from the political platform, from university chairs, in numerous pamphlets and in a number of learned treatises, as the entire younger generation of the educated classes has been systematically trained 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 Jupiter.⁵ The content of this new trend did not have to grow and take shape, it was transferred bodily from bourgeois literature to socialist literature.

To proceed. If Bernstein’s theoretical criticism and political yearnings are still unclear to anyone, the French have taken the trouble graphically to demonstrate the “new method.” In this instance, too, France has justified its old reputation of being the country in which “more than anywhere else, the historical class struggles were each time fought out to a decision...” (Engels, in his introduction to Marx’s *The Eighteenth Brumaire*).⁶ The French Socialists have begun, not to theorize, but to

⁵ According to the Roman mythology, Jupiter was the chief of the gods, while Minerva was guardian goddess of handicrafts, science and art, of teachers and doctors. Minerva was said to have sprung in helmet and armor, sword in hand, from Jupiter’s head. Her mode of birth was popularly used to illustrate a person or phenomenon as being complete from the very beginning.—*Ed.*

⁶ Lenin quotes a passage from Engels’ “Preface to the Third German Edition” in K. Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Foreign Languages Press, Paris,

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 provided an excellent example of practical Bernsteinism; not without reason did Bernstein and Vollmar rush so zealously to defend and praise 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 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 déportateur)? 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 worker masses—the only basis that can guarantee our victory—the reward for this is pompous *plans* for niggardly reforms, so niggardly 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 brilliant uniforms they don, not 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 opportunistic trend in Social Democracy, the freedom to convert Social Democracy into a democratic party of reform, the freedom to introduce bourgeois ideas and bourgeois elements into Socialism.

"Freedom" is a grand word, but under the banner of free trade the most predatory wars were conducted; under the banner of free labor, the toilers were robbed. The modern use of the term "freedom of criticism" contains the same inherent falsehood. Those who are really convinced

that they have advanced science would demand, not 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 “Long live freedom criticism,” that is heard today, too strongly calls to mind the fable of the empty barrel.⁷

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 under their almost constant fire. We have combined voluntarily, precisely for the purpose of fighting the enemy, and not to retreat into the adjacent 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 several among us begin to cry out: let us go into this marsh! And when we begin to shame them, they retort: how conservative 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 been solemnly advanced, very recently, in No. 10 of the *Rabocheye Dyelo*, the organ of the Union of Russian Social Democrats Abroad,^h not as a theoretical postulate, but as a political demand, as a reply to the question: “is it possible to unite the Social Democratic organizations operating abroad?”—“in order that unity may be durable, there must be freedom of criticism” (p. 36).

⁷ From Ivan Andreyevich Krylov’s fable “Two Barrels.” One barrel was empty and rattled on the cart with such deafening noise that passers-by all tried to keep out of the way.—*Ed.*

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

The *Rabocheye Dyelo* is "particularly" displeased with the *Iskra's* and the *Zarya's*ⁱ "inclination to predict a rupture between the *Mountain* and the *Gironde* in international Social Democracy."⁸

B. Krichevsky, editor of the *Rabocheye Dyelo*, writes:

Generally speaking, this talk about the *Mountain* and the *Gironde* that is 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 ideologist historians may think, but different classes or strata—the middle bourgeoisie, on the one hand, and the petit 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, *all* of its diverse forms including the most pronounced Bernsteinians, stand on the basis of the class interests of the proletariat and of its class struggle for political and economic emancipation. (pp. 32-33)

A bold assertion! Has not B. 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 secured such a rapid spread of Bernsteinism? And what is most important—on what does our author base his opinion that even "the most pronounced Bernsteinians" stand on the basis of the class struggle for the political and eco-

⁸ A comparison between the two trends among the revolutionary proletariat (the revolutionary and the opportunist), and the two trends among the revolutionary bourgeoisie in the eighteenth century (the Jacobin, known as the *Mountain*, and the Girondist) was made in a leading article in No. 2 of the *Iskra* (February 1901). This article was written by Plekhanov. The Cadets,^j the *Bezzaglavtsi*^k and the Mensheviks to this day love to refer to the Jacobinism in Russian Social Democracy but they prefer to remain silent about, or... to forget the circumstance that Plekhanov used this term for the first time against the Right wing of Social Democracy. [Author's note to the 1907 edition.—Ed.]

conomic emancipation of the proletariat? No one knows. This determined defense of the most pronounced Bernsteinians is not supported by any argument or ideas 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 opinion of a whole tendency based on nothing more than what the representatives of that tendency say about themselves? Can anything more shallow be imagined than the subsequent “homily” about the two different and even diametrically opposite types, or paths, of party development (*Rabocheye Dyelo*, pp. 34-35)? The German Social Democrats, you see, recognize complete freedom of criticism, but the French do not, and it is precisely their example that demonstrates all the “harmfulness of intolerance.”

To which we reply that the very example of B. Krichevsky proves that the name of Marxists is sometimes assumed by people who regard history literally from the “Ilovaisky”¹ point of view. 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 country with republican parliamentarism in the other, or to analyze the effects of the Paris Commune and the effects of the Anti-Socialist Law;⁹ to compare the economic life and economic development of the two countries, or recall that “the unexampled growth of German Social Democracy” was accompanied by a strenuous struggle, unexampled in the history of Socialism, not only against mistaken theories (Mühlberger,

⁹ *The Anti-Socialist Law* was introduced in Germany in 1878. It provided for the prohibition of all Social Democratic organizations, mass labor organizations, the labor press, the confiscation of socialist literature and the persecution of Social Democrats. The law was repealed in 1890 under pressure by the mass working-class movement.—*Ed.*

Dühring,¹⁰ the Katheder-Socialists¹¹), but also against mistaken tactics (Lassalle), etc., etc. All that is superfluous! The French quarrel among themselves because they are intolerant; the Germans are united because they are good boys.

And observe, this piece of matchless profundity is intended to "refute" the fact which is a complete answer to the defense of the Bernsteinians. The question as to whether the Bernsteinians *do stand* on the basis of the class struggle of the proletariat can be completely and irrevocably answered only by historical experience. Consequently, the example of France is the most important one in this respect, because it 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. the *Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 2-3, pp. 83-84). The reference to the "intolerance" of the French, apart from its "historical" significance (in the Nozdryov sense¹²), turns out to be merely an attempt to obscure very unpleasant facts with angry invectives.

Nor are we at all prepared to make a present of the Germans to B. Krichевsky and to the numerous other champions of "freedom of

¹⁰ 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, uncomradely polemics, etc., were even publicly hurled at Engels at the Party Congress. At the Congress of 1877, Most, and his supporters, moved a resolution to prohibit the publication of Engels' articles in the *Vorwärts*^m because "they do not interest the overwhelming majority of the readers," and Wahlteich declared that the publication of these articles had caused great damage to the Party, that Dühring too had rendered services to Social Democracy: "We must utilize everyone in the interest of the party; let the professors engage in polemics if they care to do so, but the *Vorwärts* is not the place in which to conduct them." (*Vorwärts*, No. 65, June 6, 1877.) This, as you see, is another example of the defense 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 over it!

¹¹ *The Katheder-Socialists (Socialists of the Chair)*—a trend in bourgeois political economy, originated in Germany in the seventies and eighties of the nineteenth century. The Katheder-Socialists used their position as university lecturers to preach bourgeois-liberal reformism under the guise of Socialism. Their contention was that the bourgeois state stood above classes, was capable of reconciling hostile classes, gradually introducing "Socialism" without encroaching on the interests of the capitalists and, as far as possible, of taking into account the demands of the workers. The views of the Katheder-Socialists were advocated in Russia by the "legal Marxists."—*Ed.*

¹² *Nozdryov*—a character in Gogol's *Dead Souls*, landowner, troublemaker and rascal. Gogol called Nozdryov a "historical" personage because wherever he appeared he left behind a "history" of trouble making.—*Ed.*

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 Hanover resolution,ⁿ which emphatically rejected Bernstein’s “amendments,” and to the Lübeck resolution,^o 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 one or another *method* 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, “The most pronounced Bernsteinians stand on the basis of the class struggle of the proletariat, for political and economic emancipation,” means failing absolutely to understand what is going on before everybody’s eyes.¹³

Nor is that all. As we have already observed, the *Rabocheye Dyelo* demands “freedom of criticism,” and defends Bernsteinism before *Russian* Social Democracy. Apparently it came to the conclusion that we were unfair to our “critics” and the Bernsteinians. Which ones? Who was unfair? Where and when? What was the unfairness? About this, not a word. The *Rabocheye Dyelo* does not name a single Russian critic or Bernsteinian! All that is left for us to do is to make one of two possible suppositions: *Either*, that the unfairly treated party is none other than the *Rabocheye Dyelo* itself (and this is confirmed by the fact that in the

¹³ It should be observed that the *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 on these facts. See, for example, the reports of the Stuttgart Congress^p in No. 2-3 (p. 66), in which all the disagreements are reduced to disagreements over “tactics,” and the bare statement is made that the overwhelming majority remain true to the previous revolutionary tactics. Or take No. 4-5 (p. 25 *et seq.*), in which we have a bare paraphrasing of the speeches delivered at the Hanover Congress, and a reprint of the resolution moved by Bebel. An exposition and criticism of Bernstein’s views is 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 enormous majority of the congress,” and a few lines lower: “...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 the *Rabocheye Dyelo*, apparently having lost faith in the correctness of Bebel’s position, repeats David’s views as its own!

two articles in No. 10 reference is made only to the wrongs suffered by the *Rabocheye Dyelo* at the hands of the *Zarya* and the *Iskra*). If that is the case, how is the strange fact to be explained that the *Rabocheye Dyelo*, which always vehemently dissociates itself from all solidarity with Bernsteinism, could not defend itself, without putting in a word on behalf 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 the *Rabocheye Dyelo* is continuing to play the game of hide-and-seek that it has played (as we shall show further on) ever since it commenced publication. And note this *first* practical application of the much vaunted "freedom of criticism." As a matter of 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's⁹ apt expression) proposes, for the treatment of this disease, to *copy word for word* the latest German prescription for the treatment of the German variety of the disease! Instead of freedom of criticism—slavish (worse: monkey-like) imitation. The very same social and political content of modern international opportunism reveals itself in a variety of ways according to its national peculiarities. In one country the opportunists long ago came out under a separate flag, in another they ignored theory and in practice pursued the policy of the Radical-Socialists; in a third country, several members of the revolutionary party have deserted to the camp of opportunism and strive to achieve their aims not by an open struggle for principles and for new tactics, but by gradual, imperceptible and, if one may so express it, unpunishable corruption of their party. In a fourth country again, similar deserters employ the same methods in the gloom of political slavery, and with an absolutely unique combination of "legal" with "illegal" activity, etc., etc. To talk about freedom of criticism and 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, is tantamount to talking for the purpose of saying nothing.

Let us ourselves try, if only in a few words, to say what the *Rabocheye Dyelo* did not want to say (or perhaps did not even understand).

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 the change of progressive public opinion towards Marxism on the other, was marked by the combination of obviously heterogeneous elements under a common flag for the purpose also of fighting a common enemy (an 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 eighties or the beginning of the nineties would have believed possible. In a country ruled by an autocracy, in which the press is completely shackled, and in a period of terrific political reaction in which even the tiniest outgrowth of political discontent and protest was persecuted, the theory of revolutionary Marxism suddenly forces its way into the *censored* literature, and though expounded in Aesopian language, is understood by the “interested.” The government had accustomed itself to regarding only the theory of (revolutionary) Narodnaya Volya-ism as dangerous, without, as is usually the case, observing its internal evolution, and rejoicing at any criticism leveled against it. Quite a considerable time elapsed (according to our Russian calculations) before the government realized 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 Marxist novices who were caught in this atmosphere, there should be more than one “author who got a swelled head...”¹⁴

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

¹⁴ *The Author Who Got a Swelled Head*—the title of one of Maxim Gorky’s early stories.—*Ed.*

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; and this was the conclusion (so strikingly confirmed by their subsequent "critical" development) that suggested itself to some people, even when the "alliance" was still intact.¹⁵

That being the case, does not the responsibility for the subsequent "confusion" rest mainly upon the revolutionary Social Democrats who entered into the alliance with the future "critics?" This question, together with a reply in the affirmative, is sometimes heard from people with excessively rigid views. But these people are absolutely 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 vulgarized form) became very widespread. More over, the alliance was not concluded altogether without "conditions." The proof: the burning by the censor, in 1895, of the Marxist symposium, *Materials on the Problem of the Economic Development of Russia*.¹ 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 in so far as its democratic tasks, brought to the front 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

¹⁵ This refers to an article by K. Tulin [Lenin—*Ed.*] written against Struve. [See V. I. Lenin, "The Economic Content of Narodism and the Criticism of it in Mr. Struve's Book" in *Collected Works*, Vol. I.] The article was compiled from an essay entitled "The Reflection of Marxism in Bourgeois Literature." [Author's note to the 1907 edition.—*Ed.*]

and corrupted socialist consciousness by vulgarizing Marxism, by advocating the theory that social antagonisms were being toned down, 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 tantamount to bourgeois democracy denying 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 a rupture was necessary. But the “peculiar” feature of Russia manifested itself in 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 of “demolishing” Marxism, entrenched themselves in this literature. Catchwords like: “Against orthodoxy” and “Long live freedom of criticism” (now repeated by the *Rabocheye Dyelo*) immediately became the fashion, and the fact that neither the censor nor the gendarmes could resist this fashion is apparent from the publication of *three* Russian editions of Bernstein’s celebrated book (celebrated in the Herostratus sense)¹⁶ and from the fact that the books by Bernstein, Mr. Prokopovich and others were recommended by Zubatov¹⁷ (*Iskra*, No. 10). Upon the Social Democrats was now imposed a task that was difficult in itself, and made incredibly more difficult by purely external obstacles, viz., the task of combating the new trend. And this trend did not confine itself to the sphere of literature. The turn towards “criticism” was accompanied by the inclination towards “Economism” among Social Democratic practical workers.

The manner in which the connection between, and inter-dependence of, legal criticism and illegal Economism arose and grew is an interesting subject in itself, and could serve as the subject of a special article. We need only note here that this connection undoubtedly existed. The

¹⁶ Herostratus was a Greek in Asia Minor. To get a name for himself, he set fire in 356 B.C. to Artemis Temple, a famous artistic building of ancient Greece.—*Ed.*

¹⁷ *Zubatov*—chief of the Moscow secret police, the moving spirit of “police socialism” in Russia. Zubatov set up bogus labor organizations under the aegis of the gendarmes and police, in an effort to deflect the workers from the revolutionary movement.—*Ed.*

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," viz., let the workers carry on the economic struggle (it would be more correct to say the trade unionist struggle, because the later 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, and legal criticism meant fulfilling the second part. This statement was such an excellent weapon against Economism that, had there been no *Credo*, it would have been worth inventing.

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 day¹⁸ has heard complaints and reproaches to the effect that copies of the résumé of the speakers 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 Economists, viz., a 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, the *Rabochaya Mysl*,¹⁹ and by the *Rabocheye Dyelo* (which was indignant over the publication of "Economist" documents in the *Vademecum*²⁰), as well as by the Kiev Committee, which two years ago refused to permit the publication of its *profession de*

¹⁸ 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). The protest and the *Credo* were published abroad in the spring of 1900. [See V. I. Lenin, "Declaration of the Editorial Board of *Iskra*" in *Collected Works*, Vol. IV.—*Ed.*] It is now known from the article written by Madame Kuskova, I think in *Byloye*,¹ that she was the author of the *Credo*, and that Mr. Prokopovich was very prominent among the "Economists" abroad at that time. [Author's note to the 1907 edition.—*Ed.*]

¹⁹ *Rabochaya Mysl* (*The Workers' Thought*)—newspaper of the "Economists," published from October 1897 to December 1902. Sixteen issues appeared: Nos. 3 to 11, and 16 in Berlin, and the others in St. Petersburg. Edited by K. M. Takhtaryov and others.—*Ed.*

²⁰ *Vademecum for the Editors of the Rabocheye Dyelo*—the title of a collection of materials and documents compiled and prefaced by G. V. Plekhanov and published by the Emancipation of Labor-group in Geneva in 1900. It exposed the opportunist views of the Union of the Russian Social Democrats Abroad and of the editors of its organ, the *Rabocheye Dyelo*.—*Ed.*

foi,²¹ together with a repudiation of it,²¹ and by many, many other individual representatives of Economism.

This fear of criticism being displayed by the advocates of freedom of criticism cannot be attributed solely to craftiness (although, on occasion, no doubt craftiness has something to do with it: it would be unwise to expose the young and as yet frail shoots of the new trend to attacks by opponents). No, the majority of the Economists quite sincerely disapprove (and by the very nature of Economism they must disapprove) of all theoretical controversies, factional disagreements, broad political questions, schemes for organizing revolutionaries, etc. "Leave all that to the people abroad!" said a fairly consistent Economist to me one day, and thereby he expressed a very widespread (and again a purely trade unionist) view: our work, he said, is the working-class movement, the workers' organizations, here, in our parts; all the rest are merely the inventions of doctrinaires, an "exaggeration of the importance of ideology," as the authors of the letter, published in the *Iskra*, No. 12, expressed it, in unison with the *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 desired to oppose opportunism, in deeds and not merely in words? First of all, they should have made efforts to resume the theoretical work that the period of "legal Marxism" had only just begun, and that has now again fallen on the shoulders of the illegal workers. Without such work, the successful growth of the movement was impossible. Secondly, they should have actively combated legal "criticism" that was greatly corrupting people's minds. 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 tactics.

That the *Rabocheye Dyelo* did none of these things is well known, and further on we shall deal in detail with this well-known fact from various aspects. At the moment, however, we desire merely to show what a glaring contradiction there is between the demand for "freedom of crit-

²¹ As far as our information goes, the composition of the Kiev Committee has changed since then.

icism" and the specific features of our native criticism and Russian Economism. Indeed, glance at the text of the resolution in which the Union of Russian Social Democrats Abroad endorsed the point of view of the *Rabocheye Dyelo*.

In the interests of the further ideological development of Social Democracy, we recognize the freedom to criticize Social Democratic theory in Party literature to be absolutely necessary in so far as this criticism does not run counter to the class and revolutionary character of this theory. (*Two Congresses*, p. 10)

And the argumentation? The resolution "in its first part coincides with the resolution of the Lübeck Party Congress on Bernstein...." In the simplicity of their souls the "Unionists" failed to observe what a *testimonium paupertatis* (certificate of poverty) they give themselves by this piece of imitateness.... "But... in its second part, it restricts freedom of criticism much more than did the Lübeck Party Congress."

So the Union's resolution was directed against the Russian Bernsteinians? If it was not, then the reference to Lübeck would be utterly absurd! But it is not true to say that it "restricts freedom of criticism." In passing their Hanover 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 in the resolution. Our "free" imitators, however, do not make a single allusion to a single manifestation of Russian "criticism" and Russian Economism and, 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 refuses to identify "so-called Economism" with opportunism (*Two Congresses*, p. 8, para. I). But all this *en passant*. The main thing to note is that the opportunist attitude towards revolutionary Social Democrats in Russia is the very opposite of that in Germany. In that country, as we know, revolutionary Social Democrats are in favor of preserving what is: the old program and tactics which are universally known, and have been elucidated in all their details by many decades of experience. The "critics" want to introduce changes, and as these critics represent an insignificant minority, and as 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 Economists who are in favor of preserving what is: the “critics” want us to continue to regard them as Marxists, and to guarantee them the “freedom of criticism” which they enjoyed to the full (for, as a matter of fact, they never recognized any kind of *Party* ties,²² and, moreover, we never had a generally recognized Party body which could “restrict freedom” of criticism, if only by council); the Economists want the revolutionaries to recognize the “sovereign character of the present movement” (*Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 10, p. 25), *i.e.*, to recognize the “legitimacy” of what exists; 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” published in the *Iskra*, No. 12); they want recognition for the struggle “that is at all possible for the workers under the present conditions,” and, as the only possible struggle, the one “they are actually conducting at the present time” (Special Supplement to the *Rabochaya Mysl*,^v p. 14). We revolutionary Social Democrats, on the contrary, are dissatisfied with this worshiping of spontaneity, *i.e.*, worshiping what is “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 the *Iskra*.)²³ In a word,

²² The very absence of public Party ties and Party traditions marks such a cardinal difference between Russia and Germany that it should have warned all sensible Socialists against blind imitation. But here is an example 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 cooperative societies) “apparently remains excessively tied by the opinions of his Party, and although he disagrees with it in details, he dare not reject the common principle” (*Capitalism and Agriculture*, Vol. II, p. 287). The subject of a politically enslaved state, in which nine hundred and ninety-nine out of a thousand of the population are corrupted to the marrow of their bones by political subservience, and completely lack the conception of Party honor and Party ties, superciliously reprimands a citizen of a constitutional state for being excessively “tied by the opinion of his Party!” Our illegal organizations have nothing else to do, of course, but draw up resolutions about freedom of criticism....

²³ V. I. Lenin, “Declaration of the Editorial Board of *Iskra*,” *op. cit.*—*Ed.*

the Germans stand for what is and reject changes; we demand changes, and reject subservience to, and conciliation with, what is.

This "little" difference our "free" copyists of German resolutions failed to notice!

D. Engels of 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 the *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 another question:

Who are the judges?

Before us lie two publisher's announcements. One, *The Program of the Periodical Organ of the Union of Russian Social Democrats—the "Rabocheye Dyelo"* (reprint from No. 1 of the *Rabocheye Dyelo*), and the other an announcement of the resumption of the publications of the Emancipation of Labor group.¹⁰ Both are dated 1899, a time when the "crisis of Marxism" had long since been under discussion. And what do we find? You 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. Of theoretical work and the urgent tasks that now confront it, not a word is said, either in this program or in the supplements to it that were adopted by the Third Congress of the Union in 1901 (*Two Congresses*, pp. 15-18). During the whole of this time the editorial board of the *Rabocheye Dyelo* ignored theoretical questions, in spite of the fact that these questions were agitating the minds of all Social Democrats all over the world.

The other announcement, on the contrary, points first of all to the decreased interest in theory observed 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 the *Zarya* that have appeared show how this program has been carried out.

Thus we see that high-sounding phrases against the ossification of thought, etc., conceal unconcern for and impotence in the development of theoretical thought. The case of the Russian Social Democrats very strikingly illustrates the phenomenon observed in the whole of Europe (and long ago noted also by the German Marxists) that the celebrated freedom of criticism does not imply the substitution of one theory for another, but freedom from all integral and considered 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 the *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."²⁴ To repeat these words in a period of theoretical chaos 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, 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 principle, do not make "concessions" in questions of theory. This was Marx's idea, and yet there are people among us who strive—in his name—to belittle the significance of theory!

Without a revolutionary theory, there can be no revolutionary movement. This thought 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 more circumstances, which are often forgotten: firstly, by the fact that our Party is only in process of formation, its features are only just becoming outlined, and it is yet far from having settled accounts with other trends of revolutionary thought, which threaten to divert the movement

²⁴ K. Marx, F. Engels, "Marx to W. Bracke In Brunswick" in *Selected Works in Three Volumes*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1970, Vol. III, pp. 11-12—Ed.

from the correct path. On the contrary, precisely the very recent past was marked by a revival of non-Social Democratic revolutionary trends (which Axelrod long ago warned the Economists would happen). Under these circumstances, what at first sight appears to be an "unimportant" mistake may lead to most deplorable consequences, and only shortsighted people can consider factional disputes and a strict differentiation between shades inopportune or superfluous. The fate of Russian Social Democracy for many, many years to come may depend on the strengthening of one or 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 also that a movement that is starting in a young country can be successful only if it implements the experience of other countries. And in order to implement this experience, it is not enough merely to be acquainted with it, or simply to transcribe the latest resolutions. What it requires is the ability to treat this experience critically and to test it independently. Anybody who realizes 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 fulfill this task.

Thirdly, the national tasks of Russian Social Democracy are such as have never confronted any other socialist party in the world. Further on we shall have occasion to deal with the political and organizational duties which the task of emancipating the whole people from the yoke of autocracy imposes upon us. At this point, we only wish to state that *the role of vanguard fighter can be fulfilled only by a party that is guided by the most advanced theory*. In order to get some 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 seventies; let him ponder over the world significance which Russian literature is now acquiring; let him... but that is enough!

Let us quote what Engels said in 1874 concerning the significance of theory in the Social Democratic movement. Engels recognizes not two forms of the great struggle of Social Democracy (political and economic),

as is the fashion among us, *but three, placing on a par with the first two the theoretical struggle*. 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*,²⁵ which has long become a great bibliographical rarity.

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 organization 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

²⁵ Dritter Abdruck, Leipzig, 1875. Verlag der Genossenschaftsbuchdruckerei, (*The Peasant War in Germany*, Third impression, Co-operative Publishers, Leipzig, 1875.)—Ed.

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 utilize 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 used the advantages of their situation with rare understanding. For the first time since the working-class movement has existed, the struggle is being waged in a planned way from its three coordinated and interconnected sides, the theoretical, the political and the practical-economic (resistance to the capitalists). 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 honor 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 organization both of the party and of the trade unions.

If the German workers proceed 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 will, nevertheless, occupy an honorable 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.²⁶

Engels' words proved prophetic. Within a few years the German workers were subjected to unexpectedly grave trials in the shape of the Anti-Socialist Law. And the German workers really met them armed for battle and succeeded in emerging from them victoriously.

The Russian proletariat will have to undergo trials immeasurably more grave; it will have to fight a monster compared with which the Anti-Socialist Law in a constitutional country seems but a pygmy. History has now confronted us with an immediate task, which is the *most revolutionary* of all the *immediate* tasks that confront the proletariat of any country. The fulfillment of this task, the destruction of the most powerful bulwark, not only of European but also (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 honorable title already earned by our predecessors, the revolutionaries of the seventies, if we succeed in inspiring our movement—which is a thousand times broader and deeper—with the same devoted determination and vigor.

²⁶ Lenin is quoting from Engels' Preface to *The Peasant War in Germany*, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1956, pp. 32-34.—Ed.

II

The Spontaneity of the Masses and the Consciousness of the Social Democrats

We have said that our movement, much wider and deeper than the movement of the seventies, must be inspired with the same devoted determination and vigor that inspired the movement at that time. Indeed, no one, we think, has up to 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 most astonishing discovery has been made, which threatens to overthrow all the views that had hitherto prevailed on this question. This discovery was made by the *Rabocheye Dyelo*, which in its controversy with the *Iskra* and the *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.” The *Rabocheye Dyelo* formulated its indictment as a *belittling of the significance of the objective or the spontaneous element of development*.²⁷ To this we say: if the controversy with the *Iskra* and the *Zarya* resulted in nothing more than causing the *Rabocheye Dyelo* to hit upon these “general disagreements,” that result alone would give us considerable satisfaction, so significant is this thesis and so clearly does it illuminate the quintessence of the present-day theoretical and political differences that exist among Russian Social Democrats.

That is why the question of the relation between consciousness and spontaneity is of such enormous general interest, and that is why this question must be dealt with in great detail.

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 nineties. The strikes that followed the famous St. Petersburg industrial war of 1896 assumed a similar wholesale character. The fact that these strikes spread over the whole of Russia clearly showed how deep the newly awakening popular movement was, and if we are to speak of the “spontaneous element” then, of course, it is this movement which,

²⁷ *Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 10, September 1901, pp. 17-18. *Rabocheye Dyelo*’s italics.

first and foremost, must be regarded as spontaneous. But there is spontaneity and spontaneity. Strikes occurred in Russia in the seventies and sixties (and even in the first half of the nineteenth century), and were accompanied by the “spontaneous” destruction of machinery, etc. Compared with these “riots” the strikes of the nineties might even be described as “conscious,” to such an extent do they mark the progress which the working-class movement had 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 riots 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. They began... I shall not say to understand, but to sense the necessity for collective resistance, and definitely abandoned their slavish submission to their superiors. But this was, nevertheless, more in the nature of outbursts of desperation and vengeance than of *struggle*. The strikes of the nineties revealed far greater flashes of consciousness: definite demands were advanced, the strike was carefully timed, known cases and examples in other places were discussed, etc. While the riots were simply revolts of the oppressed, the systematic strikes represented the class struggle in embryo, but only in embryo. Taken by themselves, these strikes were simply trade union struggles, but not yet Social Democratic struggles. They testified to 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 nineties, in spite of the enormous progress they represented as compared with the “riots,” remained a purely spontaneous movement.

We have said that *there could not yet be* Social Democratic consciousness among the workers. It could only 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

labor legislation, etc.²⁸ The theory of Socialism, however, grew out of the philosophic, historical and economic theories that were elaborated by the educated representatives of the propertied classes, the intellectuals. According to 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 quite independently of the spontaneous growth of the working-class movement, it arose as a natural and inevitable outcome of the development of ideas among the revolutionary socialist intelligentsia. At the time of which we are speaking, i.e., the middle of the nineties, this doctrine not only represented the completely formulated program of the Emancipation of Labor 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 masses of the workers, the awakening to conscious life and conscious struggle, and a revolutionary youth, armed with the Social Democratic theory, eager to come into contact with the workers. In this connection it is particularly important to state the oft-forgotten (and comparatively little-known) fact that the early Social Democrats of that period *zealously carried on economic agitation* (being guided in this by the really useful instructions contained in the pamphlet *On Agitation* that was still in manuscript), but they did not regard this as their sole task. On the contrary, *right from the very beginning* they advanced the widest historical tasks of Russian Social Democracy in general, and the task of overthrowing the autocracy in particular. For example, already 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 the *Rabocheye Dyelo*. This issue was ready to go to press when it was seized by the gendarmes who, on the night of December 8, 1895, raided the house of one of the members of the group, Anatoli Alex-

²⁸ 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.

eyeovich Vaneyev,²⁹ and so the original *Rabocheye Dyelo* was not destined to see the light of day. The leading article in this issue (which perhaps in some thirty years' time some *Russkaya Starina*³⁰ will unearth in the archives of the Department of Police) described the historical tasks of the working class in Russia, of which the achievement of political liberty is regarded as the most important. This issue also contained an article entitled "What Are Our Cabinet Ministers Thinking Of?"³¹ which dealt with the breaking up of the elementary education committees by the police. In addition, there was some correspondence, not only from St. Petersburg, but from other parts of Russia too (for example, a letter about the assault on the workers in Yaroslavl Gubernia). This, if we are not mistaken, "first effort" of the Russian Social Democrats of the nineties was not a narrow, local, and certainly not an "economic" newspaper, but one that aimed to unite the strike movement with the revolutionary movement against the autocracy, and to win all who were oppressed by the policy of reactionary obscurantism over to the side of Social Democracy. 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. The same thing must be said with regard to the *S. Peterburgsky Rabochy Listok*³² and particularly with regard to the *Rabochaya Gazeta* and the *Manifesto* of the Russian Social Democratic Labor

²⁹ 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.

³⁰ *Russkaya Starina*—a monthly journal of history published in St. Petersburg from 1870 to 1918.—*Ed.*

³¹ V. I. Lenin, "What Are Our Ministers Thinking About?" in *Collected Works*, Vol. II.—*Ed.*

³² *S. Peterburgsky Rabochy Listok* (*St. Petersburg Workers' Sheet*)—an illegal newspaper, organ of the St. Petersburg League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class. Two issues appeared: No. 1 in February (marked January), 1897 (mimeographed in Russia in 300-400 copies); and No. 2 in September 1897 in Geneva.—*Ed.*

Party, which was 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. For that reason it is extremely important to establish the fact that part (perhaps even a majority) of the Social Democrats, operating in the period of 1895-98, quite justly considered it possible even then, at the very beginning of the "spontaneous" movement, to come forward with a most extensive program and militant tactics.³³ The lack of training of the majority of the revolutionaries, being quite a natural phenomenon, could not have aroused any particular fears. Since the tasks were correctly defined, since the energy existed for repeated attempts to fulfill these tasks, temporary failures were not such a great misfortune. Revolutionary experience and organizational skill are things that can be acquired provided the desire is there to acquire them, provided the shortcomings are recognized—which in revolutionary activity is more than halfway towards removing them!

But what was not a great misfortune became a real misfortune when this consciousness began to grow dim (it was very much alive among the workers of the group mentioned), when people—and even Social Democratic organs—appeared who were prepared to regard shortcomings as virtues, who even tried to invent a *theoretical* basis for *slavish cringing before spontaneity*. It is time to summarize this trend, the substance of which is incorrectly and too narrowly described as "Economism."

³³ "In adopting a hostile attitude towards the activities of the Social Democrats of the end of the nineties, the *Iskra* ignores the fact that at that time the conditions for any other kind of work except the struggle for petty demands were absent," declare the Economists in their *Letter to Russian Social Democratic Organs*. (*Iskra*, No. 12.) The facts quoted above show that the assertion about "absent conditions" is *the very opposite of the truth*. Not only at the end, but even in the middle of the nineties, all the conditions existed for other work, besides fighting for petty demands, all the conditions—except sufficient training of the leaders. Instead of frankly admitting our, the ideologists', the leaders', lack of sufficient training—the "Economists" want to shift the blame entirely upon the "absent conditions," upon the influences of material environment that determine the road from which it will be impossible for any ideologist to divert the movement. What is this but slavish cringing before spontaneity, but the infatuation of the "ideologists" with their own shortcomings?

B. Bowing to Spontaneity. The *Rabochaya Mysl*

Before dealing with the literary manifestation of this subservience, we should like to note the following characteristic fact (communicated to us from the above-mentioned source), which throws some light on the circumstances 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^y at which “old” and “young” members of the League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class gathered. The conversation centered chiefly around the question of organization, and particularly around the “rules for the workers’ benefit fund,” which, in their final form, were published in the *Listok Rabotnika*,³⁴ No. 9-10, p. 46. Sharp differences were immediately revealed between the “old” members (“Decembrists,” as the St. Petersburg Social Democrats jestingly called them) and several of the “young” members (who subsequently actively collaborated on the *Rabochaya Mysl*), and a very heated discussion ensued. The “young” members defended the main principles of the rules in the form in which they were published. The “old” members said that the prime necessity was not this, but the consolidation of the League of Struggle into an organization of revolutionaries to which all the various workers’ benefit funds, students’ propaganda circles, etc., should be subordinated. It goes without saying that the controversialists had no suspicion at that time that these disagreements were the beginning of a divergence; on the contrary, they regarded them as being of an isolated and casual nature. But this fact shows that in Russia too “Economism” did not arise and spread without a fight against the “old” Social Democrats (the Economists of today are apt to forget this). And if, in the main, this struggle has not left “documentary” traces behind it, it is solely because the membership of the circles functioning at that time underwent such constant change

³⁴ *Listok Rabotnika* (*The Workingman’s Sheet*)—published in Geneva by the Union of Russian Social Democrats Abroad from 1896 to 1899; ten issues appeared. Issues 1 to 8 were edited by the Emancipation of Labor group, which, with the majority of the Union swinging to “Economism,” refused to continue editing its publications. No. 9-10 was brought out by a new editorial board formed by the Union.—Ed.

that no continuity was established and, consequently, differences were not recorded in any documents.

The appearance of the *Rabochaya Mysl* brought Economism to the light of day, but not all at once. We must picture to ourselves concretely the conditions of the work and the short-lived character of the majority of the Russian circles (and only those who have experienced this can have any exact idea of it), in order to understand how much there was accidental in the successes and failures of the new trend in various towns, and for how long a time neither the advocates nor the opponents of this “new” trend could make up their minds—indeed they had no opportunity to do so—as to whether this was really a distinct trend or whether it was merely an expression of the lack of training of certain individuals. For example, the first mimeographed copies of the *Rabochaya Mysl* never reached the great majority of Social Democrats, and we are able to refer to the leading article in the first number only because it was reproduced in an article by V. I.³⁵ (*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 the plans for papers mentioned above.³⁶ And this leading article deserves to be dealt with because it so strongly expresses the *spirit* of the *Rabochaya Mysl* and Economism generally.

After stating that the arm of the “blue-coats”³⁷ could never stop 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,” and this fundamental thesis is then developed in greater detail. As a matter of fact, the leaders (i.e., the Social Democrats, the organizers of the League of Struggle) were, one might say, torn out of the hands of the workers³⁸ by the police; yet it is made

³⁵ An article by V. I.—reference is to an article by V. P. Ivanshin.—*Ed.*

³⁶ It should be stated in passing that the praise of the *Rabochaya Mysl* in November 1898, when Economism had become fully defined, especially abroad, emanated from that same V. I., who very soon after became one of the editors of the *Rabocheye Dyelo*. And yet the *Rabocheye Dyelo* denied that there were two trends in Russian Social Democracy, and continues to deny it to this day!

³⁷ The tsarist gendarmes wore blue uniforms.—*Ed.*

³⁸ That this simile is a correct one is shown by the following characteristic fact. When, after the arrest of the “Decembrists,” the news was spread among the workers of the

to appear that the workers were fighting against the leaders and liberated themselves from their yoke! Instead of sounding the call to go forward, towards the consolidation of the revolutionary organization and to the expansion of political activity, the call for a *retreat* to the purely trade union struggle was issued. 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 “Fight for economic conditions” (!) or, still better, “The workers for the workers.” It was declared that strike funds “are more valuable for the movement than a hundred other organizations” (compare this statement made in October 1897 with the controversy between the “Decembrists” and the young members in the beginning of 1897), and so forth. Catchwords like: We must concentrate not on the “cream” of the workers, but on the “average,” mass worker: “Politics always obediently follows economics,”³⁹ etc., etc., became the fashion, and exercised 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.⁴⁰

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 Socialism and politics, and that they must “fight, knowing that they are fighting not for some future generation, but for themselves and their children” (Leading article

Schlüsselburg Road that the discovery and arrest were facilitated by an agent-provocateur, N. N. Mikhailov, a dental surgeon, who had been in contact with a group associated with the “Decembrists,” the workers were so enraged that they decided to kill him.

³⁹ These quotations are taken from the leading article in the first number of the *Rabochaya Mysl* already referred to. One can judge from this the degree of theoretical training possessed by these “V. V.’s of Russian Social Democracy,”^z who kept repeating the crude vulgarization 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!

⁴⁰ V. V.—pseudonym of V. P. Vorontsov, one of the ideologists of liberal Narodism in the eighties and nineties of the nineteenth century. Lenin’s words “the V. V.’s of Russian Social-Democracy” are an allusion to the “Economists,” who represented the opportunist trend in Russian Social-Democracy.

in the *Rabochaya Mysl*, No. 1). Phrases like these have always been the favorite weapons of the West-European bourgeoisie, 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 struggle⁴¹ they would be fighting for themselves and for their children, and not for some future generation 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 which will be useful to us in our further analysis of *contemporary* differences.⁴²

First of all, the overwhelming of 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 an increasing number of “old” revolutionaries were “torn away” by the gendarmes and because increasing numbers of “young” “V.V.’s of Russian Social Democracy” appeared on the scene. Everyone who—I shall not say has participated in the *contemporary* Russian movement? but has at least breathed its atmosphere—knows perfectly well that this is precisely the case. And the reason why we, nevertheless, strongly insist that the reader be fully clear on this universally known fact, and why in order to be quite explicit, so to speak, we cite the details concerning the *Rabocheye Dyelo* as it first appeared, and concerning the controversy between the “old” and the “young” at the beginning of 1897—is that certain persons are speculating on the public’s (or the very youthful youths’) ignorance of this fact, and are boasting of their “democracy.” We shall return to this point further on.

⁴¹ The Germans even have a special expression: “Nur-Gewerkschaftler,” which means an advocate of the “purely trade union” struggle.

⁴² We emphasize the word *contemporary* for the benefit of those who may pharisaically shrug their shoulders and say: it is easy enough to attack the *Rabochaya Mysl* now, but is not all this ancient history? *Mutato nomine de te fabula narratur* (change the name and the tale refers to you—*Tr.*), we reply to such contemporary pharisees whose complete subjection to the ideas of the *Rabochaya Mysl* will be proved further on.

Secondly, in the very first literary manifestation of Economism, we can already observe the extremely curious phenomenon—one highly characteristic for an understanding of all the differences prevailing among contemporary Social Democrats—that the adherents of the “pure” working-class movement, the worshipers of the closest “organic” (the term used by the *Rabocheye Dyelo*) contacts with the proletarian struggle, the opponents of any non-worker intelligentsia (even if it be 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 the *Rabochaya Mysl* began—unconsciously—to carry out the program of the *Credo*. This shows (something the *Rabocheye Dyelo* cannot understand at all) 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 irrespective of whether the belittler wants to or not, strengthening the influence of the bourgeois ideology over the workers*. All those who talk about “overrating the importance of ideology,”⁴³ about exaggerating the role of the conscious element,⁴⁴ etc., imagine that the pure working-class movement can work out, and will work out, an independent ideology for itself, if only the workers “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 just and important utterances by Karl Kautsky on the new draft program of the Austrian Social Democratic Party:⁴⁵

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 aver that England, the country most highly developed capitalistically, is more remote than any other from this consciousness. Judging from the draft, one might assume that this

⁴³ Letter of the “Economists,” in the *Iskra*, No. 12.

⁴⁴ *Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 10.

⁴⁵ *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.

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, just as 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 Hineingetragenes) 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 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 being developed by the masses of the workers themselves in the process of their movement,⁴⁶ the *only* choice is: either the bourgeois or the socialist ideology. There is no middle course (for humanity has not created a “third” ideology, and, moreover, in a society torn class antagonisms there can never be a non-class or above-class ideology. Hence, to belittle the socialist ideology *in any way, to turn away from it in the slightest degree* means to strengthen bourgeois ideology.

There is a lot of talk about spontaneity, but the *spontaneous* development of the working-class movement leads to its becoming subordinated to the bourgeois ideology, *leads to its developing according to the program* of the *Credo*, for the spontaneous working-class movement is trade unionism, is *Nur-Gewerkschafterei*, 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 phrase employed by the authors of the “economic” letter in the *Iskra*, No. 12, about the efforts of the most inspired ideologists not being able to divert the working-class movement from the path that is determined by the interaction of the material elements and the material environment, *is absolutely tantamount* therefore *to the aban-*

⁴⁶ This does not mean, of course, that the workers have no part in creating such an ideology. But they take part not as workers, but as socialist theoreticians, as Proudhons and Weitlings; in other words, they take part only when, and to the extent that they are able, more or less, to acquire the knowledge of their age and advance that knowledge. And in order that workingmen *may be able to do this more often*, every effort must be made to raise the level of the consciousness of the workers generally; the workers must not confine themselves to the artificially restricted limits of “*literature for workers*” but should learn to master *general literature* to an increasing degree. It would be even more true to say “are not confined,” instead of “must not confine themselves,” because the workers themselves wish to read and do read all that is written for the intelligentsia and it is only a few (bad) intellectuals who believe that it is sufficient “for the 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.

donment of Socialism, and if only the authors of this letter were capable of fearlessly, consistently and thoroughly considering what they say, as everyone who enters the arena of literary and public activity should do, there would be nothing left for them but to “fold their useless arms over their empty breasts” and... leave the field of action to Messrs. 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 clerical and gendarme “ideology.”

Recall the example of Germany. What was the historical service Lassalle rendered to the German working-class movement? It was that he *diverted* that movement from the path of trade unionism and cooperation preached by the Progressives along which it had been traveling spontaneously (*with the benign assistance of Schulze-Delitzsch and those like him*). To fulfill a task like that it was necessary to do something altogether different from indulging in talk about underrating the spontaneous element, about tactics-as-a-process, about 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 Progressive Party into one of the finest strongholds of Social Democracy. This fight is by no means finished even now (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, broken up among a number of ideologies. A section of the workers is organized in Catholic and monarchist labor unions; another section is organized in the Hirsch-Duncker unions,⁴⁷ founded by the bourgeois worshipers of English trade unionism, while a third section is organized in Social Democratic trade unions. The last is immeasurably more numerous than all the rest, but the Social Democratic ideology was

⁴⁷ *The Hirsch-Duncker unions*—founded by the bourgeois liberals Hirsch and Duncker in 1868 in Germany. Hirsch and Duncker advocated “harmony of class interests,” drew the workers away from the revolutionary class struggle against the bourgeoisie, reduced the tasks and role of trade union organizations to those of benefit societies and cultural and educational clubs.—*Ed.*

able to achieve this superiority, and will be able to maintain it, only by unswervingly fighting against all other ideologies.

But why, the reader will ask, does the spontaneous movement, the movement along the line of the least resistance, lead to the domination of the bourgeois ideology? For the simple reason that the bourgeois ideology is far older than the socialist ideology; because it is more fully developed and because it possesses *immeasurably* more opportunities for being spread.⁴⁸ And the younger the socialist movement is in any given country, the more vigorously must it fight against all attempts to entrench non-socialist ideology, and the more strongly must the workers be warned against those bad counselors who shout against “overrating the conscious element,” etc. The authors of the economic letter, in unison with the *Rabocheye Dyelo*, declaim 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 the more quickly, it must become infected 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 episodes of the struggle.

Thirdly, the first number of the *Rabochaya Mysl* shows that the term “Economism” (which, of course, we do not propose to abandon because, however it may be, this appellation has already established itself) does not adequately convey the real character of the new trend. The *Rabochaya Mysl* does not altogether repudiate the political struggle: the rules for a workers’ benefit fund published in the *Rabochaya Mysl*, No. 1, contain a reference to combating the government. The *Rabochaya Mysl* believes, however, that “politics always obediently follows economics” (and the *Rabocheye Dyelo* gives a variation of this thesis when, in its program, it

⁴⁸ It is often said: the working class *spontaneously* gravitates towards Socialism. This is perfectly true in the sense that socialist theory defines 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*, that 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 the *Rabocheye Dyelo* forgets or distorts. The working class spontaneously gravitates towards Socialism, but the more widespread (and continuously revived in the most diverse forms) bourgeois ideology nevertheless spontaneously imposes itself upon the working class still more.

asserts 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 postulates advanced by the *Rabochaya Mysl* and the *Rabocheye Dyelo* are absolutely wrong. The economic struggle of the workers is very often connected (although not inseparably) with bourgeois politics, clerical politics, etc., as we have already seen. The *Rabocheye Dyelo*’s postulates are correct if by politics is meant trade union politics, i.e., the common striving of all workers to secure from the government measures for the alleviation of the distress characteristic of their position, but which do not abolish that position, i.e., which do not remove the subjection of labor to capital. That striving indeed is common to the British trade unionists who are hostile to Socialism, to the Catholic workers, to the “Zubatov” workers, etc. There are politics and politics. Thus, we see that the *Rabochaya Mysl* does not so much deny the political as to bow to its *spontaneity*, to its lack of consciousness. While fully recognizing the political struggle (it would be more correct to say 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 policy* corresponding to the general tasks of Socialism and to contemporary conditions in Russia. Further on we shall show that the *Rabocheye Dyelo* commits the same error.

C. The Self-Emancipation Group⁴⁹ and the *Rabocheye Dyelo*

We have dealt at such length with the little-known and now almost forgotten leading article in the first number of the *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 absolutely right when, in praising the first number and the leading article of the *Rabochaya Mysl*, he said that it was written in a “sharp and challenging” style (*Listok Rabotnika*, No. 9-10, p. 49). Every man with convictions who thinks he has something new to say

⁴⁹ *Self-Emancipation of the Workers Group*—a small group of “Economists” formed in St. Petersburg in the autumn of 1898. The group, which existed only a few months, published a manifesto setting forth its aims (printed in the *Nakanunye*, a magazine appearing in London), a set of rules and several leaflets for distribution among the workers.—*Ed.*

writes “challengingly” 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 “challenge”; only such people are able to praise the challenge of the *Rabochaya Mysl* one day, and attack the “challenging polemics” of its opponents the next.

We shall not dwell on the Special Supplement to the *Rabochaya Mysl* (further on 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 *Manifesto of the Self-Emancipation of the Workers Group* (March 1899, reprinted in the London *Nakanunye*,⁵⁰ No. 7, July 1899). The authors of this manifesto quite rightly say that “the workers of Russia are *only just awakening*, are only just looking around, and *instinctively clutch at the first available* means of struggle.” But from this they draw the same incorrect conclusion that is drawn by the *Rabochaya Mysl*, forgetting that instinctiveness is that unconsciousness (spontaneity) 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 will be the bourgeois (trade union) ideology. Similarly, these authors do not “repudiate” politics, they merely say (merely!), repeating what was said by Mr. V. V., that politics is the superstructure, and therefore, “political agitation must be the superstructure to the agitation carried on in favor of the economic struggle; it must arise on the basis of this struggle and follow in its wake.”

As for the *Rabocheye Dyelo*, it started out on its career by “defending” the Economists. It uttered a *downright falsehood* in its very first issue (No. 1, pp. 141-42) when it stated that it “does not know which young comrades Axelrod referred to” in his well-known pamphlet,⁵¹ in which he uttered a warning to the Economists. In the controversy that flared up with Axelrod and Plekhanov over this falsehood, the *Rabocheye Dyelo* was

⁵⁰ *Nakanunye (On the Eve)*—a journal of the Narodnik trend published in Russian in London from January 1899 to February 1902. Thirty-seven issues appeared. The *Nakanunye* served as a rallying point for representatives of diverse petit-bourgeois parties.—Ed.

⁵¹ *The Contemporary Tasks and Tactics of the Russian Social Democrats*, Geneva, 1898. Two letters written to the *Rabochaya Gazeta* in 1897.

compelled to admit that “by expressing perplexity, it desired to *defend* all the younger Social Democrats abroad from this unjust accusation” (Axelrod accused the Economists of having a narrow outlook). As a matter of fact this accusation was absolutely just, and the *Rabocheye Dyelo* knows perfectly well that, among others, it applied to V. I., a member of its editorial staff. Let me note in passing that in this controversy Axelrod was absolutely right and the *Rabocheye Dyelo* was absolutely wrong in their respective interpretations of my pamphlet *The Tasks of the Russian Social Democrats*.⁵² That pamphlet was written in 1897, before the appearance of the *Rabochaya Mysl* when I thought, and rightly thought, that the original tendency of the St. Petersburg League of Struggle, which I described above, was the predominant one. And that tendency really was the predominant one, at any rate until the middle of 1898. Consequently, the *Rabocheye Dyelo* had no right whatever, in its attempt to refute the existence and dangers of Economism, to refer to a pamphlet which expressed views that were *squeezed out* by “Economist” views in St. Petersburg in 1897-98.⁵³

But the *Rabocheye Dyelo* not only “defended” the Economists—it itself constantly fell into their fundamental errors. The source of this confusedness 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 literary activity of the Union, is the *mass working-class movement*” (*Rabocheye Dyelo*’s italics) “that has arisen in recent years.” That the mass movement is a most

⁵² V. I. Lenin, “The Tasks of the Russian Social-Democrats” in *Collected Works*, Vol. II.—*Ed.*

⁵³ To its defense of the first untruth it uttered (“we do not know which young comrades Axelrod referred to”), the *Rabocheye Dyelo* added a second, when, in its *Reply*, it wrote: “Since the review of *The Tasks* was published, tendencies have arisen, or have 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 is what the *Reply* says, *published in 1900*. But the first number of the *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 the *Rabocheye Dyelo* very well knows, *for already in November 1898*, V. I. was praising the *Rabochaya Mysl* (see the *Listok Rabotnika*, No. 9-10).

important phenomenon is a fact about which there can be no dispute. But the crux of the question 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 given to it by the *Rabochaya Mysl*, the Self-Emancipation Group and other Economists); *or* it means that the mass movement puts before us new theoretical, political and organizational tasks, far more complicated than those that might have satisfied us in the period before the rise of the mass movement. The *Rabocheye Dyelo* inclined and still inclines towards the first interpretation, for it has said nothing definite about any new tasks, but argued all the time just as if the “mass movement” relieves us of the necessity of clearly appreciating and fulfilling the tasks it sets before us. We need only point out that the *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 interests of the mass movement) to that of a struggle for immediate political demands (*Reply*, p. 25). We shall pass over the article by B. Krichevsky, the editor of the *Rabocheye Dyelo*, entitled “The Economic and Political Struggle in the Russian Movement,” published in No. 7 of that paper, in which these very mistakes⁵⁴ are repeated, and proceed

⁵⁴ 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 various classes play a decisive role in history, and, *consequently*, that particularly the proletariat’s struggle for the defense of its economic interests must be of first-rate importance in its class development and struggle for emancipation?” (Our italics.) The word “consequently” is absolutely out of place. 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. B. Krichevsky repeats the arguments of the “V. V.’s of Russian Social

directly to the *Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 10. We shall not, of course, enter in detail into the various objections raised by B. Krichevsky and Martynov against the *Zarya* and the *Iskra*. What interests us here solely are the principles expounded by the *Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 10. For example, we shall not examine the curiosity—that the *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 recognizes all means of struggle, as long as they correspond to the forces at the disposal of the Party,” etc. (*Iskra*, No.1)⁵⁵ and the proposition:

Without a strong organization, tested in the political struggle carried on under all circumstances and in all periods, there can be no talk of a systematic plan of activity, enlightened by firm principles and unswervingly carried out, which alone is worthy of being called tactics. (*Iskra*, No. 4)⁵⁶

To confuse the recognition, in principle, of all means of struggle, of all plans and methods, as long as they are expedient—with the demand that *at a given political moment*, if we are to talk of tactics, we be guided by a strictly observed plan, is tantamount to confusing the recognition by medical science of various methods of treatment of diseases with the necessity for adopting a certain definite method of treatment for a given disease. The point is, however, that the *Rabocheye Dyelo*, while itself the victim of a disease which we have called bowing to spontaneity, refuses to recognize any “method of treatment” for that disease. Hence, it made the remarkable discovery that “tactics-as-a-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, the *Rabocheye Dyelo*’s italics). The latter remark has every chance of becoming a celebrated maxim, a permanent monument to the *Rabocheye Dyelo* “trend.”

Democracy” (i.e., politics follow economics, etc.) and the Bernsteinians of German Social Democracy (for example, by arguments like these, Woltmann tried to prove that the workers must first of all acquire “economic power” before they can think about political revolution).

⁵⁵ V. I. Lenin, “The Urgent Tasks of Our Movement” in *Collected Works*, Vol. IV.—Ed.

⁵⁶ V. I. Lenin, “Where to Begin?,” *op. cit.*—Ed.

To the question: *whither* a leading organ replies: movement is a process of altering the distance between the starting point and subsequent points of the movement. This matchless example of profundity is not merely a curiosity (if it were, it would not be worth dealing with at length), but *the program of a whole trend*, i.e., the very program which R.M. (in the Special Supplement to the *Rabochaya Mysl*) expressed in the words: That struggle is desirable which is possible, and the struggle which is possible is the one that is going on at a given moment. This is precisely the trend of unbounded opportunism, which passively adapts itself to spontaneity.

“Tactics-as-a-plan contradicts the fundamental spirit of Marxism!”

But this is a libel on Marxism; it means turning it into the caricature of Marxism that was set up by the Narodniks in their fight 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 millions and millions of workers “spontaneously” rising for the struggle! The whole history of international Social Democracy seethes with plans advanced now by one, now by another political leader; some confirming the farsightedness and correct political and organizational views of their authors and others revealing their shortsightedness and political errors. At the time when Germany was at one of the most important 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 policy and work in general and Schweitzer had another. When the Anti-Socialist Law came down on the heads of the German Socialists, Most and Hasselmann had one plan. They were prepared there and then 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 paved the way for and carried out the publication of an illegal organ. It is easy, of course, in retrospect, many years after the fight over the selection of the path to be followed has

ended, 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,⁵⁷ 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-a-plan” that repeats the old mistakes, at such a time, to confine oneself to such profundities, means simply issuing oneself a “certificate of poverty.” At a time when many Russian Social Democrats suffer from lack of initiative and energy, from a lack of “scope of political propaganda, agitation and organization,”⁵⁸ a lack of “plans” for a broader organization of revolutionary work, at such a time, to say: “tactics-as-a-plan contradicts the fundamental spirit of Marxism,” means not only vulgarizing Marxism in the realm of theory but also *dragging the Party backward* in practice.

The *Rabocheye Dyelo* goes on to sermonize:

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. The *Iskra* knows all this in theory. But the enormous importance which Marxism quite 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 that fraternity. We would ask our philosopher: how may a deviser 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, groups, certain nations, groups of nations, etc., and in this way serves as the premise for a definite international political alignment of forces, for determining the

⁵⁷ “Ein Jahr der Verwirrung” (“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-a-plan” for the new situation.

⁵⁸ Lead article in the *Iskra*, No. 1. (“The Urgent Tasks of Our Movement,” *op. cit.*)—*Ed.*

position of revolutionary parties, etc. If the deviser of plans did that, his guilt would not be that he belittled the spontaneous element, but, on the contrary, that he belittled the *conscious* element, for he would then show that he lacked the “consciousness” properly to understand objective development. Hence, the very talk about “estimating the *relative* significance” (the *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 cannot know them, and therefore cannot speak of them. What is B. Krichevsky arguing about then? If he thinks that the *Iskra*’s “subjective plans” are erroneous (as he in fact declares them to be), then he ought to show what objective facts are ignored in these plans, and then charge the *Iskra* with a *lack of consciousness* for ignoring them, with, to use his own words, “belittling the conscious element.” If, however, while being displeased with subjective plans he can bring forward no other argument than that of “belittling the spontaneous element” (!!) he merely shows: 1) that theoretically he understands Marxism à la the Kareyevs and Mikhailovskys, who have been sufficiently ridiculed by Beltov,⁵⁹ and 2) that, practically, he is quite pleased 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.

And then follow things that are positively funny.

Just as human beings will multiply in the old-fashioned way, notwithstanding 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, notwithstanding all the discoveries of social science and the increase in the number of conscious fighters. (p. 19)

⁵⁹ Under the pseudonym of N. Beltov, G. V. Plekhanov published his well-known book *On the Development of the Monist View of History*, which appeared legally in St. Petersburg in 1895.—Ed.

Just as our grandfathers in their old-fashioned wisdom used to say: "Any fool can bring forth children," today the "modern Socialists" (*à la* Narcissus Tuporylov)⁶⁰ in their wisdom say: Any fool can participate in the spontaneous birth of a new social order. We too are of that opinion. All that is required for participation of that kind is to *yield*, to Economism when Economism reigns, and to terrorism when terrorism arises. For example, in the spring of this year, when it was so important to utter a note of warning against infatuation with terrorism, the *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, at one and the same time, presents us 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 the congress resolution: "The congress regards systematic and aggressive terror as being inopportune" (*Two Congresses*, 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 a resolution like that is extremely safe and completely insured against error, just as a man who talks, but says nothing, is insured against error! And all that is required to frame such a resolution is: the ability to keep *at the tail end* of the movement. When the *Iskra* ridiculed the *Rabocheye Dyelo* for declaring the question of terror to be a new one,⁶¹ the latter angrily accused the *Iskra* of "having the incredible effrontery to impose upon the Party organization solutions of tactical questions proposed by a group of emigrant writers more than fifteen years ago" (p. 24). Effrontery indeed, and what an overrating of the conscious element—first to find the theoretical solutions to problems, and then to try to prove to the organization, to the Party and to the masses that this solution is correct!⁶²

⁶⁰ Reference is to the satirical poem "Anthem of the Super-modern Russian Socialist" by Y. O. Martov, published in the *Zarya*, No. 1, April 1901, over the signature "Narcissus Tuporylov." It ridiculed the "Economists" and their adaptation to the spontaneous movement.—*Ed.*

⁶¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, 4th Russ. ed., Vol. 5, pp. 6-8.—*Ed.*

⁶² Nor must it be forgotten that in solving "theoretically" the problem of terror, the Emancipation of Labor group generalized the experience of the preceding revolutionary movement.

How much better it would be to repeat something that has been learned by rote, and, without “imposing” anything upon anybody, swing with every “turn”—whether in the direction of Economism or in the direction of terrorism. The *Rabocheye Dyelo* even generalizes this great precept of worldly wisdom and accuses the *Iskra* and the *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,” not only hovering over the spontaneous movement but also *raising* 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 the worst, it would be very, very harmful. The *Rabocheye Dyelo*, however, not only follows this “tactics-as-a-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 have determined always to follow behind the movement and be its tail are absolutely and forever ensured 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 lies in its bowing to spontaneity, and its failure to understand that the spontaneity of the masses demands a mass of consciousness from us Social Democrats. The greater the spontaneous upsurge of the masses, the more widespread the movement becomes, so much the more rapidly, incomparably more rapidly, grows the demand for greater consciousness in the theoretical, political and organizational work of Social Democracy.

The spontaneous upsurge of the masses in Russia proceeded (and continues) with such rapidity that the young Social Democrats proved unprepared for these gigantic tasks. This unpreparedness is our common misfortune, the misfortune of all Russian Social Democrats. The upsurge of the masses proceeded and spread uninterruptedly and with 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 revival of ferment among the students, the intellectuals generally and even among the peasantry). Rev-

olutionaries, however, lagged behind this upsurge both in their “theories” and in their activity; they failed to establish an uninterrupted organization having continuity with the past, and capable of leading the whole movement.

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

In the following chapters, we shall show how this worship of spontaneity found expression in the sphere of the political tasks and the organizational work of Social Democracy.

III

Trade Unionist Politics and Social Democratic Politics

We shall start off again by praising the *Rabocheye Dyelo*. “Exposure Literature and the Proletarian Struggle” is the title Martynov gave his article in No. 10 of the *Rabocheye Dyelo*, on his differences with the *Iskra*. He formulated the substance of these differences as follows:

We cannot confine ourselves entirely 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... The *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 the *Rabocheye Dyelo*, but the general disagreement between ourselves and the “Economists” concerning the political struggle. We have already 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 exactly the same way, and we agree, therefore, to take his views as a model of Economist error on this question. As we shall endeavor to prove, neither the authors of the Special Supplement to the *Rabochaya Mysl*, nor the authors of the manifesto issued by the Self-Emancipation Group, nor the authors of the Economist letter published in the *Iskra*, No. 12, will have any right to complain against this choice.

A. Political Agitation and its Restriction by the Economists

Everyone knows that the extensive spread and consolidation of the economic⁶³ struggle of the Russian workers proceeded simultaneously

⁶³ To avoid misunderstanding we must point out that here and throughout this pamphlet, by economic struggle we imply (in accordance with the meaning of the term as accepted among us) the “practical economic struggle” which Engels, in the passage quoted above, described as “resistance to the capitalists,” and which in free countries is known as the professional, syndical or trade union struggle.

with the creation of a “literature” exposing economic conditions, i.e., factory and industrial conditions. These “leaflets” were devoted mainly to the exposure of factory conditions, and very soon a veritable passion for exposures was roused among the workers. As soon as the workers realized that the Social Democratic circles desired to and could supply them with a new kind of leaflet that told the whole truth about their life of poverty, about their excessive toil and their lack of rights, correspondence began to pour in from the factories and workshops. This “exposure literature” created a huge sensation not only in the particular factory, the conditions of which were exposed in the given leaflet, but in all the factories to which news spread about the facts exposed. And as 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 all. Even among the most backward workers, a veritable passion arose to “go into print”—a noble passion for this rudimentary form of war against the whole of the contemporary 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 the common demands for the removal of the most glaring evils and roused in them a readiness to support these demands with strikes. Finally, the employers themselves were compelled to recognize 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 capitalism exists, which creates the need for the workers to defend themselves. Even in the most advanced countries of Europe we can still witness how the exposure of evils 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.⁶⁴

The overwhelming majority of Russian Social Democrats have of late been almost entirely absorbed by this work of organizing the exposure of factory conditions. It is sufficient to recall the *Rabochaya Mysl* to see to what extent they were taken up by it. So much so, indeed, that they 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, these exposures merely dealt with the relations between the workers *in a given trade* and their employers, and all that they achieved was that the sellers of labor 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 utilized by an organization of revolutionaries) as a beginning and a constituent part of Social Democratic activity, but they could also have led (and, given a worshipful attitude towards spontaneity, were bound to lead) to a “pure” 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 labor power but also for the abolition of the social system which compels the propertyless to sell themselves to the rich. Social Democracy represents the working class not in the latter’s relation to only a given group of employers, but in its relation to all classes of modern society, to the state as an organized political force. Hence, it follows that Social Democrats not only must not confine themselves entirely to the economic struggle; they must not even allow the organization of economic exposures to

⁶⁴ 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, the *Rabocheye Dyelo*’s charge that the *Iskra* is “too restrained” in regard to the economic struggle. (*Two Congresses*, p. 27, rehashed by Martynov in his pamphlet *Social Democracy and the Working Class*.) If those who make this accusation counted up in terms of hundred weights or reams (as they are so fond of doing) what has been said about the economic struggle in the industrial column of the *Iskra* in one year, and compared this with the industrial columns of the *Rabocheye Dyelo* and the *Rabochaya Mysl* taken together, they would easily see that they lag behind even in this respect. Apparently, the consciousness of this simple truth compels them to resort to arguments which clearly reveal their confusion. “The *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 Congresses*, p. 27.) Now this is really a crushing argument!

become the predominant part of their activities. We must actively take up the political education of the working class and the development of its political consciousness. *Now* that the *Zarya* and the *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 of? 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 (no more than it was to *explain* to them that their interests were antagonistic to the interests of the employers). Agitation must be conducted over every concrete example of this oppression (in the same way that we have begun to conduct agitation around concrete examples of economic oppression). And 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, industrial, 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 organization of the *political exposure* of the autocracy *in all its aspects*? In order to carry on agitation around concrete examples of oppression, these examples must be exposed (just as it was necessary to expose factory abuses in order to carry on economic agitation).

One would think that this was 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 the *Rabocheye Dyelo*, for example, far from tackling the task of organizing (or making a start in organizing) comprehensive political exposure, is even trying to *drag* the *Iskra*, which has undertaken this task, *away from it*. Listen to this: “The political struggle of the working class is merely” (it is precisely not “merely”) “the most developed, widest and most effective form of economic struggle” (Program of the *Rabocheye Dyelo*, published in No. 1, p. 3). “The Social Democrats are now confronted with the task of, as far as possible, lending the economic struggle itself 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 passed by the Congress of the Union and "amendments" thereto, *Two Congresses*, pp. 11 and 17). As the reader will observe, all these postulates permeate the *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. 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,⁶⁵ the economic struggle "is the most widely applicable means" of drawing the masses into the political struggle? It is absolutely untrue. *All and sundry* manifestations of police tyranny and autocratic outrage, and not only such as are connected with the economic struggle, are not one whit less "widely applicable" as a means of "drawing in" the masses. The Zemsky Nachalniks,⁶⁶ the flogging of peasants, the corruption of the officials, 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, the persecution of the religious sects, the humiliating treatment of the soldiers and the treatment of the students and the liberal intelligentsia as if they were soldiers—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 the cases in which the workers suffer (either on their own account or on account of those closely connected with them) from tyranny, violence and lack of rights, undoubtedly only a small minority represent cases of police

⁶⁵ We say "in general," because the *Rabocheye Dyelo* speaks of general principles and of the general tasks of the whole Party. Undoubtedly, cases occur in practice, when politics really *must* follow economics, but only Economists can say a thing like that 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"; and yet the *Rabocheye Dyelo* hit upon the idea that "there is no need for this whatever." (*Two Congresses*, p. 11) In the next 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* the consistent fulfillment of these tasks.

⁶⁶ *Zemsky Nachalniks*—rural officials in tsarist Russia appointed from the landed nobility and exercising administrative and magisterial rights.—*Ed.*

tyranny in the economic 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 have, in addition, other, generally speaking, no less “widely applicable” means?

Long, long ago (a year ago!...) the *Rabocheye Dyelo* wrote: “The masses begin to understand immediate political demands after one, or at all events, after several strikes,” “immediately the government sets the police and gendarmerie against them” (No. 7, p. 15, *August* 1900). This opportunist theory of stages has now been rejected by the Union, 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 Congresses*, p. 11). This very repudiation of part of its former errors by the Union 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 must be very naïve indeed to imagine that the abandonment of one form of restricting politics will induce us to agree to another form of restriction! 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 utilized 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 attaches significance to the fact that it replaced 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).^{aa} We confess that we find it difficult to say which of these resolutions is the better one. In our opinion *both are “worse.”* Both the Union and the Bund fall into the error (partly, perhaps, unconsciously, under the influence of tradition) of giving an economic, trade unionist interpretation to politics. Whether this is done by employing the word “best” or the words “most widely applicable” makes no material difference whatever. If the Union had said that “political agitation on an economic basis” is the most widely applied (and 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 recognized and, as we have seen, even recommended by the *Rabochaya Mysl* and by the Self-Emancipation Group! The *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, but instead of that, 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 else but pour every manner of abuse upon us, and call us “mystifiers,” “disrupters,” “papal Nuncios,” and “slanderers,”⁶⁷ go complaining to the whole world that we have mortally offended them, and declare almost on oath that “not a single Social Democratic organization is now tinged with Economism.”⁶⁸ Oh, these evil, slanderous politicians! They must have deliberately invented this Economism, out of sheer hatred of mankind, in order mortally to offend other people!

What real concrete meaning does Martynov attach to his words about Social Democracy taking up 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 labor power*, for the better conditions of life and labor. This struggle is necessarily an industrial struggle, because conditions of labor differ very much in different trades, and, consequently, the fight to *improve* these conditions can only be conducted in respect to each trade (trade unions in the Western countries, temporary trade associations and leaflets in Russia, etc.). Lending “the economic struggle itself a political character” means, therefore, striving to secure satisfaction of these trade demands, the improvement of conditions of labor in each separate trade by means of “legislative and administrative measures” (as Martynov expresses it on the next page of his article, p. 43). This is exactly what all workers’ trade unions do and always have done. Read the works of the thoroughly scientific (and “thoroughly” opportunist) Mr. and Mrs. Webb

⁶⁷ These are exactly the expressions used in *Two Congresses*, pp. 31, 32, 28 and 30.

⁶⁸ *Two Congresses*, p. 32.

and you will see that the British trade unions long ago recognized, 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 protecting women and children, for the improvement of labor 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! On the pretext of rectifying the one-sidedness of the *Iskra*, which, it is alleged, places “the revolutionizing of dogma higher than the revolutionizing of life,”⁶⁹ we are presented with the *struggle for economic reform* as if it were something entirely new. As a matter of fact, the phrase “lending the economic struggle itself a political character” means nothing more than the struggle for economic reforms. And Martynov himself might have come to this simple conclusion had he only pondered over the significance of his own words. “Our Party,” he says, turning his heaviest guns against the *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? And again we ask the impartial reader, do we slander the *Rabocheye Dyelo*-ites (may I be forgiven for this clumsy expression!) by calling them concealed Bernsteinians when they advance, as their point of *disagreement* with the *Iskra*, their thesis about the necessity of fighting for economic reforms?

Revolutionary Social Democracy always included, and now includes, the fight for reforms as part of its activities. But it utilizes “economic” agitation for the purpose of presenting to the government,

⁶⁹ *Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 10, p. 60. This is the Martynov variation of the application to the present chaotic state of our movement of the thesis: “Every step of real movement is more important than a dozen programs,” which we have already characterized above. As a matter of fact, this is merely a translation into Russian of the notorious Bernsteinian phrase: “The movement is everything, the final aim is nothing.”

not only demands for all sorts of measures but also (and primarily) the demand that it cease to be an autocratic government. More, it considers it its duty to present this demand to the government, not on the basis of the economic struggle *alone*, but on the basis of all manifestations in general of public and political life. In a word, it subordinates the struggle for reforms, as the part to the whole, to the revolutionary struggle for liberty and for Socialism. Martynov, however, resuscitates the theory of stages in a new form, and strives to prescribe an exclusively economic, so to speak, path of development for the political struggle. By coming out at this moment, when the revolutionary movement is on the upgrade, with an alleged special "task" of fighting for reforms, he is dragging the Party backwards and is playing into the hands of both "economic" and liberal opportunism.

To proceed. While shamefacedly hiding the struggle for reforms behind the pompous thesis about "lending the economic struggle itself a political character," Martynov advanced, as if it were a special point, *exclusively economic* (in fact exclusively factory) *reforms*. Why he did that, we do not know. Perhaps it was due to carelessness? But if he had in mind something else besides "factory" reforms, then the whole of his thesis, which we have just quoted, loses all sense. Perhaps he did it because he thinks it possible and probable that the government will make "concessions" only in the economic sphere?⁷⁰ If so, then it is a strange delusion. Concessions are also possible and are made in the sphere of legislation concerning flogging, passports, land compensation 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 masses of the workers. 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 concerning the concrete demands for legislative and administrative measures referred to

⁷⁰ 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."

above, “would not be merely a hollow sound, because, promising certain palpable results, they might be actively supported by the masses of the workers....” 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*!⁷¹ We only wish to make it understood (with Narcissus Tuporylov) that all that which “does not promise palpable results” is merely a “hollow sound!” We are only trying to argue as if the masses of the workers 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!*

Take for example the very “measures” for the relief of unemployment and the famine that Martynov himself advances. Whereas the *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,” the *Iskra*, which “constantly places the revolutionizing of dogma higher than the revolutionizing of life,” tried to explain the inseparable connection between unemployment and the whole capitalist system; warned that “famine is coming,” exposed the police “fight against the famine stricken” and the outrageous “provisional penal regulations”; and the *Zarya* published a special reprint, in the form of an agitation pamphlet, of a section of its “Review of Internal Affairs” dealing with the famine.⁷² But good God! How “one-sided” 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”

⁷¹ Meaning “everyone.”—Ed.

⁷² V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, 4th Russ. ed., Vol. 5, pp. 231-51. p.79.—Ed.

(“*economic* struggle against the government!”) “has also this significance: it constantly brings it home to the workers 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 already been said above, but in order particularly to thank Martynov for this excellent new formula: “the economic struggle of the workers against the employers and the government.” What a pearl! With what inimitable talent and skill in eliminating all partial disagreements and shades of differences among Economists does this clear and concise postulate express the *quintessence* of Economism: from calling to the workers to join “in the political struggle which they carry on in the general interest, for the purpose of improving the conditions of all the workers,”⁷³ continuing through the theory of stages, and ending in the resolution of the Congress on the “most widely applicable,” etc. “Economic struggle against the government” is precisely trade unionist politics, which is very, very far from being Social Democratic politics.

B. A Tale of 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 of those who are inclined towards Economism to arrive, “all by themselves,” at great truths (for example, 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 already been produced by the previous development of revolutionary thought and of the revolutionary movement. Lomonosov-Martynov is precisely such a born genius. Glance at his article, “Immediate Questions,” and observe how “all by himself” he *approaches* what has been said long ago by Axelrod (of whom our Lomonosov, naturally, says not a word); how, for example, he is *beginning* to understand that we cannot ignore the opposition of the various strata of the bourgeoisie (*Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 9, pp. 61, 62, 71; compare this

⁷³ *Rabochaya Mysl*, Special Supplement, p. 14.

with the *Rabocheye Dyelo's Reply* to Axelrod, pp. 22, 23-24), etc. But alas, he is only "approaching" 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) the *Rabocheye Dyelo* has tried hard to understand Axelrod, but... but has failed to do so yet! Perhaps one of the reasons is that Social Democracy, "like humanity," always sets itself only tasks that can be achieved?

But the Lomonosovs are distinguished not only by the fact of their ignorance of many things (that would be half a misfortune!), but also by the fact that they are not conscious of their 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."

Lomonosov-Martynov says:

Much water has flowed under the bridges since Plekhanov wrote this book.⁷⁴ 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 would 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 than Plekhanov's.⁷⁵ By propaganda we would understand the revolutionary elucidation of the whole of the present system or partial manifestations of it, irrespective of whether it is done in a form intelligible to individuals or to broad masses. By agitation, in the strict sense of the word [*sic!*] we would understand calling the masses to certain concrete actions, facilitating the direct revolutionary intervention of the proletariat in social life.

⁷⁴ *Tasks of the Socialists in the Fight Against the Famine in Russia.*

⁷⁵ Martynov had 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."

We congratulate Russian—and international—Social Democracy on this new, Martynov terminology which is more strict and more profound. Up to now we thought (with Plekhanov, and with all the leaders of the international working-class movement) that a propagandist, dealing with, say, that same question of unemployment, must explain the capitalistic nature of crises, the reasons why they are inevitable in contemporary society, describe the need for its transformation into 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. An 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 from starvation of the family of an unemployed worker, the growing impoverishment, etc., and utilizing this fact, which is known to all and sundry, will direct all his efforts to presenting *a single idea* to the “masses,” i.e., the idea of the senselessness of the contradiction between the increase of wealth and increase of poverty; he will strive to *rouse* discontent and indignation among the masses against this crying injustice, and leave 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 *living* word. The propagandist must possess different qualities than the agitator. Kautsky and Lafargue, for example, we call propagandists; Bebel and Guesde we call agitators. To single out a third sphere, or third function, of practical activity, and to include in this function “calling the masses to certain concrete actions,” is sheer nonsense, because the “call,” as a single act, either naturally and inevitably supplements the theoretical tract, propagandist pamphlet and agitational speech, or represents a purely executive function. Take, for example, the struggle now being carried on by the German Social Democrats against the grain duties. The theoreticians write research works on tariff policy and “call,” say, for a fight 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 the raising of the grain duties. The call for this action comes indirectly from the theoreticians, the propagandists and the

agitators, and, directly, from those workers who carry the petition lists to the factories and to private homes soliciting signatures. According to the “Martynov terminology,” Kautsky and Bebel are both propagandists, while those who solicit the signatures are agitators; is that not so?

The German example recalled to my mind the German word “Verballhornung,” which literally translated means “to Ballhorn.” Johann Ballhorn, a Leipzig publisher of the sixteenth century, published a child’s reader in which, as was the custom, he introduced a drawing of a cock; but this drawing, instead of portraying an ordinary cock with spurs, portrayed it without spurs and with a couple of eggs lying near it. On the cover of this reader he printed the legend “*Revised edition* by Johann Ballhorn.” Since that time the Germans describe any “revision” that is really a worsening as “Ballhorning.” And you cannot help recalling Ballhorn when you see how the Martynovs try to render Plekhanov “more profound.”

Why did our Lomonosov “invent” this confusion? In order to illustrate how the *Iskra* “devotes attention only to one side of the case, just as Plekhanov did a decade and a half ago” (p. 39). “According to the *Iskra*, propagandist tasks force agitational tasks into the background, at least for the present” (p. 52). If we translate this last proposition from the language of Martynov into ordinary human language (because humanity has not yet managed to learn the newly invented terminology), we shall get the following: According to the *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 just once again to employ the old terminology of old humanity, which has 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 the constant stress that is laid upon the benefits of workers’ activity in parliament (non-existent in Russia), though they completely ignore (thanks to their revolutionary nihilism) the importance of workers participating in the legislative manufacturers’

assemblies on factory affairs (which do exist in Russia)... or at least the importance of workers participating in municipal bodies.

The author of this tirade expresses somewhat more straight-forwardly, more clearly and frankly, the very idea which Lomonosov-Martynov discovered all by himself. This author is R.M. in the Special Supplement to the *Rabochaya Mysl* (p. 15).

C. Political Exposures and "Training in Revolutionary Activity"

In advancing against the *Iskra* his "theory" of "raising the activity of the masses of the workers," Martynov, as a matter of fact, betrayed a striving to *belittle* this activity, because he declared the very economic struggle, before which all Economists have groveled, to be the preferable, the most important and "the most widely applicable" means of rousing this activity, and the widest field for it. This error is characteristic, precisely because it is by no means peculiar to Martynov alone. As a matter of fact, it is possible to "raise the activity of the masses of the workers" *only* provided this activity *is not restricted* to "political agitation on an economic basis." And one of the fundamental conditions for the necessary expansion of political agitation is the organization of *comprehensive* political exposure. The masses *cannot* be trained in political consciousness and revolutionary activity in any other way except by means of such exposures. Hence, activity of this kind is one of the most important functions of international Social Democracy as a whole, for even the existence of political liberty does not in the least remove the necessity for such exposures; it merely changes somewhat the sphere against which they are directed. For example, the German party is especially strengthening its position and spreading its influence, thanks precisely to the untiring energy with which it is conducting a campaign of political exposure.

Working-class consciousness cannot be genuinely political consciousness unless the workers are trained to respond to *all* cases, *without exception*, of tyranny, oppression, violence and abuse, no matter *what* class is affected. Moreover, to respond from a Social Democratic, and

not from any other point of view. The consciousness of the masses of the workers cannot be genuine class consciousness, unless the workers learn to observe from concrete, and above all from topical (current), political facts and events, *every* other social class and *all* the manifestations of the intellectual, ethical and political life of these classes; 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 its self-realization is indissolubly bound up not only with a fully clear theoretical—it would be even more true to say not so much with a theoretical, as with a practical understanding, of the relationships between *all* the various classes of modern society, acquired through experience of political life. That is why the idea preached by our Economists, that the economic struggle is the most widely applicable means of drawing the masses into the political movement, is so extremely harmful and extremely 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 tramp; he must know their strong and weak points; he must see the meaning of all the catchwords and sophisms by which each class and each stratum *camouflages* its selfish strivings and its real “inside workings”; he must understand what interests certain institutions and certain laws reflect and how they reflect them. But this “clear picture” cannot be obtained from books. It can be obtained only from living examples and from exposures, following hot upon the heels of what is going on around us at a given moment, of what is being discussed, in whispers perhaps, by each one in his own way, of the meaning of such-and-such events, of such-and-such statistics, of such-and-such court sentences, etc., etc., etc. These comprehensive political exposures are an essential and *fundamental* condition for training the masses in revolutionary activity.

Why is it that the Russian workers as yet display little revolutionary activity in connection with the brutal way in which the police maltreat the people, in connection with the persecution of the religious sects, with

the flogging of the peasantry, with 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?” No. To advocate such views, we repeat, is merely to lay the blame where it does not belong, to blame the masses of the workers for one’s own philistinism (which is also Bernsteinism). We must blame ourselves, our lagging behind the mass movement for being unable as yet to organize sufficiently wide, striking and rapid exposures of all these despicable 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 members of religious sects, the muzhiks and the authors are being abused and outraged by the very same dark forces that are oppressing and crushing him at every step of his life, and, feeling that, he himself will be filled with an irresistible desire to respond to these things, and then he will organize catcalls against the censors one day, another day he will demonstrate outside the house of a governor who has brutally suppressed a peasant uprising, another day he will 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 *hurl* universal and fresh exposures among the masses of the workers. Many of us as yet do not appreciate the *bounden duty* that rests upon us, but spontaneously trail in the wake of the “drab everyday struggle,” in the narrow confines of factory life. Under such circumstances to say that the “*Iskra* displays a tendency to minimize the significance of the forward march of the drab everyday struggle in comparison with the propaganda of brilliant and complete ideas” (Martynov, p. 61)—means dragging the Party backward, defending and glorifying our unpreparedness and backwardness.

As for calling the masses to action, that will come of itself immediately energetic political agitation, live and striking exposures are set going. To catch some criminal red-handed and immediately to brand him publicly 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” on the crowd, and exactly 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. And our business as Social Democratic publicists is to deepen, to expand and intensify political exposures and political agitation.

A word in passing about “calls to action.” *The only paper* which prior to the spring events⁷⁶ called upon the workers actively to intervene 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 the “*Iskra*.” Immediately after the publication of the order of January 11, on “drafting the 183 students into the army,” the *Iskra* published an article about it (in its February issue, No. 2),⁷⁷ and before any demonstration was started openly 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, is not Martynov’s allegation, that the *Iskra* was one-sided because it did not sufficiently “call for” a struggle for demands “promising palpable results,” sheer philistinism?

Our Economists, including the *Rabocheye Dyelo*, were successful because they pandered 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 fighting 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 counselors of the *Rabochaya Mysl* and the *Rabocheye Dyelo*: you are wasting your time, 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 Social

⁷⁶ The reference is to student unrest and working-class action—meetings, demonstrations and strikes—that took place in February and March 1901 in many cities of Russia: St. Petersburg, Moscow, Kiev, Kharkov, Yaroslavl, Tomsk, Warsaw, Belostok, etc.—*Ed.*

⁷⁷ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, 4th Eng. ed., Vol. 4, pp. 414-19.—*Ed.*

Democrats. For all over the world, including Russia, *the police themselves often make the start in lending* the economic struggle a political character, and the workers themselves learn to understand whom the government supports.⁷⁸ 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 a host of remote spots of Russia 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 promising palpable results, we are already displaying and in our everyday, petty, 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,⁷⁹ and tell us

⁷⁸ 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. For example, the economic struggle of the British workers also assumed a political character without any intervention of the Socialists. The tasks of the Social Democrats however, are not exhausted by political agitation on an economic basis their task is to *convert* trade union politics into Social Democratic political struggle, to *utilize* the sparks of political consciousness, which the economic struggle generates among the workers, for the purpose of *raising* them 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 again *ad nauseam*, that the economic struggle “brings home” to the workers their own lack of political rights. It is unfortunate gentlemen, that the spontaneously awakening trade unionist political consciousness does not “bring home” to you an understanding of your Social Democratic tasks!

⁷⁹ 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 the *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 the *Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 6. He divided the workers into the following categories: 1. class-conscious revolutionaries; 2. intermediate stratum; 3. all the rest. Now the intermediate stra-

more about what we do not yet know and what we can never learn from our factory and “economic” experience, that is, you must give us political knowledge. You intellectuals can acquire this knowledge, and it is your *duty* to bring it to us in a hundred and a thousand times greater measure than you have done up to now; and you must bring it to us, not only in the form of arguments, pamphlets and articles which sometimes—excuse our frankness!—are rather dull, but precisely in the form of live *exposures* of what our government and our governing classes are doing at this very moment in all spheres of life. Just devote more zeal to carrying out this duty and *talk less about* “*raising the activity of the masses of the workers!*” We are far more active than you think, and we are quite able to support, by open street fighting, demands that do not promise any “palpable results” whatever! And it is not for you to “raise” our activity, because activity is precisely the thing you yourselves lack! Bow less in worship to spontaneity, and think more about raising your own activity, gentlemen!

D. What is there in Common Between Economism and Terrorism?

In the last footnote we quoted the opinion of an Economist and of a non-Social Democratic terrorist who happened to be in agreement with him. Speaking generally, however, there is not an accidental, but a necessary, inherent connection between the two, about which we shall have to speak further on, but which must be dealt with here in connection with the question of training the masses in revolutionary activity. The Economists and the present-day terrorists have one common root,

tum, 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...” The *Rabochaya Mysl* “is sharply criticized”: “it keeps on repeating the same thing over and over again, things we have long known, read long ago.” “Nothing in the political review again!” (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 worker as a small child.... The workers are not babies.” (*Svoboda*, published by the Revolutionary-Socialist Group, pp. 69-70.)

namely, the *worship of spontaneity*, which we dealt with 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 terrorists merely bow to different poles of spontaneity: the Economists bow to the spontaneity of the “pure” working-class movement, while the terrorists bow to the spontaneity of the passionate indignation of intellectuals, who lack the ability or opportunity to link up the revolutionary struggle with the working-class movement, to form 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 kinds of worship of spontaneity we have mentioned are nothing more nor less than *a beginning in carrying out* the notorious *Credo* program: Let the workers wage their “economic struggle against the employers and the government” (we apologize to the author of the *Credo* for expressing his views in Martynov’s words! We think we have a right to do so because 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 upon—even though those who are beginning to carry out this program *do not themselves realize* 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 those who wear the mask of Marxism—wholeheartedly sympathize with terror and are trying to keep alive the present wave of terrorist sentiments.

And 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—this fact once again confirmed the remarkable penetration of P. B. Axelrod who *literally foretold* these results of Social Democratic wavering *as far back as the end of 1897* (*The Contemporary Tasks and Tactics*), when he outlined his remarkable “two perspectives.” All the subsequent disputes and disagreements among Russian Social Democrats are contained, like a plant in the seed, in these two perspectives.⁸⁰

From this point of view it also becomes clear why the *Rabocheye Dyelo*, being unable to withstand the spontaneity of Economism, has been unable also to withstand the spontaneity of terrorism. It is highly interesting to note here the specific arguments that the *Svoboda* advanced in defense 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. To admit that the government cannot now be “terrified,” and therefore disrupted by terror, is tantamount to thoroughly condemning terror as a system of struggle, as a sphere of activity sanctioned by the program. Secondly, it is still more characteristic as an example of the failure to understand our immediate task of “training the masses in revolutionary activity.” The *Svoboda* advocates terror as a means of “exciting” the working-class movement, and of

⁸⁰ 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 quote an example where the leadership of the industrial struggle *alone* has succeeded in transforming a trade union movement into a revolutionary class movement? Cannot he 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 prospect: Social Democracy refrains from taking the leadership of the economic struggle of the workers and so... clips its own wings....” In the *Rabocheye Dyelo*’s opinion, quoted above, it is the Iskra that “refrains.” We have seen, however, that the latter *does far more* to lead the economic struggle *than the “Rabocheye Dyelo,”* but it does not confine itself to this, and *does not narrow down* its political tasks for the sake of it.

giving it a “strong impetus.” It is difficult to imagine an argument that disproves itself more than this one does! Are there not enough outrages committed in Russian life that special “excitants” have 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,” watching a handful of terrorists engaged in single combat with the government? The fact of the matter is that the masses of the workers are roused to a high pitch of excitement by the abominations in Russian life, but we are unable to collect, if one may put it that way, and concentrate all these drops and streamlets of popular excitement, which are called forth by the conditions of Russian life to a far larger extent than we imagine, but which it is precisely necessary to combine 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 with which the workers clamor for political literature, to which we have already referred above. 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 that now rests upon Russian revolutionaries, namely, to organize comprehensive political agitation. The *Svoboda* desires to *substitute* terror for agitation, openly admitting that “as soon as intensified and strenuous agitation is commenced among the masses the excitative function of terror will be finished” (*The Regeneration of Revolutionism*, p. 68). This is exactly what proves that both the terrorists and the Economists *underestimate* the revolutionary activity of the masses, in spite of the striking evidence of the events that took place in the spring,⁸¹ and whereas the former go out in search of artificial “excitants,” the latter talk about “concrete demands.” But both fail to devote sufficient attention to the development of *their own activity* in political agitation and in the organization of political exposures. And no other work can serve as a *substitute* for this work either at the present time or at any other time.

⁸¹ This refers to the big street demonstrations which commenced in the spring of 1901. (Author’s note to the 1907 edition.—*Ed.*)

E. The Working Class as Vanguard Fighter for Democracy

We have seen that the conduct of the broadest political agitation, and consequently the organization of comprehensive political exposures, is an absolutely necessary, and the *most urgently* necessary, task of activity, that is, if that 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 knowledge and political training. But presenting the question in this way alone is too narrow, for it ignores the general democratic tasks of Social Democracy in general, and of present-day Russian Social Democracy in particular. 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* is that to be done, what is required to do it? The economic struggle merely “brings home” to the workers questions concerning the attitude of the government 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, and not because it illustrates Martynov’s ability to confuse things, but because it strikingly expresses the fundamental 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, their economic struggle, i.e., making this struggle the exclusive (or, at least, the main) starting point, making it the exclusive, or, at least, the main basis. Such a view is fundamentally wrong. Just because the Economists are piqued by our polemics against them, they refuse to ponder deeply over the origins of these disagreements, with the result that we absolutely fail to understand each other. 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 of the economic struggle, from

outside of 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 between *all* the classes and strata and the state and the government, the sphere of the interrelations between *all* the 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*, must dispatch units of their army *in all directions*.

We deliberately select this awkward formula, we deliberately express ourselves in a simplified, blunt way—not because we desire to indulge in paradoxes, but in order to "bring home" to the Economists those tasks which they unpardonably ignore, to make them understand the difference between trade unionist and Social Democratic politics, which they refuse to understand. We therefore beg the reader not to get excited, but to listen patiently to the end.

Take the type of Social Democratic 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 capitalist and the tyranny of the police are strongly condemned. At meetings of workers the discussions never, or rarely, go beyond the limits of these subjects. Lectures and discussions on the history of the revolutionary movement, on questions of the home and foreign policy of our government, on questions of the economic evolution of Russia and of Europe, and the position of the various classes in modern society, etc., are extremely rare. 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 trade union secretary of any, say British trade union, always helps the workers to conduct the economic struggle, helps to expose factory abuses, explains the injustice of the laws and of measures which hamper

the freedom to strike and the freedom 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 insisted that *this is not yet* Social Democracy. The Social Democratic ideal should not be a trade union secretary, but *a tribune of the people*, able to react to every manifestation of tyranny and oppression, no matter where it takes place, no matter what stratum or class of the people it affects; he must be able to generalize all these manifestations to produce a single picture of police violence and capitalist exploitation; he must be able to take advantage of every event, however small, in order to explain his Socialistic convictions and his democratic demands to *all*, in order to explain to *all* and everyone the world-historic significance of the proletariat’s struggle for emancipation. 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 the *Iskra*. You will see—I am running through Martynov’s article—that Robert Knight engaged more in “calling the masses to certain concrete actions” (p. 39) while Wilhelm Liebknecht engaged more in “the revolutionary elucidation of the whole of the present system or partial manifestations of it” (pp. 38-39); that Robert Knight “formulated the immediate demands of the proletariat and indicated the means by which they can be achieved” (p. 41), whereas Wilhelm Liebknecht, while doing this, was not averse “simultaneously to guide the activities of various opposition strata,” “dictate a positive program of action for them”⁸² (p. 41); that it was precisely Robert Knight who strove “as far as possible to lend the economic struggle itself a political character” (p. 42) and was excellently able “to submit to the government concrete demands promising certain palpable results” (p. 43), while Liebknecht engaged to a much greater degree in “one-sided” “exposures” (p. 40); that Robert Knight attached more significance to the “forward

⁸² For example, during the Franco-Prussian War, Liebknecht dictated a program of action *for the whole of democracy*—and this was done to an even greater extent by Marx and Engels in 1848.

march of the drab, everyday struggle" (p. 61), while Liebknecht attached more significance to the "propaganda of brilliant and finished ideas" (p. 61); that Liebknecht converted the paper he was directing into "an organ of revolutionary opposition that exposes the state of affairs in our country, particularly the political state of affairs, in so far as it affects the interests of the most varied strata of the population" (p. 63), whereas Robert Knight "worked for the cause of the working class in close organic contact with the proletarian struggle" (p. 63)—if by "close and organic contact" is meant the worship of spontaneity which we examined above using the example of Krichевsky and Martynov—and "restricted the sphere of his influence," convinced, of course, as is Martynov, that "by doing so he intensified that influence" (p. 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 thesis. We said that a Social Democrat, if he really believes it is 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 organizers. No one doubts that the theoretical work of Social Democrats should aim at studying all the features of the social and political position of the various classes. But extremely little, little beyond proportion, is done in this direction as compared with the work that is done in studying the features of factory life. In the committees and circles, you will meet people who are immersed even in the study of, say, some special branch of the metal industry, but you will hardly ever find members of organizations (obliged, as often happens, for some reason or other to give up practical work) especially engaged in the collection of material concerning 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 speaking of the lack of training of the majority of present-day leaders of the working-class movement, we cannot refrain from mentioning the point about training in this connection also, for it too is bound up with the “economic” conception of “close organic contact 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, to which all are free to go, 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 classes of the population that desire to listen to *a democrat*; for he is no Social Democrat who forgets that “the Communists support every revolutionary movement,” that we are obliged for that reason to expound and emphasize *general democratic tasks before the whole people*, without for a moment concealing our socialist convictions. He is no Social Democrat who forgets his obligation to be *ahead of everybody* in advancing, accentuating and solving *every* general democratic problem.

“But everybody agrees with this!”—the impatient reader will exclaim—and the new instructions adopted by the last Congress of the Union for the editorial board of the *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 Congresses*, p. 17, our italics)

Yes, these are very true and very good words and we would be fully satisfied if the *Rabocheye Dyelo* understood them *and if it refrained from saying in the next breath things that are the very opposite of them*. For it is not enough to call ourselves the “vanguard,” the advanced detachment; we must act like one; we must act in such a way that *all* the other detach-

ments shall see us, and be obliged to admit that we are marching in the vanguard. And we ask the reader: Are the representatives of the other “detachments” 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 “detachment” 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 laugh 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 all the West-European bourgeoisie, want to draw the workers into politics, but *precisely into trade unionist, and not Social Democratic politics*. Trade unionist politics of the working class are precisely *bourgeois politics* of the working class and the “vanguard’s” formulation of its tasks is the formula for trade unionist politics. Let them even 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 are unconsciously driving Social Democracy into trade unionist channels.

And the light chuckle of our constitutionalist will turn into Homeric laughter when he learns that the Social Democrats who talk about Social Democracy being the vanguard at the present time, when spontaneity almost completely dominates our movement, fear nothing so much as “belittling the spontaneous elements,” as “belittling the significance of the forward march of the drab, everyday struggle, as compared with the propaganda of brilliant and finished ideas,” etc., etc.! A “vanguard” which

fears that consciousness will outstrip spontaneity, which fears to put forward a bold “plan” that would compel universal recognition even among those who think differently from us. Are you not confusing the word “vanguard” with the word “rearguard?”

Ponder over following piece of Martynov reasoning. On page 40 he says that the *Iskra*’s tactics of exposing abuses are one-sided, that “however much we may spread distrust and hatred towards the government, we shall not achieve our aim until we have succeeded in developing sufficiently active social energy for its overthrow.” This, it may be said in parenthesis, is the concern, with which we are already familiar, for increasing the activity of the masses, while at the same time striving to restrict one’s own activity. But that is not the main point just now. Martynov, therefore, speaks here 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 fight for their daily interests.... The liberal strata will themselves take care of the active struggle for their immediate interests and that struggle will bring them face to face with our political regime. (p. 41)

Thus, having commenced with talk about revolutionary energy, about the active struggle for the overthrow of the autocracy, Martynov immediately turns towards 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 will bring

them face to face with our political regime”; the police and the officials of the autocratic government will see to this more than anyone else. But if “we” desire to be advanced democrats, we must make it our business to *stimulate* in the minds of those who are dissatisfied with university, or only with Zemstvo, etc. conditions the idea that the whole political system is worthless. We must take upon ourselves the task of organizing an all-round political struggle under the leadership of our Party in such a manner as to obtain all the support possible of all opposition strata for the struggle and for 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 restless students, the discontented Zemstvo Councilors, the incensed religious sects, the offended elementary schoolteachers, etc., etc. For that reason, Martynov’s assertion is *absolutely wrong*—that “with regard to these, we can come forward *merely in the negative* role of exposers of abuses... we can *only*” (our italics) “dissipate the hopes they have in various government commissions.” By saying this Martynov shows that *he understands absolutely nothing* about 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 following concluding remarks:

The *Iskra* is an organ of revolutionary opposition that exposes the state of affairs in our country, particularly the political state of affairs in so far as it affects the interests of the most varied strata of the population. We, however, work and shall continue to work for the cause of the working class in close organic contact with the proletarian struggle. By narrowing down the sphere of our active influence, we make it more complicated to exercise that influence. (p. 63)

The true meaning of this conclusion is as follows: the *Iskra* desires to *elevate* the trade unionist politics of the working class (to which, owing to misunderstanding, lack of training, or by conviction, our practical workers frequently confine themselves) to Social Democratic politics, whereas the *Rabocheye Dyelo* desires to *degrade* Social Democratic politics to trade unionist politics. And, what is more, it assures the world that

these positions are “quite compatible within the common cause” (p. 63).
*O, Sancta simplicitas!*⁸³

To proceed: Have we sufficient forces to direct our propaganda and agitation among *all* classes of the population? Of course we have. Our Economists, frequently inclined as they are to deny this, lose sight of the gigantic progress our movement has made from 1894 (approximately) to 1901. Like real “tail-enders,” they frequently live in the distant past, in the period when the movement was just beginning. At that time, indeed, we had astonishingly few forces, and it was perfectly natural and legitimate then to devote ourselves exclusively to activities among the workers, and severely condemn any deviation from this. The whole 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 young generation of the educated classes are coming over to us; all over the country there are people, compelled to live in the provinces, who have taken part in the movement in the past or who desire to do so now, who are gravitating towards Social Democracy (whereas in 1894 you could count the Social Democrats on your fingers). One of the principal political and organizational shortcomings of our movement is that we *do not know how* to utilize all these forces and give them appropriate work (we shall deal with this in greater detail in the next chapter). The overwhelming majority of these forces entirely lack the opportunity of “going among the workers,” so there are no grounds for fearing that we shall deflect forces from our main work. And 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 organization.

Is there scope for activity among all classes of the population? Those who fail to see this also lag, in their consciousness, behind the spontaneous awakening of the masses. The working-class movement has aroused and is continuing to arouse discontent in some, hopes for support for the opposition in others, and the consciousness of the intol-

⁸³ Meaning “How simple and naïve!”—*Ed.*

erableness and inevitable downfall of the autocracy in still others. We would be “politicians” and Social Democrats only in name (as actually very often happens), if we failed to realize that our task is to utilize every manifestation of discontent, and to collect and make the best of every grain of even rudimentary protest. This is quite apart from the fact that many millions of the laboring peasantry, handicraftsmen, petty artisans, etc., would always listen eagerly to the preachings of any at all able and intelligent Social Democrat. Indeed, is there a single class of the population in which no individuals, groups or circles are to be found who 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 enlightened a passion for *political* exposure,” I wrote in my article “Where To Begin?” (*Iskra*, No. 4, May 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 at present feeble, rare and timid. 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 audience to listen eagerly and approve what the speakers say, and because the latter do not see anywhere among the people forces to whom it would be worth while directing their complaint against the ‘omnipotent’ Russian government.... We are now in a position, and it is our duty, to provide a tribune for the nation-wide exposure of the tsarist government. That tribune must be a Social Democratic paper.⁸⁴

⁸⁴ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, 4th Russ. ed., Vol. 5, pp. 9-10.—*Ed.*

The ideal audience for political exposures 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 if it does not promise “palpable results.” And the tribune for *nation-wide* exposures can be only an all-Russian newspaper. “Without a political organ, a political movement deserving that name is inconceivable in modern Europe,” and in this respect Russia must undoubtedly be included in modern Europe. The press has long ago become a power in our country, otherwise the government would not spend tens of thousands of rubles to bribe it, and to subsidize 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 seventies and even in the fifties. How much broader and deeper are now those sections of the people that are prepared 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 the *Iskra* (No. 7).^{ab} Political exposures are as much a declaration of war against the *government* as economic exposures are a declaration of war against the factory owners. And the moral significance of this declaration of war will be all the greater, the wider and more powerful this campaign of exposure is, the more numerous and determined the social *class*, which has *declared war in order to commence the war*. Hence, political exposures in themselves serve as a powerful instrument for *disintegrating* the system we oppose, a means for diverting from the enemy his casual or temporary allies, a means for spreading enmity and distrust among the permanent partners of the autocracy.

Only a party that will *organize* really *nation-wide* exposures can become the vanguard of the revolutionary forces in our time. The word “nation-wide” has a very profound meaning. The overwhelming majority of the non-working-class exposers (and in order to become the vanguard, we must attract other classes) are sober politicians and level-headed businessmen. 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 on rear-guard theory and practice.

But if we have to undertake the organization of really nation-wide exposure of the government, what, then, will be the expression of the class character of our movement?—the over-zealous advocates of “close organic contact with the proletarian struggle” will ask us. The reply is: the fact that we Social Democrats will organize these public exposures; that all the questions raised by the agitation will be elucidated in a consistently Social Democratic spirit, without any concessions to deliberate or non-deliberate distortions of Marxism; in the fact that this all-round political agitation will be conducted by a party which unites into one inseparable whole the pressure upon the government in the name of the whole people, the revolutionary training of the proletariat, while safeguarding its political independence, and guidance of the economic struggle of the working class, the utilization of all its spontaneous conflicts with its exploiters which rouse and bring into our camp increasing numbers of the proletariat!

But one of the most characteristic features of Economism is its failure to understand this connection, more, this identity of the most pressing needs of the proletariat (a comprehensible political education through the medium of political agitation and political exposures) with the needs of the general democratic movement. This lack of understanding is expressed not only in “Martynovite” phrases, but also in the references to a supposedly class point of view which is identical in meaning with these phrases. Here, for example, is how it is put by the authors of the “Economist” letter in No. 12 of the *Iskra*.⁸⁵ “This fundamental defect of the *Iskra*” (overestimating ideology) “is the cause of its inconsistency in the question of the attitude of Social Democrats to various social classes

⁸⁵ Lack of space has prevented us from replying in full, in the *Iskra*, to this letter, which is extremely characteristic of the Economists. We were very glad it appeared, for rumors about the *Iskra* not maintaining a consistent, class point of view, have reached us long ago from various sources, and we have been waiting for an appropriate opportunity, or for a formulated expression of this current charge, to reply to it. And it is our habit to reply to attacks not by defense, but by counter-attacks.

and tendencies. By a process of theoretical reasoning” (and not by “the growth of Party tasks, which grow together with the Party”), “the *Iskra* solved the problem of immediately proceeding to the struggle against absolutism. But in all probability it senses how difficult a task this would be for the workers in the present state of affairs”... (not only senses, but knows perfectly well that this task appears less difficult to the workers than to those “Economist” intellectuals who are concerned about little children, 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”)... “and lacking the patience to wait until the workers accumulate more strength for this struggle, the *Iskra* begins to search for allies in the ranks of the liberals and intelligentsia”....

Yes, yes, we have indeed lost all “patience” to “wait” for the blessed time that has long been promised us by diverse “conciliators” when the Economists will stop throwing the blame for their own backwardness upon the workers, and stop justifying their *own* lack of energy by alleging that it is the workers who lack strength. We ask our Economists: what does “the working class accumulating more strength for this struggle” mean? Is it not evident that it means the political training of the workers, exposing to them *all* the aspects of our despicable autocracy? And is it not clear that *precisely for this work* we need “allies in the ranks of the liberals and intelligentsia,” 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 repeated to you over and over again since 1897: “The problem of the Russian Social Democrats 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* accumulate strength (for trade unionist politics) and *then* “go over”—we presume from trade unionist “training for activity”—to Social Democratic activity!

The Economists continue:

In its quest the *Iskra* not infrequently departs from the class point of view, obscures class antagonisms and puts into the forefront the general character of the prevailing discontent with the government, notwithstanding the fact that the causes and the degree of this discontent vary quite considerably among the "allies." Such, for example, is the *Iskra's* attitude towards the Zemstvo.

The *Iskra*, it is alleged, "promises the nobility, who are discontented with the government's sops, the aid of the working class, but does not say a word about the class antagonisms between these strata of the population. If the reader will turn to the articles "The Autocracy and the Zemstvo" (Nos. 2 and 4 of the *Iskra*), to which, *in all probability*, the authors of the letter refer, he will find that these articles⁸⁶ deal with the attitude of the *government* towards the "mild agitation of the bureaucratic Zemstvo, which is based on the Estates," and towards the "independent activity of even the propertied classes." In these articles it is stated that the workers cannot look on indifferently while the government is carrying on a fight against the Zemstvo, and the Zemstvo-ites are called upon to give up 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 Estates?" Do they think that *urging* the Zemstvo to abandon mild speeches and to speak firmly and resolutely is "overestimating ideology?" Do they imagine the workers can "accumulate strength" for the fight against absolutism if they know nothing about the attitude of absolutism *also* towards the Zemstvo? 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 also" (i.e., also "obscures class antagonisms") "is the *Iskra's* attitude towards the student movement." Instead of calling upon the workers to

⁸⁶ And in the interval *between* these articles the *Iskra* (No. 3) printed one specially dealing with class antagonisms in the countryside. (V. I. Lenin, "The Workers' Party and the Peasantry," *Collected Works*, 4th Eng. ed., Vol. 4, pp. 420-28.)—*Ed.*

declare by means of public demonstrations that the real center of unbridled violence, disorder and outrage is not the students but the Russian government (*Iskra*, No. 2⁸⁷), we should, no doubt, have inserted arguments in the spirit of the *Rabochaya Mysl*! And such ideas are expressed by Social Democrats in the autumn of 1901, after the events of February and March, on the eve of a fresh revival 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 stand up for the students who are being beaten up by the police and the Cossacks is outstripping the conscious activity of the Social Democratic organization!

“And yet in other articles,” continue the authors of the letter, “the *Iskra* sharply condemns all compromises, and defends, for example, the intolerant conduct of the Guesdites.” We would advise those who usually so conceitedly and frivolously declare in connection with the disagreements existing among the contemporary Social Democrats that they are of a minor nature and do not justify a split, to ponder very deeply over these words. Is it possible to have successful activity, within one organization, by people who say that so far we have done astonishingly little to explain the hostility of the autocracy towards the various classes, and to inform the workers of the opposition of the various strata of the population towards the autocracy, and by people who see in this a “compromise”—evidently a compromise with the theory of the “economic struggle against the employers and the government?”

We urged the necessity of introducing the class struggle in the rural districts on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of the emancipation of the peasantry (No. 3⁸⁸), and spoke of the irreconcilability between the local government bodies and the autocracy in connection with Witte’s secret memorandum (No. 4). In connection with the new law we attacked the feudal landlords and the government which serves them (No. 8⁸⁹) and welcomed the illegal Zemstvo congress. We urged the Zemstvo to stop

⁸⁷ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, 4th Russ. ed., Vol. 4, pp. 388-93.—*Ed.*

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 394-401.—*Ed.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 5, pp. 78-83.—*Ed.*

making degrading petitions (No. 8⁹⁰), and to come out and fight. We encouraged the students, who had begun to understand the need for, and to take up, the political struggle (No. 3) and, at the same time, we lashed out at the “barbarous lack of understanding” revealed by the adherents of the “purely student” movement, who called upon the students to abstain from taking part 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 the Rossiya⁹¹ (No. 5) and at the same time we commented on the fury with which “peaceful writers, aged professors, scientists and well-known liberal Zemstvo-ites were manhandled” in the government’s torture chambers (No. 5, “Police Raid on Literature”). We exposed the real significance of the program of “state concern 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).⁹² 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 *compromise with liberalism* shows that he absolutely fails to understand the true significance of the program of the *Credo* and *is carrying out that program de facto*, however much he may repudiate it! Because *by that* 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 defining *his own*, Social Democratic, attitude towards this question.

F. Again “Slanderers,” Again “Mystifiers”

These polite expressions, as the reader will recall, belong to the *Rabocheye Dyelo*, which in this way answers our charge that it “is indirectly preparing the ground for converting the working-class movement

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 84-85.—*Ed.*

⁹¹ *Rossiia (Russia)*—a moderate liberal newspaper published in St. Petersburg from 1899 through 1902.—*Ed.*

⁹² V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, 4th Russ. ed., Vol. 5, pp. 71-72.—*Ed.*

into an instrument of bourgeois democracy.” In its simplicity of heart the *Rabocheye Dyelo* decided that this accusation was nothing more than a polemical sally, as if to say, these malicious doctrinaires have made up their minds to say all sorts of unpleasant things about us; now 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” (*Two Congresses*, p. 30), “mystification” (p. 31), “masquerade” (p. 33). Like Jupiter, the *Rabocheye Dyelo* (although it has little resemblance to Jupiter) is angry 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 *all* worship of the spontaneity of the mass movement and *any* degrading of Social Democratic politics to trade unionist politics mean precisely preparing the ground for converting the working-class movement into an instrument of bourgeois democracy. The spontaneous working-class movement by itself is able to create (and inevitably creates) only trade unionism, and working-class trade unionist politics are precisely working-class bourgeois politics. The fact that the working class participates in the political struggle, and even in political revolution, does not in itself make its politics Social Democratic politics. Will the *Rabocheye Dyelo* make bold to deny that? Will it, at long last, publicly, plainly and without equivocation explain just how it understands the urgent questions of the international and of the Russian Social Democratic movement? Oh no, it will never pluck up the courage to do anything of the kind, because it holds fast to the trick, which might be described as saying “no” to everything: “It’s not me; it’s not my horse; I’m not the driver. We are not Economists; the *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 practicing it are usually nicknamed “Anything you wish, sir.”

The *Rabocheye Dyelo* imagines that in general bourgeois democracy in Russia is merely a “phantom” (*Two Congresses*, p. 32).⁹³ Happy

⁹³ There follows a reference to the “concrete Russian conditions which fatalistically impel the working-class movement onto 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

people! Like the ostrich, they bury their 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 disappearance of Marxism; liberal newspapers (the *S. Peterburgskiy Vedomosti*,⁹⁴ the *Russkiye Vedomosti*, and many others) which encourage the liberals who bring to the workers the Brentano⁹⁵ 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!

The *Rabocheye Dyelo* and the authors of the Economist letter published in the *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 was that we were not up to the tasks confronting us. The masses of the workers proved to be more active than we; we lacked adequately trained revolutionary leaders and organizers with a thorough knowledge of the mood prevailing among all the opposition strata and able to march at the head of the movement, turn a spontaneous demonstration into a political one, broaden its political

West-European bourgeoisie “impelled,” deliberately impelled, the workers onto 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, by that, play into the hands of bourgeois democracy.

⁹⁴ *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.—*Ed.*

⁹⁵ *L. Brentano*—a German bourgeois economist, advocate of so-called “state Socialism,” who tried to prove the possibility of attaining social equality within the framework of capitalism by introducing reforms and conciliating the interests of the capitalists and workers. Using Marxist phraseology as a cover, Brentano and his followers endeavored to subordinate the working-class movement to the interests of the bourgeoisie.—*Ed.*

character, etc. Under such circumstances, our backwardness will inevitably be utilized by the more mobile and more energetic non-Social Democratic revolutionaries, and the workers, no matter how strenuously and self-sacrificingly they may fight the police and the troops, no matter how revolutionary their actions may be, will prove to be merely a force supporting these revolutionaries, the rearguard of bourgeois democracy, and not the Social Democratic vanguard. Take, for example, the German Social Democrats, whose weak aspects alone our Economists desire to emulate. Why is it that *not a single* political event takes place in Germany without adding to the authority and prestige of Social Democracy? Because Social Democracy is always found to be in advance of all others in that it furnishes the most revolutionary appraisal of every given event and by its championship of every protest against tyranny. It does not lull itself with disquisitions about the economic struggle bringing the workers up against their own lack of rights and about concrete conditions fatalistically impelling the working-class movement onto 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 progressive as city mayor (our Economists have not yet managed to convince the Germans that this, in fact, is a compromise with liberalism!); in the question of the law against "immoral" publications and pictures; in the question of the government influencing the election of professors, etc., etc. Everywhere the Social Democrats are found to be ahead of all others, rousing political discontent among all classes, rousing the sluggards, pushing on the laggards and providing a wealth of material for the development of the political consciousness and political activity of the proletariat. The result of all this is that even the avowed enemies of Socialism are filled with respect for this advanced political fighter, and not unfrequently an important document from bourgeois, and even from bureaucratic and Court circles, makes its way by some miraculous means into the editorial office of the *Vorwärts*.

This, then, is the explanation of the seeming "contradiction" which is so much beyond the understanding of the *Rabocheye Dyelo* that it raises its arms and cries: "Masquerade!" Indeed, just think of it: We, the Rabocheye Dyelo, regard the mass working-class movement as the **corner-**

stone (and say so in bold type!); we warn all and sundry against belittling the significance of the spontaneous movement; we desire to lend the economic struggle itself, 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 converting the working-class movement into an instrument of bourgeois democracy! And who says this? People who “compromise” with liberalism, intervene in every “liberal” issue (what a gross misunderstanding of “organic contact with the proletarian struggle!”), who devote so much attention to the students and even (Oh horror!) to the Zemstvo-ites! People who wish to devote a greater (compared with the Economists) percentage of their efforts to activity among non-proletarian classes of the population! Is not this a “masquerade?”

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

IV

The Amateurishness of the Economists and an Organization of Revolutionaries

The *Rabocheye Dyelo*'s assertions—which we have analyzed above—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 organizational tasks. The “economic struggle against the employers and the government” does not in the least require—and therefore such a struggle can never give rise to—an all-Russian centralized organization that will combine, in one general onslaught, all and every manifestation of political opposition, protest and indignation, an organization that will consist of professional revolutionaries and be led by the real political leaders of the whole people. This is but natural. The character of any organization is naturally and inevitably determined by the content of its activity. Consequently, the *Rabocheye Dyelo*, by the assertions analyzed above, sanctifies and legitimatizes not only the narrowness of political activity but also the narrowness of organizational work. In this case too, as always, it is an organ whose consciousness yields to spontaneity. And yet the worship of spontaneously developing forms of organization, failure to realize how narrow and primitive is our organizational work, what amateurs we still are in this most important sphere, failure to realize this, I say, is a veritable disorder from which our movement suffers. It is not a disorder that comes with decline, it is, of course, a disorder that comes with growth. But it is precisely at the present time, when the wave of spontaneous indignation, as it were, sweeps over us, leaders and organizers of the movement, that a most irreconcilable struggle must be waged against all defense of backwardness, against any legitimization of narrowness in this matter, and it is particularly necessary to rouse in all who take part in practical work, in all who are preparing to take up their work, discontent with the amateurishness that prevails among us and an unshakable determination to get rid of it.

A. What is Amateurishness?

We shall try to answer this question by giving a brief description of the activity of a typical Social Democratic circle of the period of 1894-1901. We have already 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, absorbed in Marxism as a theory, but as an answer to the question: "What is to be done?"; as a call to take the field against the enemy. And 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, having no contacts whatever with the old members of the movement, no contacts with circles in other districts, or even in other parts of the same city (or with other universities), without the various sections of the revolutionary work being in any way organized, having no systematic plan of activity covering any length of time, establishes contacts with the workers and sets to work. The circle gradually expands its propaganda and agitation; by its activities it wins the sympathies of rather large sections of workers and of a certain section of the educated classes, which provide it with money and from among whom the "committee" recruits new groups of young people. There is a growing fascination about the committee (or League of Struggle), its sphere of activity becomes wider and its activities expand quite spontaneously: the very people who a year or a few months previously had spoken at the gatherings of the students' circle and discussed the question, "Whither?", who established and maintained contacts with the workers, 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 about organizing a demonstration, and finally, commence open hostilities (these open hostilities may, according to circumstances, take the form of the publication of the very first agitational leaflet, or the first issue of a newspaper, or of the organization of the first demonstration). And usually the very first of these actions ends in immediate and wholesale arrests. Immediate and wholesale, precisely because these open hostilities were 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 circle work; because, naturally, the police, in almost every case, knew the principal leaders of the local movement, for they had already "won a reputation" for themselves in their school days, and the police waited only for a convenient moment to make their

raid, deliberately allowing the circle sufficient time to develop its work so that they might obtain a palpable *corpus delicti*, and always permitted several of the persons known to them to remain at liberty in order to act as “breeders” (which, I believe, 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 mob of peasants, armed with clubs, against modern troops. And one can only wonder at the virility of the movement which expanded, grew and scored victories in spite of the total lack of training among the fighters. It is true that 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 commenced (and they commenced in fact with the strikes in the summer of 1896), the defects in our fighting organizations made themselves felt to an ever-increasing degree. Thrown into confusion at first and committing a number of mistakes (for example, its appeal to the public describing the misdeeds of the Socialists, or the deportation of workers from the capital to provincial industrial centers), the government very soon adapted itself to the new conditions of the struggle and managed to deploy 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 circles so thoroughly that the masses of the workers literally lost all their leaders, the movement assumed an incredibly sporadic character, and it became utterly impossible to establish continuity and coherence in the work. The terrible dispersion of the local leaders, the accidental character of the circle memberships, the lack of training in and the narrow outlook on theoretical, political, and organizational questions were all the inevitable result of the conditions described above. Things reached such a pass that in several places the workers, because of our lack of stamina and ability to maintain secrecy, began to lose faith in the intelligentsia and to avoid them; the intellectuals, they said, are much too careless and lay themselves open to 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 primitive methods as a disease. And 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 already quoted. We hope we shall be forgiven for the length of the quotation:

While the gradual transition to more extensive practical activity, a transition which 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 and not less interesting feature in the general mechanism of the Russian workers' revolution. We refer to the *general lack of revolutionary forces fit for action*⁹⁶ which is felt not only in St. Petersburg, but throughout the whole of Russia. With the general revival of the working-class movement, the general development of the working masses, growing frequency of strikes, and with the mass struggle of the workers becoming more and more open, which intensifies government persecution, arrests, deportation and exile, this *lack of highly skilled revolutionary forces is becoming increasingly marked* and, without a doubt, *cannot but affect the depth and the general character of the movement*. Many strikes take place without the revolutionary organizations exercising any strong and direct influence upon them.... A shortage of agitational leaflets and illegal literature is felt.... The workers' circles are left without agitators.... In addition, there is a constant shortage of funds. In a word, *the growth of the working-class movement is outstripping the growth and development of the revolutionary organizations*. The numerical strength of the active revolutionaries is too small for 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 organization.... The separate circles and individual revolutionaries are not brought together and united, and do not represent a single, strong and disciplined organization with

⁹⁶ All italics ours.—Ed.

the planned development of its parts.... (B-v in the *Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 6)

And admitting that the immediate organization of fresh circles to replace those that have been broken up “merely proves the virility of the movement... but does not prove the existence of an adequate number of sufficiently fit 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 Labor versus Capital group,⁹⁷ clearly showed that the young agitator, lacking a detailed knowledge of the conditions of labor 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 (but does he understand?) is able to carry on his work for perhaps four, five or six months. Then come arrests, which frequently lead to the breakup of the whole organization, or at all events, part of it. The question arises, therefore, can the group conduct successful and fruitful activity if its existence is measured by months?... Obviously, the defects of the existing organizations cannot be wholly ascribed to the transitional period.... Obviously, the numerical and above all the qualitative make up of the functioning organizations is no small factor, and the first task our Social Democrats must undertake... *is effectively to combine the organizations and make a strict selection of their membership.*

B. Amateurishness and Economism

We must now deal with a question that has undoubtedly arisen in the mind of every reader. Can a connection be established between ama-

⁹⁷ Reference is to the “Labor Group for Struggle Against Capital.” It had a small membership and its views were close to those of the “Economists.” Formed in St. Petersburg in the spring of 1899, it issued a mimeographed leaflet entitled “Our Program,” which, however, was not circulated owing to the group’s arrest.—*Ed.*

teurishness, this disorder of growth affecting the *whole* of the movement, and Economism, which is *one* of the trends in Russian Social Democracy? We think that it can. Lack of practical training, lack of ability to carry on organizational work is certainly common *to us all*, including those who have from the very outset unswervingly stood for revolutionary Marxism. And, of course, were it only lack of practical training, no one could blame the practical workers. But the term “amateurishness” embraces something else: it denotes a narrow scope of revolutionary work generally, failure to understand that a good organization of revolutionaries cannot be built up on the basis of such narrow activity, and lastly—and most important—it denotes attempts to justify this narrowness and to elevate it to a special “theory,” i.e., bowing in worship to spontaneity on this question too. Once such attempts were observed, it became certain that amateurishness is connected with Economism and that we shall never eliminate this narrowness of our organizational activity until we eliminate Economism generally (i.e., the narrow conception of Marxist theory, of the role of Social Democracy and of its political tasks). And these attempts were revealed in a twofold direction. Some began to say: the mass of workers themselves have not yet advanced the broad and militant political tasks that the revolutionaries are attempting to “impose” upon them; they must continue, for the time being, to fight for *immediate* political demands, to conduct “the economic struggle against the employers and the government”⁹⁸ (and, naturally, corresponding to this struggle which is “easily understood” by the mass movement must be an organization that will be “easily understood” by the most untrained youth). Others, far removed from any kind of “gradualness,” began to say: it is possible and necessary to “bring about a political revolution,” but that does not require building a strong organization of revolutionaries to train the proletariat in the steadfast and stubborn struggle. All we need do is to snatch up our old friend, the “handy” wooden club. Speaking without metaphor it means—we must organize a general strike,⁹⁹ or we must stimulate the “spiritless” progress of the working-class movement by means of “exci-

⁹⁸ The *Rabochaya Mysl* and the *Rabocheye Dyelo*, especially the “Reply to Plekhanov.”

⁹⁹ See “Who Will Bring About the Political Revolution?” in the symposium published in Russia, entitled *The Proletarian Struggle*. Reissued by the Kiev Committee.

tative terror.”¹⁰⁰ Both these trends, the opportunists and the “revolutionists,” bow to the prevailing amateurishness; neither believes that it can be eliminated, neither understands our primary and most imperative practical task, namely, to establish *an organization of revolutionaries* capable of maintaining the energy, stability and continuity of the political struggle.

We have just quoted the words of B-v: “The growth of the working-class movement is outstripping the growth and development of the revolutionary organizations.” This “valuable remark of a close observer” (the *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 that the *leaders* (“ideologists,” revolutionaries, Social Democrats) *lag behind the spontaneous upsurge of the masses*. It shows that all the arguments advanced by the authors of the Economic letter (in the *Iskra*, No. 12), by B. Krichevsky and by Martynov, about the danger of belittling the significance of the spontaneous element, about the drab everyday struggle, about tactics-as-a-process, etc., are nothing more than a glorification and defense of amateurishness. These people who cannot pronounce the word “theoretician” without a contemptuous grimace, 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 organizational work, from lack of “plans” for wide and bold activity, they shout about “tactics-as-a-process!” The principal sin we commit is that we *degrade* our political *and organizational* tasks to the level of the immediate, “palpable,” “concrete” interests of the everyday economic struggle; and yet they keep singing to us the old song: lend the economic struggle itself a political character. We say again: this kind of thing displays as much “sense for the realities of life” as was displayed by the hero in the popular fable who shouted to a passing funeral procession: many happy returns of the day!

¹⁰⁰ *Regeneration of Revolutionism and the Svoboda*.

Recall the matchless, truly “Narcissus”-like¹⁰¹ superciliousness with which these wiseacres lectured Plekhanov about 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” (The *Rabocheye Dyelo’s Reply*, p. 24).

There are circles and circles, gentlemen! Circles of “amateurs” are, of course, not capable of coping with political tasks so long as they have not become aware of their amateurishness and do not abandon it. If, besides this, these amateurs are enamored 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, of course, and certainly cannot *cope with any political tasks in general*. But a circle of heroes like Alexeyev and Myshkin, Khalturin and Zhelyabov is capable of coping with political tasks in the genuine and most practical sense of the term, and it is capable of coping with them precisely because and to the extent that their passionate preaching meets with response among the spontaneously awakening masses, and their seething energy is answered and supported by the energy of the revolutionary class. Plekhanov was a thousand times right when he not only pointed to this revolutionary class, not only proved that its spontaneous awakening was inevitable, and unavoidable but also when he set even “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, in order to *narrow down* the energy and scope of activity of the “workers’ circles.” If you are not amateurs enamored 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 circles, but even of individual persons is able to perform in the revolutionary cause. Or do you think that our movement cannot produce

¹⁰¹ Narcissus is the name of a character in Greek mythology who was so proud of his beauty that he rejected the love of all the goddesses. To punish him, Aphrodite, Goddess of Love, caused him to fall in love with his own reflection in the water, at which he stared until he pined away and died. Here it is in the sense of conceit that Lenin uses the word.—*Ed.*

heroes like those of the seventies? But why? Because we lack training? But we are training ourselves, will go on training and acquire the training! Unfortunately it is true that mold has formed on the surface of the stagnant waters of the “economic struggle against the employers and the government”; people have appeared among us who kneel in prayer to spontaneity, gazing with awe (as Plekhanov expresses it) upon the “posteriors” of the Russian proletariat. But we will get rid of this mold. 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 last!—rise to full stature in all their giant strength. All that is required is that the masses of our practical workers, and the still larger masses of those who long for practical work even while still at school, shall meet with scorn and ridicule any suggestion that may be made to degrade our political tasks and to restrict the scope of our organizational work. And we shall achieve that, rest assured, gentlemen!

In the article “Where To Begin?” I wrote in opposition to the *Rabocheye Dyelo*:

The tactics of agitation in relation to some special question, or the tactics with regard to some detail of party organization may be changed in twenty-four hours; but only people devoid of all principles are capable of changing in twenty-four hours, or twenty-four months for that matter, their views as to whether it is in general, always and absolutely, necessary to have a militant organization, and to conduct political agitation among the masses.¹⁰²

To this the *Rabocheye Dyelo* replied: “This, the only one of the Iskra’s charges that claims to be based on facts, is totally without foundation. Readers of the *Rabocheye Dyelo* know very well that right from the outset we not only called for political agitation, without waiting for the appearance of the *Iskra*...” (and saying at the same time that not only the workers’ circles, “but also the mass working-class movement could not regard as its primary political task the overthrow of absolutism,” but only the struggle for immediate political demands, and that “the masses

¹⁰² V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, 4th Russ. ed., Vol. 5, p. 6. p. 132.—Ed.

begin to understand immediate political demands after one, or at all events, after several strikes”)... “but the publications that we procured from abroad for the comrades working in Russia, provided the *only* Social Democratic political and agitational material...” (and in this only 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 narrowed-down agitation was the “most widely applicable.” And do you not observe, gentlemen, that your own arguments prove the necessity—that kind of material being the *only* material provided—for the *Iskra*’s appearance, and its fight against the *Rabocheye Dyelo*?)... “On the other hand, our publishing activity actually prepared the ground for the tactical unity of the party”... (unity in the belief that tactics are a process of growth of Party tasks, which grow together with the Party? A precious unity indeed!)... “and by that rendered possible the creation of a ‘militant organization’ for which the Union did all that an organization 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 even to talk about a “militant organization” to fight for “immediate political demands,” or conduct “the economic struggle against the employers and the government.”

But if the reader wishes to see the pearls of “Economist” passion for amateurishness, he must, of course, turn from the eclectic and vacillating *Rabocheye Dyelo* to the consistent and determined *Rabochaya Mysl*. In its Special Supplement, p. 13, R. M. wrote:

Now two words about the so-called revolutionary intelligentsia proper. It is true that on more than one occasion it has proved that it was quite prepared to “enter into determined battle with tsarism!” The unfortunate thing, however, is that, ruthlessly persecuted by the political police, our revolutionary intelligentsia imagined that the struggle against this political police was the political struggle against the autocracy. That is why, to this day, it cannot understand “where the forces for the fight against the autocracy are to be obtained.”

What matchless and magnificent contempt for the fight against the police is displayed by this worshiper (in the worst sense of the word) of the *spontaneous* movement! Our inability to organize secretly he is prepared to *justify* by the argument that with the spontaneous growth of the mass movement, it is not at all important for us to fight against the political police!! Very few indeed would subscribe to this monstrous conclusion; our defects in revolutionary organization have become too urgent a matter to permit them to do that. But if Martynov, for example, refuses to subscribe to it, 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 prompting the masses to put forward concrete demands that promise palpable results call for special efforts to create a stable, centralized, militant organization of revolutionaries? Cannot such a “task” be carried out even by masses that do not “fight against the political police” at all? More: could this task be fulfilled unless, in addition to the few leaders, it was undertaken by such workers (the overwhelming majority), who are quite *incapable* of “fighting 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 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 not only see to it that the masses “advance” concrete demands, but also 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 organization of professional revolutionaries and the pure and simple working-class movement. Although this question has found little reflection in literature, it has greatly engaged us “politicians” in conversations and controversies with those comrades who gravitate more or less towards Economism. It is a question that deserves special treatment. But before taking it up, let us cite one more quotation by way of illustrating our thesis concerning the connection between amateurishness and Economism.

In his *Reply*, Mr. N. N.¹⁰³ wrote: "The Emancipation of Labor 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*." Emphasizing the last words, the author adds the following footnote to the word "path":

This can not 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 approaches quite closely to the question of the "material forces" (organizers 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. A secret strike is impossible—for those who take part in it and for those immediately associated with it, but a strike may remain (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 between strikers, takes care to prevent all news of strikes from spreading. Here indeed is where a special "fight against the political police" is required, a fight that can never be conducted by such large masses as take part in strikes. This struggle must be organized, 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 organization 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 (and if we did not ourselves sometimes secretly prepare) every strike and every demonstration. And we shall *succeed* in doing this, precisely because the spontaneously awakening masses will *advance also from their own ranks* increasing numbers of "professional

¹⁰³ N. N.—S. N. Prokopovich, an active "Economist" and later a Cadet.—*Ed.*

revolutionaries” (that is, if we do not take it into our heads to advise the workers to keep on marking time).

C. Organization of Workers and Organization of Revolutionaries

It is only natural to expect that a Social Democrat, who conceives the political struggle as being identical with the “economic struggle against the employers and the government,” should conceive of an “organization of revolutionaries” as being more or less identical with an “organization of workers.” And this, in fact, is what actually happens; so that when we talk about organization, we literally talk 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 we were very soon agreed that its principal defect was that it ignored the question of organization. We were beginning to think that we were in complete agreement with each other—but... as the conversation proceeded, it became clear that we were talking of different things. My interlocutor accused the author of ignoring strike funds, mutual aid societies, etc., whereas I had in mind an organization of revolutionaries as an essential factor in “bringing about” the political revolution. As soon as that disagreement became clear, I hardly remember a single question of principle upon which I was in agreement with that Economist! What was the source of our disagreement? It was the fact that on questions of both organization and 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 (and indeed for that reason), the organization of a revolutionary Social Democratic party must inevitably be of a different kind than the organizations of the workers designed for this struggle. A workers’ organization must in the first place be a trade organization; secondly, it must be as broad as possible; and thirdly, it must be as little clandestine as possible (here, and further on, of course, I have only autocratic Russia in mind). On the other hand, the organizations of revolutionaries must consist first,

foremost and mainly of people who make revolutionary activity their profession (that is why I speak of organizations of *revolutionaries*, meaning revolutionary Social Democrats). In view of this common feature of the members of such an organization, *all distinctions as between workers and intellectuals*, and certainly distinctions of trade and profession, must be *utterly obliterated*. Such an organization must of necessity be not too extensive and 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 organization is clear enough, as is the distinction between trade unions and Social Democracy. The relation of the latter to the former will naturally vary in each country according to historical, legal and other conditions—it may be more or less close, complex, etc. (in our opinion it should be as close and simple as possible); but there can be no question of trade union organizations being identical with the Social Democratic party organizations in free countries. In Russia, however, the yoke of the autocracy appears at first glance to obliterate all distinctions between a Social Democratic organization and trade unions, because *all* workers' associations and *all* circles are prohibited, and because the principal manifestation and weapon of the workers' economic struggle—the strike—is regarded as a criminal (and sometimes even as a political!) offense. 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 confuse trade unionism with Social Democracy (and our Krichevskys, Martynovs and their like, while diligently discussing the first kind of “impelling,” fail to notice the second kind). Indeed, picture to yourselves people who are immersed ninety-nine per cent in “the economic struggle against the employers and the government.” Some of them will never, during the *whole* course of their activity (four to six months) be impelled to think of the need for a more complex organization 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 march of “the drab everyday struggle.” Still others will be carried away, per-

haps, 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 Social Democratic movements. Such people may argue that the later a country enters into 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 reason can and should there be for non-Social Democratic trade unions. Up to this point the argument is quite correct; unfortunately, however, some go beyond that and envisage the 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 these dreams have upon our plans of organization.

The workers’ organizations for the economic struggle should be trade union organizations. Every Social Democratic worker should as far as possible assist and actively work in these organizations. That is true. But it is not at all to our interest to demand that only Social Democrats should be eligible for membership in the “trade” unions: that would only narrow down our influence over 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 unattainable if they failed to unite all who have attained at least this elementary degree of understanding, and if they were not very *wide* organizations. And the wider these organizations are, the wider our influence over them will be—an influence due not only to the “spontaneous” development of the economic struggle but also to the direct and conscious effort of the socialist trade union members to influence their comrades. But a broad organization cannot apply the methods of strict secrecy (since the latter 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 little clandestine as possible? Generally speaking, there can be only two ways to this end: either the trade unions become legalized (and in some countries this preceded the legalization of the Socialist and political unions), or the organization

is kept a secret one, but so “free” and amorphous, *lose*¹⁰⁴ as the Germans say, that the need for secret methods becomes almost negligible as far as the bulk of the members is concerned.

The legalization of the non-socialist and non-political labor unions in Russia has already 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 legalization—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 legality has already been hoisted by the Vasilyevs and the Zubatovs. Support has been promised by Messrs. the Ozerovs and the Wormses, and followers of the new tendency are already to be found among the workers. Henceforth, we cannot but reckon with this tendency. As to how we are to reckon with it, 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 to the workers what their real intentions are. We must also expose all the conciliatory, “harmonious” notes that will be heard in the speeches of liberal politicians at the legal meetings of the workers, irrespective of whether these speeches are motivated by an earnest conviction of the desirability of peaceful class collaboration, by a desire to curry favor with the powers that be, or 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 “hotheads” and try to make use of legal organizations to plant their *agents provocateurs* in the illegal organizations.

But while doing all this, we must not forget that *in the long run* the legalization 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 that the attention of still larger and more backward sections of the workers is attracted to social and political questions; we mean relieving us, revolutionaries, of functions which are essentially legal (the distribution of legal

¹⁰⁴ *Lose* means loose in German.—*Ed.*

books, mutual aid, etc.), and 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” corruption of the workers with the aid of “Struve-ism”), we shall see to it that you are exposed. But whenever you take a real step forward, even if it is the most “timid zigzag,” we shall 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. And every such extension will be to our advantage and will help to hasten the advent of legal societies of the kind where not *agents provocateurs* will detect Socialists, but where Socialists will find adherents. In a word, our task is to fight down 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 Afanasi Ivanoviches and Pulkheria Ivanovnas¹⁰⁵ are tending their flower-pot crops, we must prepare the reapers, not only to cut down the tares of today but also to reap the wheat of tomorrow.¹⁰⁶

Thus, *we* cannot by means of legalization *solve* the problem of creating a trade union organization that will be as little secret and as extensive as possible (but we would be extremely glad if the Zubatovs and the Ozerovs provided us with even a partial opportunity for such a solution—to which end we must fight them as strenuously as possible!). There remains the path of secret trade union organization; and *we must* give all possible assistance to the workers, who (as we definitely know) are already adopting this path. Trade union organizations can be not only of tremendous value in developing and consolidating the economic struggle, but can

¹⁰⁵ *Afanasi Ivanovich* and *Pulkheria Ivanovna*—old-world small provincial landowners described by Gogol in *Old-World Landowners*.—Ed.

¹⁰⁶ The *Iskra*’s campaign against the tares evoked the following angry outburst from the *Rabocheye Dyelo*: “For the *Iskra*, the signs of the times lie not so much in the great events (of the spring), as in the miserable attempt of the agents of Zubatov to ‘legalize’ 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 Congresses*, p. 27). For all this we have to blame the “dogmatism” of those orthodox fellows who “ignore the imperative demands of life.” They obstinately refuse to see the yard-high wheat and are fighting down the inch-high tares! Does this not reveal a “distorted sense of perspective in regard to the Russian working class movement?” (*Ibid.*, p. 27.)

also become a very important auxiliary to political agitation and revolutionary organization. In order to achieve this, and in order to guide the nascent trade union movement in the channels the Social Democrats desire, we must first of all clearly realize how absurd is the plan of organization with which the St. Petersburg Economists have been occupying themselves for nearly five years. That plan is set forth in the “Rules for a Workers’ Benefit Fund” of July 1897 (*Listok Rabotnika*, No. 9-10, p. 46; taken from the *Rabochaya Mysl*, No. 1), and also in the “Rules for a Trade Union Workers’ Organization,” of October 1900 (special leaflet printed in St. Petersburg and quoted in the *Iskra*, No. 1). The fundamental defect of both these sets of rules is that they give a detailed formulation of a broad workers’ organization and confuse it with an organization of revolutionaries. Let us take the last-mentioned set of rules, since it is drawn up in greater detail. The body of it consists of *fifty-two* paragraphs. Twenty-three paragraphs deal with structure, the method of conducting business and the jurisdiction of the “workers’ circles,” which are to be organized in every factory (“not more than ten 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 organization,” and nineteen to the highly complex interconnection between the “Committee of the Workers’ Organization” and the “Committee of the St. Petersburg League of Struggle” (delegates from each district and from the “executive groups”—“groups of propagandists, groups for maintaining contact with the provinces and with the organization 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 find a more striking illustration of 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 organization of revolutionaries who are capable of guiding the *whole* proletarian struggle for emancipation. To talk of “the political emancipation of the working class” and of the struggle against “tsarist despotism,” and yet to draft rules

like this, indicates a complete failure to understand what the real political tasks of Social Democracy are. Not one of the fifty or so paragraphs reveals the slightest glimmer of understanding that it is necessary to conduct the widest possible political agitation among the masses, an agitation that deals with every aspect of Russian absolutism and with all the features of the various social classes in Russia. Rules like these are of no use even for the achievement of trade union aims, let alone political aims, for that requires organization *according to trades*, of which no mention is made in the Rules.

But most characteristic of all, perhaps, is the amazing top-heaviness of the whole “system,” which attempts to bind each single factory with the “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 which positively reek of red tape and bureaucracy. In practice, of course, three-fourths of the clauses are never applied; on the other hand, however, a “conspiratorial” organization 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 already passed through a similar phase in their movement, when everybody was enthusiastic about the extensive organization of workers’ benefit funds; but they very quickly abandoned this idea when they saw that such organizations only provided rich harvests for the gendarmes. If we are out for wide workers’ organizations, and not for widespread arrests, if we do not want to provide satisfaction to the gendarmes, we must aim to have these organizations remain entirely informal. But will they be able to function in that case? Well, 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 formal group for this? Could not the purpose be better served by correspondence to the illegal papers and without setting up special groups? “To lead the struggles of the workers for the improvement of their workshop conditions” (par. 3 of the *Rules*). This, too, requires no formal group. Any sensible agitator can establish just what demands the workers want to advance in the course of ordinary conversation and transmit them to a narrow—not a wide—organization of revolutionaries to be embodied in a leaflet. “To organize a

fund... to which subscriptions of two kopeks per ruble should be made” (par. 9). “To present to subscribers a monthly financial account” (par. 17) “To expel members who fail to pay dues” (par. 10), and so forth. Why, this is a very paradise for the police; for nothing would be easier than for them to penetrate into the ponderous secrecy of a “central factory fund,” confiscate the money and arrest all 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 exclusive and very secret) organization, 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 analyzing 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 organization of revolutionaries, can, with the widest support of the masses and without any formal organization, perform all the functions of a trade union organization, and perform them, moreover, in a manner desirable to Social Democracy. Only in this way can we secure the *consolidation* and development of a *Social Democratic* trade union movement, in spite of all the gendarmes.

It may be objected that an organization which is so loose that it is not even definitely formed, and which even has no enrolled and registered membership, cannot be called an organization at all. That may very well be. I am not out for names. But this “organization without members” will do everything that is required, and from the very outset guarantee the closest contact between our future trade unions and Socialism. Only an incorrigible utopian would want a *broad* organization of workers, with elections, reports, universal suffrage, etc., under the autocracy.

The moral to be drawn from this is a simple one: if we begin with the solid foundation of a strong organization of revolutionaries, we can guarantee the stability of the movement as a whole and carry out the aims of both Social Democracy and of trade unions proper. If, however, we begin with a broad workers’ organization, supposed to be most “acces-

sible” to the masses (but as a matter of fact most accessible to the gendarmes and making the revolutionaries most accessible to the police), we shall achieve neither one nor the other of these aims; we shall not eliminate our amateurishness, and because we remain scattered and our forces are constantly broken up by the police, we shall only make the trade unions of the Zubatov and Ozerov type most accessible to the masses.

What, properly speaking, should be the functions of an organization of revolutionaries? We shall deal with this in detail. But first let us examine a very typical argument advanced by our terrorist, who (sad fate!) in this matter also is a next-door neighbor to the Economist. The *Svoboda* (No. 1), a journal published for workers, contains an article entitled “Organization,” the author of which tries to defend his friends, the Economist workers of Ivanovo-Voznesensk. He writes:

It is a bad thing when the crowd is mute and unenlightened, and when the movement does not proceed from the rank and file. For instance, the students of a university town leave for their homes during the summer and other vacations 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? Of course not!... It has not yet learned to walk, it is still in leading strings. So it is in everything. The students go off, and everything comes to a standstill. The most capable among the cream are arrested—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 one. The first preached one thing, the second may preach 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 this is because no deep roots have been struck in the crowd; 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 organization embraces the crowd everything proceeds from the crowd, and nobody, however he tries, can stop the cause. (p. 63)

The facts are described correctly. They provide a fairly good picture of our amateurishness. But the conclusions are worthy of the *Rabochaya Mysl* both for 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 organizational question of the best method of fighting the gendarmes. They represent the height of political tactlessness, because the author, instead of appealing from bad leaders to good leaders, appeals from the leaders in general to the “crowd.” This is as much an attempt to drag us back organizationally as the idea of substituting excitative terrorism for political agitation drags us back politically. Indeed, I am experiencing a veritable *embarras de richesses*,¹⁰⁷ and hardly know where to begin to disentangle the confusion created by the *Svoboda*. For the sake of clarity, I shall try to begin by citing an example. Take the Germans. It will not be denied, I hope, that their organization embraces the crowd, that in Germany everything proceeds from the crowd, that the working-class movement there has learned to walk. Yet observe how this vast crowd of millions values its “dozen” tried political leaders, how firmly it clings to them! Members of the hostile parties in parliament have often teased the Socialists by exclaiming: “Fine democrats you are indeed! Yours is a working-class movement only in name; in actual fact it is the same clique of leaders that is always in evidence, Bebel and 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 “crowd” 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 already 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 hundred), professionally trained, schooled by long experience and working in perfect harmony, no class in modern society can wage a determined struggle. The Germans

¹⁰⁷ Meaning “an embarrassment of riches.”—*Ed.*

too, have had demagogues in their ranks who have flattered the “hundred fools,” exalted them above the “dozen wise men,” extolled the “mighty fists” 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 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 sufficient numbers of trained, developed and experienced leaders to guide the spontaneously awakening masses, cry out with the profundity of fools: “it is a bad thing when the movement does not proceed from the rank and file.”

“A committee of students is no good, 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 does not matter 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 amateurishness. In what way, may I ask, did our students “push on” our workers? *Solely* by the student bringing to the worker the scraps of political knowledge he himself possessed, the crumbs of socialist ideas he had managed to acquire (for the principal intellectual diet of the present-day student, “legal Marxism,” could furnish only the rudiments, only crumbs of knowledge). There has never been too much of *such* “pushing on from outside”; on the contrary, so far there has been too little, 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” a hundred times more forcibly than we have done hitherto. But the very fact that you select so despicable 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 politi-

cal knowledge and revolutionary experience from outside, and rouse in them an instinctive desire to resist *all* such people—proves that you are *demagogues*, and demagogues are the worst enemies of the working class.

Yes, yes! And don't start howling about my "uncomradely methods" of controversy! I have not the least intention of doubting the purity of your intentions. As I have already said, one may become a demagogue out of sheer political innocence. But I have shown that you have descended to demagoguery, and I shall never tire of repeating that demagogues are the worst enemies of the working class. The worst enemies because they arouse bad instincts in the crowd, because the unenlightened worker is unable to recognize 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 crowd, which can realize its mistake only later by the most bitter experience. That is why the slogan of the day for the Russian Social Democrat must be: resolute struggle against the *Svoboda* and the *Rabocheye Dyelo*, both of which have sunk to the level of demagoguery. We shall deal with this in greater detail elsewhere.¹⁰⁸

"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 continue to talk of a "committee," an "organization" being wiped out, and now you skip to the question of the "depth" of the movement's "roots." The fact is, of course, that our movement cannot be wiped out precisely because it has hundreds and hundreds of thousands of roots deep down among the masses; but that is not the point we are discussing. As far as "deep roots" are concerned, we cannot be "wiped out" even now, in spite of all our amateurishness, and yet we all complain, and cannot but complain, that "*organizations*" are wiped out, with the result that it is

¹⁰⁸ For the moment let us observe merely that all our remarks on "pushing on from outside" and the *Svoboda's* other disquisitions on organization apply *entirely* to *all* the Economists, including the adherents of the *Rabocheye Dyelo*, for either they themselves have actively preached and defended such views on organization, or have drifted into them.

impossible to maintain continuity in the movement. But since you raise the question of *organizations* being wiped out and stick to that question, then I assert that it is far more difficult to wipe out a dozen wise men than a hundred fools. And this position I shall defend no matter how much you instigate the crowd against me for my “anti-democratic” views, etc. As I have already said time and again that by “wise men,” in connection with organization, I mean *professional revolutionaries*, irrespective of whether they are trained from among students or workingmen. I assert: 1) that no revolutionary movement can endure without a stable organization of leaders that maintains continuity; 2) that the wider the masses spontaneously drawn into the struggle, forming the basis of the movement and participating in it, the more urgent the need of such an organization, and the more solid this organization must be (for it is much easier for demagogues to sidetrack the more backward sections of the masses); 3) that such an organization 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 organization 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 wipe out such an organization, and 5) the *greater* will be the number of people of the working class and of the other classes of society who will be able to join the movement and perform active work in it.

I invite our Economists, terrorists and “Economists-terrorists”¹⁰⁹ 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 we have con-

¹⁰⁹ This latter term is perhaps more applicable to the *Svoboda* than the former, for in an article entitled “The Regeneration of Revolutionism” it defends terrorism, while in the article at present under review it defends Economism. One might say of the *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; and this is chiefly due to the fact that while the *Svoboda* advocates continuity of organization, it refuses to recognize continuity of revolutionary thought and of 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 organization 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 warming it.

sidered above, namely, whether it is possible to have a mass *organization* when the maintenance of strict secrecy is essential. We can never give a mass organization that degree of secrecy without which there can be no question of persistent and continuous struggle against the government. But to concentrate all secret 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 crowd will not take an active part in the *movement*. On the contrary, the crowd will advance from its ranks increasing numbers of professional revolutionaries; for it will know that it is not enough for a few students and for a few workingmen waging the economic struggle, to gather together and form a “committee,” but that it takes years to train oneself to be a professional revolutionary; the crowd will “think” not of amateurish methods alone but of such training. The centralization of the secret functions of the *organization* by no means implies the centralization of all the functions of the *movement*. The active participation of the widest mass in the illegal press will not diminish because a “dozen” professional revolutionaries centralize the secret functions connected with this work; on the contrary, it will *increase* tenfold. In this way, and in this way alone, will we ensure that reading of illegal literature, writing for it, and to some extent even distributing it, will *almost cease to be secret work*, for the police will soon come to realize the folly and futility of setting the whole judicial and administrative machine into motion to intercept every copy of publication that is being broadcast in thousands. This applies not only to the press, but to every function of the movement, even to 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 centralize all the secret aspects of the work—drawing up leaflets, working out approximate plans and appointing bodies of leaders for each urban district, for each factory district and for each educational institution, etc. (I know that exception will be taken to my “undemocratic” views, but I shall reply fully to this anything but intelligent objection later on.) The centralization of the most secret functions in an organization of revolutionaries will not diminish, but rather increase the extent and quality of the activity of a large number of other organiza-

tions which 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, socialist and also democratic circles among *all* other sections of the population, etc., etc. We must have such circles, trade unions and organizations everywhere in *as large a number as possible* and with the widest variety of functions; but it would be absurd and dangerous to *confuse* them with the organization of *revolutionaries*, to obliterate the border line between them, to dim still more the masses' already incredibly hazy appreciation 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 appreciation has become incredibly dim. Our chief sin with regard to organization is that *by our amateurishness we have lowered the prestige of revolutionaries in Russia*. A person who is flabby and shaky in 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 people's tribune, 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—why, such a man is not a revolutionary but a wretched amateur!

Let no active worker take offense 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 circle¹¹⁰ that set itself very wide, all-embracing tasks; and all of us, members of that circle, suffered painfully, acutely from the realization that we were proving ourselves to be amateurs at a moment in history when we might have been able to say, paraphrasing a well-known epigram: "Give us an organization of revolutionaries, and we shall overturn Russia!" And the more I recall the burning sense of shame I then experienced, the more bitter are my feelings towards those pseudo Social Democrats whose teachings "bring disgrace on the calling of a revolutionary," who fail to understand that our task is not to champion the

¹¹⁰ Lenin is referring to his revolutionary activity in St. Petersburg in 1893-95.—*Ed.*

degrading of the revolutionary to the level of an amateur, but to *raise* the amateurs to the level of revolutionaries.

D. The Scope of Organizational Work

We have already heard from B-v about “the lack of revolutionary forces fit for action which is felt not only in St. Petersburg, but throughout the whole of 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, demoralized by prolonged political reaction and split by past and present economic changes, advances from its own ranks *an extremely small number of persons fit for revolutionary work*; that the working class does advance revolutionary workers who to some extent reinforce the ranks of the illegal organizations, 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 perform, mainly, the functions of an agitator; but propaganda and organization, delivery and reproduction of illegal literature, issuing 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 the words we have emphasized, and which bring out most saliently that, although weary of our amateurishness (as is every practical worker who thinks over the position), B-v cannot find the way out of this intolerable situation, because he is ground down by Economism. The fact of the matter is that society advances very *many* persons fit for “work,” 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 ever more diverse strata of society, year after year, advance 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 fight against absolutism, the intolerableness of which is not yet recognized by all, but is nevertheless 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 organizers 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 organizations," not only lag behind the growth of the working-class movement, which even B-v admits, but also 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 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." And yet, at the present time, not only Social Democratic political agitators, but also Social Democratic organizers must "go among all classes of the population."¹¹¹ There is hardly a single practical worker who will doubt that the Social Democrats could distribute the thousand and one minute functions of their organizational work among the different representatives of the most varied classes. Lack of specialization 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 can we find capable of carrying out such operations (people who, in the majority of cases, are absolutely not capable 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 some petty affair, a "case" that would justify the government's expenditure on the "secret service." As for the number ready to help us, we have already referred in

¹¹¹ For example, 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 fights against "enemies" like workers and students. And 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 organizations" affiliated to our Party.

the previous 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,¹¹² it is necessary to have a strong organization of tried revolutionaries. The more secret such an organization is, the stronger and more widespread will be the confidence in the Party, and, as we know, in time of war, it is of the utmost importance to imbue not only 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 organization existed, one built up on a firm theoretical foundation and possessing a Social Democratic journal, we would 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 amateurishness prevalent, that we see many Social Democrats leaning towards the *Credo*, and only imagining that they are Social Democrats.) In a word, specialization necessarily presupposes centralization, and in its turn imperatively calls for it.

¹¹² I recall what a comrade related to me of a factory inspector, who desiring to help, and while in fact helping, the Social Democrats, bitterly complained that he did not know whether his "information" reached the proper revolutionary center, how much his help was really required, and what possibilities there were for utilizing his small and petty services. Every practical worker can, of course, cite many similar cases of our amateurishness depriving us of allies. And 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, the clergy and in *every* other walk of life, including even the police and the Court! Had we a real party, a real militant organization of revolutionaries, we would not make undue demands on every one of these "assistants," 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 very carefully and would even train people especially for such functions, bearing in mind the fact that many students could be of much greater service to the Party as "assistants" holding some official post than as "short-term" revolutionaries. But, I repeat again, only an organization that is already established and has no lack of active forces would have the right to apply such tactics.

But B-v himself, who has so excellently described the necessity for specialization, underestimates its importance, in our opinion, in the second part of the argument that 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 close observer” fully confirms our view of the causes of the present crisis in Social Democracy, and, consequently, of the means required for overcoming it. Not only are revolutionaries in general lagging behind the spontaneous awakening of the masses, but even working-class revolutionaries are lagging behind the spontaneous awakening of the working-class masses. And this *fact* most strikingly confirms, even from the “practical” point of view, not only the absurdity but even the *political reactionariness* of the “pedagogics” to which we are so often treated when discussing our duties to our workers. This fact proves that our very first and most imperative 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 emphasize the words “in regard to Party activity,” because although necessary, it is neither so easy nor so imperative to bring the workers up to the level of intellectuals in other respects). Therefore, attention 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 the *Svoboda* desires to do (which thus ascends to the second grade of Economist “pedagogics”). I am far from denying the necessity for popular literature for the workers, and especially popular (but, 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 organization. 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 organization. Talk about serious things in a serious manner, leave pedagogics to the pedagogues, and not to politicians, nor to organizers! Are there not advanced people, “average people,” and the “mass,” among the intelligentsia too? Does not everyone recognize that popular literature is also required for the intelligentsia

and is not such literature written? Just imagine someone, in an article on organizing 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 organization of “average students.” The author of such an article would be ridiculed, and rightly so. He would be told: give us your ideas on organization, if you have any, and we ourselves will decide who is “average,” who above average, who below average. But if you have no organizational ideas *of your own*, then all your exertions on behalf of the “masses” and “average” will be simply boring. You must realize that these questions about “politics” and “organization” are so serious in themselves that they cannot be discussed in any other but a very serious way. We can and must *educate* workers (and university and high-school students) so as to *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 get off by resorting to empty phrasemongering.¹¹³

In order to be fully prepared for his task, the worker revolutionary must also become a professional revolutionary. Hence B-v is wrong when he says 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 is not out of sheer “necessity.” It is so because we are backward, because we do not recognize our duty to assist every capable worker to become a *professional* agitator, organizer, 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: they have a hundred times more forces than we have. But they understand perfectly well that the “average” does not too frequently pro-

¹¹³ *Svoboda*, No. 1, p. 66, in the article “Organization”: “The heavy tread of the army of workers will reinforce all the demands that will be advanced on behalf of Russian Labor”—Labor with a capital L, of course. And this very author exclaims: “I am not in the least hostile towards the intelligentsia, but” (this is the very word, *but*, that Shchedrin translated as meaning: the ears never grow higher than the forehead, never!) “but it always frightfully annoys me when a man comes to me, utters beautiful and charming words and demands that they be accepted for their (his?) beauty and other virtues” (p. 62). Yes. This “always frightfully annoys” me too.

mote really capable agitators, etc., from its ranks. That is why they immediately try to place every capable workingman in such conditions as will enable him to develop and apply his abilities to the utmost: 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 one 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 within himself the knowledge of working-class environment and freshness of socialist convictions with professional skill, without which the proletariat *cannot* wage a stubborn struggle against its excellently trained enemies. In this way and in this way alone does the mass of workers produce men like Bebel and Auer. But what in a politically free country takes place very largely automatically must in Russia be done deliberately and systematically by our organizations. A worker-agitator who is at all talented and “promising” *must not be left* to work eleven 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, otherwise he will not enlarge his experience, he will not widen his outlook, and will not be able to hold out for at least a few years in the fight against the gendarmes. As the spontaneous rise of the working-class masses becomes wider and deeper, they promote from their ranks not only an increasing number of talented agitators, but also talented organizers, propagandists and “practical workers” in the best sense of the term (of whom there are so few among our intelligentsia who, for the most part, in the Russian manner, are somewhat careless and sluggish in their habits). When we have detachments of specially trained worker-revolutionaries who have gone through extensive preparation (and, of course, revolutionaries “of all arms”), no political police in the world will then be able to contend against them, for these detachments of men absolutely devoted to the revolution will themselves enjoy the absolute confidence of the widest masses of the workers. And 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 that we

too frequently drag them back by our silly speeches about what “can be understood” by the masses of the workers, by the “average workers,” etc.

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

E. A “Conspiratorial” Organization and “Democracy”

And 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 accuse those who adhere to the views here expounded of Narodnaya Volya-ism, of failing to understand “democracy,” etc. We have to deal with these accusations, which, of course, have been echoed by the *Rabocheye Dyelo*.

The writer of these lines knows very well that the St. Petersburg Economists even accused the *Rabochaya Gazeta* of being Narodnaya Volya-ite (which is quite understandable when one compares it with the *Rabochaya Mysl*). We were not in the least surprised, therefore, when, soon after the appearance of the *Iskra*, a comrade informed us that the Social Democrats in the town of X describe the *Iskra* as a Narodnaya Volya-ite journal. 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-ite?

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 centralized organization which declares determined war upon tsarism. But the magnificent organization that the revolutionaries had in the seventies, and which should serve us as a model, was not established by the Narodnaya Volya-ites, but by the *Zemlya i Volya-ites*, who split up

into the Cherny Peredel and Narodnaya Volya. Consequently, to regard a militant revolutionary organization as something specifically Narodnaya Volya-ite is absurd both historically and logically, because *no* revolutionary tendency, if it seriously thinks of fighting, can dispense with such an organization. The mistake the Narodnaya Volya-ites committed was not that they strove to enlist in their organization *all* the discontented, and to direct this organization to decisive battle against the autocracy; on the contrary, that was their great historical merit. Their mistake was that they relied on a theory which in substance was not a revolutionary at all, and they either did not know how, or were unable, inseparably to link up their movement with the class struggle within developing capitalist society. And only a gross failure to understand Marxism (or an “understanding” of it in the spirit of Struve-ism) could prompt the opinion that the rise of a mass, spontaneous working-class movement *relieves* us of the duty of creating as good an organization of revolutionaries as the *Zemlya i Volya* had, and even an incomparably better one. On the contrary, this movement *imposes* this duty upon us, because the spontaneous struggle of the proletariat will not become its genuine “class struggle” until this struggle is led by a strong organization of revolutionaries.

Secondly, many, including apparently B. Krichevsky (*Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 10, p. 18), misunderstand the polemics that Social Democrats have always waged against the “conspirative” view of the political struggle. We have always protested, and will, of course, continue to protest against *confining* the political struggle to a conspiracy.¹¹⁴ But this does not, of course, mean that we deny the need for a strong revolutionary organization. And, for example, 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 organization 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.”¹¹⁵ In *form* such a strong revolutionary organization in an

¹¹⁴ Cf. *The Tasks of the Russian Social Democrats*, p. 21, polemics against P. L. Lavrov. (V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, 4th Eng. ed., Vol. 2, pp. 323-51. The polemic is on pp. 339-49.)—Ed.

¹¹⁵ *The Tasks of the Russian Social Democrats*, p. 23 (V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, 4th Russ. ed., Vol. 2, p. 318.—Ed.). Apropos, we shall give another illustration of the

autocratic country may also be described as a “conspiratorial” organization, because the French word “*conspiration*” is tantamount to the Russian word “*zagovor*” (“conspiracy”), and we must have the utmost secrecy for an organization of that kind. Secrecy is such a necessary condition for this kind of organization that all the other conditions (number and selection of members, functions, etc.) must be made to conform to it. It would be extremely naïve indeed, therefore, to fear the accusation that we Social Democrats desire to create a conspiratorial organization. Such an accusation should be as flattering to every opponent of Economism as the accusation of being followers of Narodnaya Volya.

The objection may be raised: such a powerful and strictly secret organization, which concentrates in its hands all the threads of secret activities, an organization which of necessity is centralized, 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. To this we reply: speaking abstractly, it cannot be denied, of course, that a militant organization *may* thoughtlessly commence a battle, which *may* end in defeat, that might have been avoided under other circumstances. 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 other way of *reducing* this possibility than by organized preparation for battle. If, however, we proceed from the concrete conditions at present prevailing in Russia, we must come to the positive conclusion that a strong revolutionary organization is absolutely necessary precisely for the purpose of giving firmness to the movement, and of *safeguarding* it against the possibility of making premature attacks. It is precisely at the present time, when no such organization

fact that the *Rabocheye Dyelo* either does not understand what it is talking about or changes its views “with the wind.” In No. 1 of the *Rabocheye Dyelo*, we find the following passage in italics: “*The sum and substance of the views expressed in this pamphlet coincide entirely with the editorial program of the ‘Rabocheye Dyelo’*” (p. 142). Is that so, indeed? Does the view that the mass movement must not be set the primary task of overthrowing the autocracy coincide 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 coincide with the views expressed in that pamphlet? We leave it to the reader to judge whether an organ which understands the meaning of “coincidence” in this peculiar manner can have firm principles.

exists yet, and when the revolutionary movement is rapidly and spontaneously growing, that we *already observe* two opposite extremes (which, as is to be expected, “meet”), i.e., absolutely unsound Economism and the preaching of moderation, and equally unsound “excitative terror,” which “strives artificially to call forth symptoms of its end in a movement which is developing and becoming strong, but which is as yet nearer to its beginning than to its end” (V. Zasulich, in the *Zarya*, No. 2-3, p. 353). And the example of the *Rabocheye Dyelo* shows that *there are already* Social Democrats who give way to both these extremes. This is not surprising because, apart from other reasons, the “economic struggle against the employers and the government” can *never* satisfy revolutionaries, and because opposite extremes will always arise here and there. Only a centralized, militant organization 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, viz., that the views on organization here expounded contradict the “principles of democracy.” Now while the first-mentioned accusation was specifically Russian in origin, this one is *specifically foreign* in character. And only an organization abroad (the Union of Russian Social Democrats) was capable of giving its editorial board instructions like the following:

Principles of Organization. In order to secure the successful development and unification of Social Democracy, broad democratic principles of Party organization must be emphasized, developed and fought for; and this is particularly necessary in view of the antidemocratic tendencies that have become revealed in the ranks of our Party. (*Two Congresses*, p. 18)

We shall see in the next chapter how the *Rabocheye Dyelo* fights against the *Iskra*’s “antidemocratic tendencies.” For the present we shall examine more closely the “principle” that the Economists advance. Everyone will probably agree that “broad democratic principles” presuppose the two following conditions: first, full publicity, and second, election to all offices. It would be absurd to speak about democracy without public-

ity, that is, a publicity that is not limited to the membership of the organization. We call the German Socialist Party a democratic organization because all it does is done publicly; even its party congresses are held in public. But no one would call democratic an organization that is hidden from everyone but its members by a veil of secrecy.

What is the use, then, of advancing “*broad* democratic principles” when the fundamental condition for these principles *cannot be fulfilled* by a secret organization? “Broad principles” turns out to be a resonant but hollow phrase. More, it reveals a total lack of understanding of the urgent tasks in regard to organization. Everyone knows how great is the lack of secrecy 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 (and therefore more restricted) selection of members but “*broad* democratic principles!” This is what we call being absolutely wide of the mark.

Nor is the situation any better with regard to the second attribute of democracy, namely, the principle of election. In politically free countries, this condition is taken for granted. “Membership of the Party is open to those who accept the principles of the Party program and render the Party all possible support”—reads clause I of the rules of the German Social Democratic Party. And as the entire political arena is as open to the public view as is a theater stage to the audience, this acceptance or non-acceptance, support or opposition, is known to all from the press and 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 way and possesses such-and-such qualities and, consequently, all party members, knowing all the facts, can elect or refuse to elect this person to a particular party office. The universal 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 “survival of the fittest.” The “natural selection” by full publicity, election and universal control provides the guarantee that, in the last analysis,

every political figure will be “in his proper place,” will do the work for which he is best fitted by his capacity and abilities, will feel the effects of his mistakes on himself, and will prove before all the world his ability to recognize mistakes and to avoid them.

Just try to put this picture into the frame of our autocracy! Is it conceivable in Russia for all those “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 the revolutionaries to elect one of their number to any particular office, when, in the very interests of the work, he *must* conceal his identity from nine out of ten of these “all?” Ponder a little over the real meaning of the high-sounding phrases to which the *Rabocheye Dyelo* gives utterance, and you will realize that “broad democracy” in Party organization, amidst the gloom of the autocracy and the domination of gendarme selection, is nothing more than a *useless and harmful toy*. It is a useless toy because, as a matter of fact, no revolutionary organization has ever practiced, or could practice, *broad* democracy, however much it desired to do so. It is a harmful toy because any attempt to practice the “broad democratic principles” will simply facilitate the work of the police in carrying out large-scale raids, it will perpetuate the prevailing amateurishness, divert the thoughts of the practical workers from the serious and imperative task of training themselves to become professional revolutionaries to that of drawing up detailed “paper” rules for election systems. Only abroad, where people who have no opportunity of doing real live work gather together very often, could this “playing at democracy” develop here and there, especially in various small groups.

In order to show how implausible is the *Rabocheye Dyelo*’s favorite trick of advancing the plausible “principle” of democracy in revolutionary affairs, we shall again call a witness. This witness, E. Serebryakov, the editor of the London magazine, *Nakanunye*, has a tender feeling for the *Rabocheye Dyelo*, and is filled with great hatred for Plekhanov and the “Plekhanovites.” In its articles on the split in the Union of Russian Social Democrats Abroad, the *Nakanunye* definitely sided with the *Rabocheye Dyelo* and poured a stream of abuse upon Plekhanov. All the more valuable, therefore, is this witness in the question at issue. In No. 7 of

the *Nakanunye* (July 1899), in an article entitled “The Manifesto of the Self-Emancipation of the Workers Group,” E. Serebryakov argues that it was “indecent” to talk about such things as “self-deception, leadership and so-called Areopagus in a serious revolutionary movement” and, among other things, 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 as a matter of fact, they were leaders because, in the propaganda period, as well as in the period of the fight 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, their energy and 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 naïve. Who would obey it?

We ask the reader, in what way does “Areopagus” differ from “anti-democratic tendencies?” And is it not evident that the *Rabocheye Dyelo*’s “plausible” organizational principle is equally naïve and indecent; naïve, because no one would obey “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 ignorance of the history of the revolutionary movement of still others. The only serious organizational principle for the active workers of our movement should be the strictest selection of members and the training of professional revolutionaries. Given these qualities, something even more than “democracy” would be guaranteed to us, namely, complete, comradely, mutual confidence among revolutionaries. And this is absolutely essential for us because there can be no question of replacing it by universal democratic control in Russia. And it would be a great mistake

to believe that the fact that it is impossible to establish real “democratic” control renders the members of the revolutionary organization beyond control altogether. They have not the time to think about the toy forms of democracy (democracy 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 organization of real revolutionaries will stop at nothing to rid itself of an undesirable 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 “democracy,” real and not toy democracy, certainly forms a component part of the conception of comradeship). Take all this into consideration and you will realize that all this talk and these resolutions about “antidemocratic tendencies” have the musty smell of that playing at generalship which is indulged in abroad.

It must be observed also that the other source of this talk, i.e., naïveté, is likewise fostered by the confusion of ideas concerning the meaning of democracy. In Mr. and Mrs. Webb’s book on the British trade unions there is an interesting chapter entitled “Primitive Democracy.” In it the authors relate how the British workers, in the first period of existence of their unions, thought that it was 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 the official duties were fulfilled by all the members in turn. A long period of historical experience was required for workers to realize how absurd such a conception of democracy was 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 unions occurred did the workers realize that the ratio between dues and benefits cannot be decided merely by a democratic vote, but requires also the advice of insurance experts. Take also Kautsky’s book on parliamentarism and legislation by the people, and you will see that the conclusions drawn by the Marxist theoretician coincide with the lessons learned from many years of practical experience by the workers who organized “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 directly edited 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 litterateurs," who in their "striving after effect" extol direct legislation by the whole people, completely failing to understand that this idea can be only relatively applied in modern society.

Those who have performed practical work in our movement know how widespread is the "primitive" conception of democracy among the masses of the students and workers. It is not surprising that this conception penetrates into rules of organization and into literature. The Economists of the Bernstein persuasion included in their rules the following: "§10. All affairs affecting the interests of the whole of the union organization 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 circulated among 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 organization 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 organizations. But when the *Rabocheye Dyelo*, which lays claim to leadership, confines itself, under such conditions, to a resolution about broad democratic principles, can this be described other than a mere "striving after effect?"

F. Local and All-Russian Work

The objections raised against the organization plan outlined here on the grounds that it is undemocratic and conspiratorial are totally unsound. Nevertheless, a question still remains, which is frequently put and deserves detailed examination. This is the question about the relations between local work and all-Russian work. Fears are expressed that the formation of a centralized organization may shift the center of gravity from the former to the latter, damage the movement, weaken our

contacts with the masses of the workers and undermine local agitation generally. To these fears we reply that our movement in the past few years has suffered precisely from the fact that the local workers have been too absorbed in local work; that therefore it is absolutely necessary to shift the center of gravity somewhat to national work and that far from weakening, this would strengthen our ties and the continuity of our local agitation. 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 is made by local Party workers to publish an all-Russian paper, the *Rabochaya Gazeta*. In the next period (1898-1900), the movement makes an enormous stride, but the attention of the leaders is wholly absorbed by local publications. If we count up all the local papers that were published, we shall find that the average was one per month.¹¹⁶ Does this not clearly illustrate our amateurishness? Does this not clearly show that our revolutionary organization 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 organization, 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 very 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"¹¹⁷ for

¹¹⁶ See *Report of the Paris Congress*,^{ac} p. 14. "From that time (1897) to the spring of 1900, thirty issues of various papers were published in various places.... On an average, over one issue per month was published." [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 the *Rabocheye Dyelo* on behalf of the Union of Russian Social Democrats Abroad and was issued in a separate pamphlet in Geneva in 1901. The pamphlet also contained the report of the Bund ("History of the Jewish Working-Class Movement in Russia and Poland").—*Ed.*]

¹¹⁷ This difficulty is more apparent than real. As a matter of fact, *there is not* a single local circle but which has the opportunity of taking up some function or other in

local workers to engage in the organization of an all-Russian newspaper, and that local newspapers are better than no newspapers at all. The latter argument is, of course, perfectly just, and we shall not yield to any practical worker in our recognition of the enormous importance and usefulness of local newspapers *in general*. But this is not the point. The point is, can we not overcome the scatteredness and amateurishness that are so glaringly expressed in the thirty issues of local newspapers published throughout Russia in 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 also frankly to admit their negative aspects that have been 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, lacking in 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 them, but the frequency and regularity of publication). These defects are not accidental; they are the inevitable outcome of the scatteredness which, on the one hand, explains the predominance of local newspapers in the period under review, and, on the other hand, is *fostered by* this predominance. It is positively *beyond the strength* of a separate local organization to maintain stability of principles in its newspaper and raise it to the level of a political organ; it is *beyond its strength* to collect and utilize sufficient material to cast light on the whole of our political life. The argument usually advanced to support the need of numerous local newspapers in free countries that the cost of printing by local workers is low and that the population can be kept more fully and quickly informed, this *argument*, as experience has shown, speaks *against* local newspapers in Russia. They are excessively costly in regard to expenditure of revolutionary forces, and appear very rarely, for the very simple reason that the publication of an *illegal* newspaper, no matter how small its size, requires an extensive secret apparatus such as is possible with large factory production; for this apparatus cannot be created in a small, hand-craft workshop. Very frequently, the primitiveness of the secret apparatus

connection with all-Russian work. "Don't say: I can't; say: I won't."

(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 cleanup that it becomes necessary to start all over again. A well-organized secret apparatus requires professionally well-trained revolutionaries and division of labor applied with the greatest consistency, but both of these requirements are beyond the strength of a separate local organization, no matter how strong it may be at any given moment. Not only are the general interests of our movement as a whole (training of the workers in consistent socialist and political principles) *better served by non-local newspapers*, but so also are even specifically local interests. This may seem paradoxical at first sight, but it has been proved up to the hilt by the two-and-a-half years of experience to which we have already referred. Everyone will agree that if all the local forces that were engaged in the publication of these thirty issues of newspapers had worked on a single newspaper, sixty if not a hundred issues could easily have been published and, consequently, it would have more fully expressed all the specifically local features of the movement. True, it is not an easy matter to attain such a degree of organization, but we must realize the need for it. Every local circle must think about it, and *work actively* to achieve it, without waiting to be urged on 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 that they are particularly close to the practical workers, fail to see this illusoriness, and make shift with the astonishingly hollow argument: we must have local newspapers, we must have district newspapers, and we must have all-Russian newspapers. Generally speaking, of course, all these are necessary, but once you undertake to solve a concrete organizational problem surely you must take time and circumstances into consideration. Is it not quixotic when the *Svoboda* (No. 1, p. 68), in a special article "dealing with *the question of a newspaper*," writes: "It seems to us that every locality, where any appreciable number of workers are collected, 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 about their meaning, then at least you, reader, think about it for him. How many scores, if not hundreds, of “localities where any appreciable number of workers are collected” are there in Russia, and would it not be simply perpetuating our amateurishness if indeed every local organization set to work to publish its own newspaper? How this diffusion would facilitate the task of the gendarmes of netting—and without “any appreciable” effort—the local Party workers at the very outset of their activity and preventing them from developing into real revolutionaries! A reader of an all-Russian newspaper, continues the author, would not find at all interesting the descriptions of the malpractices of the factory owners and the “details of factory life in other towns outside his own.” But “an inhabitant of Orel would not find it dull reading about Orel affairs. In every issue he would learn of who had been ‘called over the coals’ and who had been ‘scolded,’ and his spirits would begin to soar” (p. 69). Yes, yes, the spirit of the Orel reader is soaring but the flights of imagination of our publicist are also soaring—too high. He should have asked himself: is such a defense of petty parochialism in place? We are second to none in our appreciation of 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*. Local factory exposures have always been *and should always continue* to be made through the medium of leaflets, but we must raise the level of the *newspaper*, and not lower it to the level of a factory leaflet. What we require for a newspaper is not so much “petty” exposures, as 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, capable of really enriching their knowledge, widening their outlook, and of serving as a starting point for awakening new districts and new categories of the workers.

Moreover, in a local newspaper, all the malpractices of the factory administration and other authorities may be denounced hot on the spot. In the case of a general newspaper, however, by the time the news reaches it the facts will have been forgotten in the localities in which they occurred. The reader, when

he gets the paper, will say: "God knows when that happened!"
(*Ibid.*)

Exactly! God knows when it happened. From the same source we learn that the 30 issues of newspapers, which appeared in two-and-a-half years, were published in six cities. This, on the average, is *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 absolutely wrong in the case of an average city, because it is impossible to increase productivity to any extent by our amateurish methods), we would still get only one issue every two months, i.e., nothing at all like "denouncing hot on the spot." It would be sufficient, however, to combine ten or so local organizations, and send their delegates to take an active part in organizing 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 organizations 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 trite phrase—that is quite beyond the ability of the illegal paper generally. It can only be done by an anonymous leaflet, because exposures of that nature must be made within a day or two at the most (take, for example, the usual brief strikes, beatings in a factory, demonstrations, etc.).

"The workers live not only in factories, but in the cities too," continues our author, rising from the particular to the general, with a strict consistency that would have done honor 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—an excellent one in itself—serves as a particularly vivid illustration of the empty abstraction to which discussions about local newspapers are all too frequently limited. First of all, if indeed newspapers appeared "in every locality where any appreciable number of workers are collected" with such detailed information on municipal affairs as the *Svoboda* desires, it would, under our Russian conditions, inevitably degenerate into actual petty parochialism, would lead to a weakening of the consciousness of the importance of an all-Russian revolutionary onslaught on the tsarist autocracy, and would strengthen

those extremely virile shoots—not uprooted but rather hidden or temporarily suppressed—of the tendency which has already become notorious as a result of the famous remark about revolutionaries who talk a great deal about non-existent parliaments and too little about existing municipal councils. We say “inevitably” in order to emphasize that the *Svoboda* obviously does not want this but the contrary to happen. But good intentions are not enough. In order that municipal affairs may be dealt with in their proper perspective, in relation to the whole of our 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 far from being the case with us yet. And yet this must be done *first*, before we can allow ourselves to think and talk about an extensive local press.

Secondly, in order to be able to write really well and interestingly about municipal affairs, one must have first-hand and not book knowledge of them. But there are hardly any Social Democrats *anywhere in Russia* who possess that knowledge. In order to be able to write in newspapers (not in popular pamphlets) about municipal and state affairs one must have fresh and multifarious material collected and worked up by able people. And in order to be able to collect and work 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. For this it is necessary to have a staff of expert writers, expert correspondents, an army of Social Democratic reporters who establish contacts far and wide, able to fathom all sorts of “state secrets” (about which the Russian government official is so puffed up, but which he so easily blabs), able to penetrate “behind the scenes,” an army of people whose “official duty” it must be to be ubiquitous and omniscient. And we, the Party that fights against *all* economic, political, social and national oppression, can and must find, collect, train, mobilize and set into motion such an army of omniscient people—but all this has yet to be done! Far from taking a single step in this direction in the overwhelming majority of localities, the necessity for doing it is very often not even *realized*. Search our Social Democratic press for lively and interesting articles, correspondence, and exposures of our diplomatic, military,

ecclesiastical, municipal, financial, etc., etc., affairs and malpractices! You will find *almost nothing*, or very little, about these things.¹¹⁸ That is why “it always frightfully annoys me when a man comes to me, utters beautiful and charming words” about the need for newspapers in “every locality where any appreciable number of workers are collected” that will expose factory, municipal and government evils.

The predominance of the local papers over a central press may be a sign either of poverty or of luxury. Of poverty, when the movement has not yet developed the forces for large-scale production, continues to flounder in amateurishness and is all but swamped with “the petty details of factory life.” Of luxury, when the movement has *already 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 one decide for himself what the predominance of local newspapers implies at the present time. I shall limit myself to a precise formulation of my own conclusion in order not to furnish grounds for misunderstanding. Hitherto, the majority of our local organizations have been thinking almost exclusively of local newspapers, and have devoted almost all their activities to these. This is abnormal—the very opposite should be the case. The majority of the local organizations should think principally of the publication of an all-Russian newspaper and devote their activities principally 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 it is done, however, normal relations between the necessary central newspapers and the necessary local newspapers will be established automatically.

¹¹⁸ That is why even examples of exceptionally good local newspapers fully confirm our point of view. For example, the *Yuzhny Rabochy* is an excellent newspaper, and is altogether free from instability of principles. 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. What our Party most urgently requires at the present time, viz., a principled discussion of the fundamental questions of the movement and wide political agitation, has proved too big a job for the local newspaper. And what material of particular value it has published, like the articles about the mine owners' congress, unemployment, etc., was not strictly local material, *it was required for the whole of Russia*, and not for the South alone. No articles like that have appeared in any of our Social Democratic newspapers.

* * *

It would seem at first glance that the conclusion concerning the necessity for shifting the center of gravity from local work to all-Russian work does not apply to the sphere of the specifically economic struggle. In this struggle, the immediate enemy of the workers is the individual employer or group of employers, who are not bound by any organization having even the remotest resemblance to the purely military, strictly centralized organization of the Russian government which is guided even in its minutest details by a single will, and which is our immediate enemy in the political struggle.

But that is not the case. As we have already pointed out time and again, the economic struggle is a trade struggle, and for that reason it requires that the workers be organized according to trade and not only according to their place of employment. And this organization by trade becomes all the more imperatively necessary, the more rapidly our employers organize in all sorts of companies and syndicates. Our scatteredness and our amateurishness are an outright hindrance to this work of organization which requires the existence of a single, all-Russian body of revolutionaries which is capable of giving leadership to the all-Russian trade unions. We have already described above the type of organization that is desired for this purpose, and now we shall add just a few words about this in connection with the question of our press.

That every Social Democratic newspaper must have a *special section* devoted to the trade union (economic) struggle hardly anyone will doubt. But the growth of the trade union movement compels us to think also about 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*¹¹⁹ and illegal material should

¹¹⁹ Legal material is particularly important in this connection, and we are particularly behind in our ability systematically to collect and utilize it. It would not be an exaggeration to say that one could somehow compile a trade union pamphlet on the basis of legal material alone, but it could not be done on the basis of illegal material alone. In collecting illegal material from workers on questions like those dealt with in the

be collected and grouped systematically, on conditions of labor in a given trade, on the differences in this regard in the various parts of Russia, the principal demands advanced by the workers in a given trade, the defects of the laws concerning that trade, outstanding cases of economic struggle by the workers in this trade, on the rudiments, the present state and the requirements of their trade union organization, 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 the workers of the given trade; secondly, they would record the results of our experience in the trade union struggle, would preserve the material collected—which now literally gets lost in a mass of leaflets and fragmentary correspondence—and would generalize this material. Thirdly, they could serve as material for the guidance of agitators, because conditions of labor change relatively slowly and the principal 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 these 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, information about the higher standard of living, about better conditions of labor in one district, would encourage the workers in other districts to take up the fight again and again. Fourthly, having made a start in gen-

publications of the *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 very distinctly remember my “first experiment,” which I would never like to repeat. I spent many weeks “examining” a worker who used to visit me, about 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 just 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 answer your questions!”

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

eralizing the trade union struggle, and having in this way strengthened 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 did not take up either too small or too large a part of our entire Social Democratic work. A local organization that is cut off from the organizations in other towns finds it very difficult, and sometimes almost impossible, to maintain a correct sense of proportion (and the example of the *Rabochaya Mysl* shows what a monstrous exaggeration can be made in the direction of trade unionism). But an all-Russian organization of revolutionaries that stands undeviatingly on the basis of Marxism, that leads the whole of the 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-Russian Political
Newspaper**

"The most serious blunder the *Iskra* committed in this connection," writes B. Krichevsky (*Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 10, p. 30)—accusing us of betraying a tendency to "convert theory into a lifeless doctrine by isolating it from practice"—"was in promoting its 'plan' for a general party organization" (i.e., the article entitled "Where To Begin?"¹²⁰). And Martynov echoes this idea by declaring that "*Iskra's* tendency to belittle the forward march of the drab everyday struggle in comparison with the propaganda of brilliant and complete ideas... was crowned by the plan for the organization of a party which it sets forth in an article in No. 4, entitled 'Where To Begin?'" (*Ibid.*, p. 61). Lastly, quite recently, L. Nadezhdin joined in the chorus of indignation against this "plan" (the quotation marks were meant to express sarcasm). In his pamphlet we have just received, entitled *The Eve of Revolution* (published by the Revolutionary-Socialist Group *Svoboda*, whose acquaintance we have already made), he declares: "To speak now of an organization linked up with an all-Russian newspaper means propagating armchair ideas and armchair work" (p. 126), that it is a manifestation of "literariness," 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 organization. But we must draw attention here to the fact that L. 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 the *Rabocheye Dyelo* has said nothing that is material to the subject, but has only tried to confuse the question by a whole series of unseemly, demagogic sallies. Unpleasant though the task may be, we must first spend some time in cleaning this Augean stable.¹²¹

¹²⁰ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, 4th Russ. ed., Vol. 5, pp. 1-12.—*Ed.*

¹²¹ Augean stable means a place marked by a staggering accumulation of corruption and filth. According to a Greek legend the stable of Augeas was left uncleaned for 30 years until Hercules cleaned it in one day.—*Ed.*

A. Who was Offended by the Article “Where to Begin?”

Let us quote a regular bouquet of the expletives and exclamations that the *Rabocheye Dyelo* hurled at us. “It is not a newspaper that can create a party organization, but just the other way round....” “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 the *Iskra* forgotten about the actually existing Social Democratic organizations 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 live and virile organizations into the realm of shadows and desires to call into being a fantastic network of agents....” “If the *Iskra*’s plan were carried out, every trace of the Russian Social Democratic labor party, which is taking shape, would be completely wiped out....” “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 tone of the above quotations, the *Rabocheye Dyelo* has taken offense. Not for its own sake, but for the sake of the organizations and committees of our Party which it alleges the *Iskra* desires to drive into the realm of shadows and even obliterate their traces. Terrible, isn’t it? But the curious thing is this. The article “Where To Begin?” appeared in May 1901. The articles in the *Rabocheye Dyelo* appeared in September 1901. Now we are in the middle of January 1901. During these five months (prior to and after September), *not a single* committee and *not a single organization* of the Party protested formally against this monster which desires to drive them into the realm of shadows; and yet scores and hundreds of communications from all parts of Russia have appeared during this period in the *Iskra*, and in numerous local and non-local 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 offense, though a third party did take offense?

The explanation is that the committees and other organizations are engaged in real work and do not play at "democracy." The committees read the article "Where to Begin?," saw that it was an attempt "to work out a definite plan for an organization *which would make it possible to set about building that organization from all sides*," and as they knew and saw very well that not one of these "sides" will dream of "setting to work to build it" until it is convinced of its necessity, and of the correctness of the architectural plan, it has naturally never occurred to them to take offense at the boldness of the people who said in the *Iskra*: "In view of the urgency and importance of the question, we make bold to submit to the comrades an outline of a plan which is developed in greater detail in a pamphlet now being prepared for the press." Assuming people were conscientious about the work, would they not understand 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 "outline" (a pretentious word, is it not?) would remain merely an outline? Is it not sheer demagoguery to fight against the outline of a plan, not only by "picking it to pieces" and advising comrades to reject it, but also by *inciting* people inexperienced in revolutionary activity against the authors of the outline *merely on the grounds* that they *dare* to "make laws" and come out as the "supreme regulators," i.e., because they dare to *submit* an outline of a plan? Can our Party develop and make progress if an attempt to raise local Party workers to broader views, tasks, plans, etc., is objected to, not only on the ground that these views are wrong, but on the grounds that the very "desire" to "*raise*" is "offensive?" L. Nadezhdin also "picked" our plan "to pieces," but he did not sink to such demagoguery as cannot be explained by naïveté or by primitive political views. Right 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 the *Rabocheye Dyelo* deserves only to be treated with contempt.

But contempt for a writer, who sinks to shouting 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. And

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 realm of shadows, etc. How can we reply to these charges when, owing to considerations of secrecy, we *can give the reader almost no facts* about our real relationships with the committees. Persons who broadcast slashing accusations calculated to excite the crowd prove to be ahead of us because of their brazenness and their disregard of the duty of a revolutionist carefully to conceal from the eyes of the world the relationships and contacts which he maintains, which he is establishing or trying to establish. Naturally, we absolutely refuse once for all to compete with such people on the field of “democracy.” As regards the reader who is not initiated in all Party affairs, the only way in which we can discharge our duty to him is to tell him, not about what is and what is *im Werden*¹²² but about a *particle* of what has taken place and what can be told as something of the past.

The Bund hints that we are “impostors”;¹²³ 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.¹²⁴ The members of one of the Leagues of Struggle, who took a direct part in the formation of 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 in order to serve the whole movement. The attempt to publish the series failed, and the pamphlets written for it: *The Tasks of Russian Social Democrats*, and *The New Factory Act*,¹²⁵ by a roundabout way, and through the medium of third parties, found their way abroad, and were there published.¹²⁶

¹²² *Im Werden* means “coming into existence” in German.—*Ed.*

¹²³ *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.

¹²⁴ We deliberately refrain from relating these facts in the order in which they occurred. [This footnote was inserted by Lenin for the sake of secrecy. The facts are enumerated here in the order in which they actually took place.—*Ed.*]

¹²⁵ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, 4th Eng. ed., Vol. 2, pp. 323-54 and pp. 267-315.—*Ed.*

¹²⁶ Reference is to the negotiations of the St. Petersburg League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class with Lenin, who in the second half of 1897

Second fact. Members of the Central Committee of the Bund approached a member of the *Iskra* group with the proposal to organize what the Bund then described as a "literary laboratory." In making the proposal, they stated that unless this was done, the movement would retrogress very much. The result of these negotiations was the appearance of the pamphlet, *The Cause of Labor in Russia*.¹²⁷

Third fact. The Central Committee of the Bund, via a provincial town, approaches a member of the *Iskra* with the suggestion that he undertake the editing of the revived *Rabochaya Gazeta* and, of course, received his consent. This offer was later modified. The comrade in question was invited to act as a contributor, in view of a new arrangement regarding the editorial board. To this also consent was, of course, given.¹²⁸ Articles were sent (which we managed to preserve): "Our Program," which was a direct protest against Bernsteinism, against the change of policy in legal literature and in the *Rabochaya Mysl*; "Our Immediate Task" ("The publication of a party organ that shall appear regularly and have close contacts with all the local groups"; the drawbacks of the prevailing "amateurishness"); "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 central organ; an insistence on the paramount importance of a "revolutionary organization," and on the necessity of "developing organization, discipline, and the technique of secrecy to the highest degree of perfection").¹²⁹ The proposal to resume publication of the *Rabochaya Gazeta* was not carried out, and the articles were not published.

Fourth fact. A member of the committee which was organizing the second regular congress of our Party communicated to a member of the

wrote the two pamphlets mentioned in the text.—*Ed.*

¹²⁷ The author of this pamphlet requests me to state that like his previous ones, it was sent to the Union on the assumption that its publications were edited by the Emancipation of Labor group (owing to certain circumstances, he could not then—February 1899—know about the change in the editorship). The pamphlet will be republished by the League^{ad} at an early date.

¹²⁸ Reference is to the negotiations between the Central Committee of the Bund and V. I. Lenin.—*Ed.*

¹²⁹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, 4th Eng. ed., Vol. 4, pp. 210-14, 215-220 and 221-226.—*Ed.*

Iskra group the program of the congress, and proposed that group for the editorship of the revived *Rabochaya 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;¹³⁰ the *Iskra* group was notified of the place and time of the congress and (uncertain of being able, for definite reasons, to send a delegate), drew up a written report for the congress. In this report, the idea was suggested that the mere election of a central committee would not only not solve the question of the amalgamation at a time when complete dispersion reigns, but may 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, and that therefore, a beginning should be made by inviting all committees and all other organizations to support the revived common organ, which will establish *real contacts* between all the committees and *really* train a group of leaders for the whole movement; that the committees and the Party could very easily be able to transform this group into a central committee as soon as the group had grown and become strong. The congress, however, never took place owing to a number of police raids and arrests. For reasons of secrecy, the report was destroyed, having been read only by several 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 the *Rabocheye Dyelo*, which accuses us of trying to relegate the committees to the realm of shadows, and to “substitute” for the organization of a party an organization 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 organization that we elaborated this plan, in articles published in the *Rabochaya Gazeta*, and in the report to the Party congress, again on the invitation of those who held such an influential

¹³⁰ In relating the “*fourth fact*,” Lenin has in view the attempt of the Union of Russian Social Democrats Abroad and the Bund to convene the Second Congress of the Party in the spring of 1900. The “Member of the Committee” mentioned by Lenin is I. Kh. Lalayants (member of the Yekaterinoslav Social Democratic Committee), who came to Moscow in February 1900 for talks with V. I. Lenin.—*Ed.*

position in the Party that they took the initiative in its (actual) revival. And only after the *twice* repeated attempts of the Party organization, 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 this *third* attempt the comrades might have before them the results of *experience* and not merely conjectural proposals. At present certain results of this experience are there for all to see, and all comrades may now judge as to whether we properly understood our duties, and what should be thought of persons who strive to mislead those who are unacquainted with the immediate past, simply because they are vexed with our having pointed out to some their inconsistency on the "national" question, and to others the inadmissibility of unprincipled waverings.

B. Can a Newspaper be a Collective Organizer?

The main point of the article "Where To Begin?" is 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 greatly pleased us to see the *Iskra* (No. 4) raise the question of the need for an all-Russian newspaper, but we cannot agree that it fits in with the title of the article: "Where To Begin?" Undoubtedly this is an extremely important matter, but neither a newspaper, nor a whole series of popular leaflets, nor a whole mountain of manifestos, can serve as the basis for a militant organization in revolutionary times. We must set to work to build up strong political organizations in the localities. We lack such organizations; 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 organizations are not trained locally, what will be the use of even an excellently organized all-Russian newspaper?* It will be a burning bush, burning without being consumed, but

firing no one! The *Iskra* thinks that around it, in the work for it people will gather and organize. *But they will find it far easier to gather and organize around work that is more concrete!* This something more concrete must and should be the extensive organization of local newspapers, the immediate preparation of the workers' forces for demonstrations, constant work by local organizations among the unemployed (regular distribution of pamphlets and leaflets, meetings, appeals to resist the government, etc.). We must begin live political work in the localities, and when the time comes to amalgamate on this real basis, it will not be an artificial, a paper amalgamation, it will not be by means of newspapers that such an amalgamation of local work into an all-Russian cause will be achieved! (*The Eve of Revolution*, p. 54)

We have emphasized the passages in this eloquent tirade which most strikingly illustrate the author's incorrect judgment of our plan, and the incorrectness of his point of view in general, which he opposes to that of the *Iskra*. Unless we train strong political organizations in the localities—even an excellently organized all-Russian newspaper will be of no avail. Absolutely true. But the whole point is that *there is no other way of training* strong political organizations except through the medium of an all-Russian newspaper. The author missed the most important statement the *Iskra* made *before it proceeded* to set forth its "plan": that it was necessary "to call for the establishment of a revolutionary organization, capable of combining all the forces and of leading the movement *not only in name*, but in deed, i.e., *an organization that will be ready at any moment to support every protest and every outbreak*, and to utilize these for the purpose of increasing and strengthening the military forces required for decisive battle." But now after the February and March events, everyone will agree with this in principle, continues the *Iskra*. Yet what we need is not a solution of the problem in principle, but a *practical solution of it*; we must immediately advance a definite constructive plan in order that everyone may immediately set to work to build *from every side*. And now we are again being dragged away from the practical solution towards something that in principle is correct, indisputable and great, but is absolutely inad-

equate and absolutely incomprehensible to the broad masses of workers, namely, to "train strong political organizations!" This is not the point at issue, most worthy author! The point is *how* to go about the training 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, this thesis reduces itself to the *Svoboda's* usual but fundamentally fallacious proclivity to oppose the enlightened workers to the "mass." 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; and such leaders can acquire training *solely* by systematically appraising *all* the everyday aspects of our political life, of *all attempts* at protest and struggle on the part of various classes and on various grounds. Therefore, to talk about "training political organizations" and at the same time to *contrast* the "paper work" of a political newspaper to "live political work in the localities" is simply ridiculous! Why, the *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-ites, "popular indignation against the reckless tsarist bashi-bazouks," etc. Everyone who is at all acquainted with the movement knows perfectly well that the vast majority of local organizations *never even dream* of these things, that many of the prospects of "live political work" here indicated have never been realized by a single organization, 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-ites?"—*The Eve*, p. 129), among the Economists (letter to the *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, by inducing them to summarize and generalize all the diverse signs of ferment and active struggle. "Live political work" can be *begun* in our

time, when Social Democratic tasks are being degraded *exclusively* with live political agitation, which is impossible unless we have an all-Russian newspaper, frequently issued and properly distributed.

Those who regard the *Iskra*'s "plan" as a manifestation of "literariness" have totally failed to understand the substance of the plan, and imagine that what is suggested as the most suitable means for the present time is the goal. These people have not taken the trouble to study the two comparisons that were drawn to clearly illustrate the plan proposed. The *Iskra* wrote: the publication of an all-Russian political newspaper must be *the main line* by adhering to which we could unswervingly develop deeper, and expand this organization (i.e., a revolutionary organization always prepared to support every protest and every outbreak). Pray tell me: when bricklayers lay bricks in various parts of an enormous structure the like of which has never been seen before, is it "paper" work to use a line to help them find the correct place in which to put each brick, to indicate to them the ultimate purpose of the work as a whole, enable them to use not only every brick but even every piece of brick which, joining with the bricks placed before and after it, forms a complete and all-embracing line? And are we not now passing through just such a period in our Party life when we have bricks and bricklayers, but lack the guiding line which all could 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 a number of 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 was laid by an official organ.

"The question of uniting local activity in central bodies runs in a vicious circle," L. Nadezhdin lectures us; "unification requires homogeneous elements, and this can be created only by something that unites; but this uniting element may be the product of strong local organizations which at the present time are by no means distinguished for their homogeneity." This truism is as hoary and indisputable as the one that says we

must train strong political organizations. And it is equally barren. *Every* question "runs in a vicious circle" because the whole of political life is an endless chain consisting of an infinite number of links. The whole art of politics lies in finding and gripping as strong as we can the link that is least likely to be torn out of our hands, the one that is most important at the given moment, the one that guarantees the possessor of a link the possession of the whole chain.¹³¹ If we had a staff of experienced bricklayers, who had learned to work so well together that they could place their bricks exactly where they were required without a guiding line (and, speaking abstractly, this is by no means impossible), then perhaps we might seize upon some other link. But the unfortunate thing is that we have no experienced bricklayers trained to teamwork yet, 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 about that the enemy can shatter the structure as if it were made not of bricks but of sand.

Here is the other comparison:

A newspaper is not only a collective propagandist and collective agitator, but also a collective organizer. In this respect *it can be compared to the scaffolding* erected around a building in 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 organized labor.¹³²

Does this sound anything like an attempt of an armchair author to exaggerate his role? The scaffolding is not required at all for habitation, it is made of the cheapest material, it is only put up temporarily, and as soon as the shell of the structure is completed, is scrapped for firewood.

¹³¹ 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-prepared subject for two leading articles for No. 12 of the *Rabocheye Dyelo*!

¹³² Martynov, quoting the first sentence in this passage in the *Rabocheye Dyelo* (No. 10, p. 62), left out the second sentence as if desiring to emphasize by that either his unwillingness to discuss the essentials of the question, or his incapability of understanding them.

As for the building up of revolutionary organizations, experience shows that sometimes they may be built without scaffolding—take the seventies for example. But at the present time we cannot imagine that the building we require can be put up without scaffolding.

Nadezhdin disagrees with this, and says: “The *Iskra* thinks that around it, in the work for it people will gather and organize. *But they will find it far easier* to gather and organize around work that is *more concrete!*” So! So! “they will find it far easier to gather around work that is more concrete....” There is a Russian proverb which says: “Don’t spit into a well, you may want to drink out of it.” But there are people who do not object to drinking from a well which has been spat into. What despicable things our magnificent, legal “critics of Marxism” and illegal admirers of the *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 is justified by the traditional argument about finding it “far easier to gather around work that is more concrete!” And Nadezhdin—who regards himself as possessing a particularly keen sense of the “realities of life,” who so severely condemns “armchair” authors (with pretensions to being witty) and accuses the *Iskra* of a weakness for seeing Economism everywhere, and who imagines that he stands far above this division between the orthodox and the critics—fails to see that with his arguments he is playing into the hands of the narrowness that arouses his indignation and that he is drinking from a well that has actually been spat into! Yes, the sincerest indignation against narrowness, the most passionate desire to raise those who worship this narrowness from their knees, is insufficient if the indignant one is swept along without sail or rudder, and as “spontaneously” as the revolutionaries of the seventies, clutches at such things as “excitative terror,” “agrarian terror,” “sounding the tocsin,” etc. Glance at this “more concrete” work around which he thinks it will be “far easier” to gather and organize: 1) local newspapers; 2) preparations for demonstrations; 3) work among the unemployed. It will be seen at the very first glance that all these have been seized upon at random in order to be able to say something, for however we may regard them, it would be absurd to see in them anything especially suitable for

"gathering and organizing." Why, this very Nadezhdin says a few pages further on:

It is time we simply stated the fact that extremely petty work is being carried on in the localities, the committees are not doing a tenth of what they could do... the unifying centers that we have at the present time are a pure fiction, they represent a sort of revolutionary bureaucracy, mutual promotion of each other to the post of general; and so it will continue until strong local organizations 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 see the connection between the petty work carried on in the localities and the narrow outlook of the Party workers, the narrow scope of their activities, which is inevitable in view of the lack of training of the Party workers confined to their local organizations? Has he, like the author of the article on organization published in the *Svoboda*, forgotten how the transition to a broad local press (from 1898) was accompanied by a very strong intensification of Economism and "amateurishness?" Even if a "broad local press" could be established at all satisfactorily (and we have shown above that it is impossible save in very exceptional cases)—even then the local organs could not "gather and organize" *all* the revolutionary forces for a *general* attack upon the autocracy and for the leadership of a *united* struggle. Do not forget that we are here discussing *only* the "gathering," the organizing significance of a newspaper, and we could put to Nadezhdin, who defends scatteredness, the ironical question that he himself has put: "Has someone left us a legacy of 200,000 revolutionary organizers?" Furthermore, "preparations for demonstrations" cannot be *opposed* to the *Iskra's* plan for the very reason that this plan includes the organization of the widest possible demonstrations *as one of its aims*; the point under discussion is the choice of the practical *means*. On this point also Nadezhdin is confused for he has lost sight of the fact that only already "gathered and organized" forces can "prepare for" demonstrations (which hitherto, in the overwhelming majority of cases, have taken place quite spontaneously) and we *lack* precisely *the ability* to gather and orga-

nize. "Work among the unemployed." Again the same confusion, for this too represents one of the military operations of the mobilized forces and not a plan for mobilizing the forces. The extent to which Nadezhdin here too underestimates the harm caused by our state of scatteredness, by our lack of "200,000 organizers," can be seen from the following: many (including Nadezhdin) have reproached the *Iskra* with the paucity of the news it gives about unemployment and with the casual nature of the correspondence it publishes about the most common affairs of rural life. The reproach is justified, but the *Iskra's* "guilty without sin." We strive "to stretch a line" through the countryside too, but there are almost no bricklayers there, and we are *obliged* to encourage *everyone* who informs us even on the most common facts, in the hope that this will increase the number of our contributors in this field and will ultimately *train us all* to select the really most outstanding facts. But the material on which we can train is so scanty that unless we generalize it for the whole of Russia we shall have very little to train on at all. No doubt one who possesses at least as much capability as an agitator and as much knowledge of the life of the vagrant as apparently Nadezhdin does, could render priceless service to the movement by carrying on agitation among the unemployed—but a person of this description would be simply burying his talents if he failed to inform *all* comrades in Russia of every step he took in his work, in order that others, who, in the mass, as yet lack the ability to undertake new kinds of work, might learn from his example.

Absolutely everybody now talks about the importance of unity, about the necessity for "gathering and organizing" 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 everyone will agree that if we "unite," say, the district circles in a given city? it will be necessary to have for this purpose *common institutions*, i.e., not merely a common title of "Union" but genuinely *common* work exchange of material, experience and forces, distribution of functions not only by districts, but specializing them on a city-wide scale. Everyone will agree that a big secret apparatus will not pay its way (to use a commercial expression) "with the resources" (in material and man power, 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 unification of a number of cities, because even a whole locality *will prove*, and has already proved in the history of our Social Democratic movement, to be far too narrow a field: we have already proved this above in detail with regard to political agitation and organizational work. What we require first and foremost and most imperatively, is to widen the field, establish *real* contacts between the cities on the basis of *regular, common work*; for scatteredness weighs down our people who are "stuck in a hole" (to use the expression employed by a correspondent to the *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. And I continue to insist that we can *start* establishing *real* contacts only with the aid of a common newspaper, as the only regular, all-Russian enterprise, which will summarize the results of the most diverse forms of activity and thereby *stimulate* people to march forward untiringly along *all* the innumerable paths which lead to revolution in the same way as all roads lead to Rome. If it is not in name only that we want unity, we must arrange for every local circle *immediately to assign*, say, a fourth of its forces to active work for the *common* cause and the newspaper will immediately convey to them¹³³ the general design, dimensions and character of this cause, will give them a precise indication of the most keenly felt defects of all-Russian activity, where agitation is lacking and where contacts are weak, and point out which cogs in the vast general mechanism could be repaired or replaced by better ones. A circle that has not yet commenced to work, but which is only just seeking work, could then start, not like a craftsman in a separate little workshop unaware of the development that has taken place in "industry" before him 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. And the more perfect the finish of each cog, the larger the number of detail work-

¹³³ *A reservation*: that is, if a given circle sympathizes with the policy of that newspaper and considers it useful to become a collaborator, meaning by that, not only literary collaboration, but revolutionary collaboration generally. *Note for the "Rabocheye Dyelo"*: among revolutionists 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.

ers engaged in the common cause, the closer will our network become and the less will be the consternation in the general ranks resulting from inevitable police raids.

Actual contacts would begin to be established by the mere function of distributing a newspaper (that is, if it is a newspaper worthy of the name, i.e., if it is issued regularly, not once a month like a magazine, but four times a month). At the present time, communication between cities on revolutionary business is an extreme rarity, and at all events 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 also (and what is more important) an exchange of experience, of material, of forces and of resources. The scope of organizational work would immediately become many times wider and the success of one locality would serve as a standing encouragement to further perfection and would arouse the desire to utilize the experience already gained by comrades working in other parts of the country. Local work would become far richer and more varied than it is now: political and economic exposures gathered from all over Russia would provide mental food for workers of all trades and in *all stages of development*, 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 public and by the “shamefaced” government statements. Every outbreak, every demonstration, would be weighed and discussed in all its aspects in all parts of Russia; it would stimulate a desire to keep up with the rest (we Socialists do not by any means reject all rivalry or all “competition!”) and consciously to prepare for that which at first appeared spontaneously as it were, a desire to take advantage of the favorable 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 not result in that desperate, “convulsive” exertion of *all* efforts and the 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,” once they do not know in what district to seek 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 detachment of the army (at the present time no one ever thinks of doing that, because in nine cases out of ten these attacks occur spontaneously), and would facilitate the "transportation" from one place to another, not only of literature, but also of revolutionary forces.

At present these forces in a great many cases are being spent and bled on restricted local work, but under the circumstances we are discussing, there would be the possibility and occasion would constantly arise for transferring an agitator or organizer who is at all capable from one end of the country to another. Beginning with short journeys on Party business at the Party's expense, people would become accustomed to being maintained entirely by the Party, would become professional revolutionaries and would train themselves to be real political leaders.

And if indeed we succeeded in reaching a point when all, or at least a considerable majority, of the local committees, local groups and circles actively took up work for the common cause, we could, in the not distant future, establish a weekly newspaper that would be regularly distributed in tens of thousands of copies over the whole of Russia. This newspaper would become a part of an enormous pair of smith's bellows that would fan every spark of class struggle and popular indignation into a general conflagration. Around what is in itself still a very innocent and very small, but a regular and *common* effort, in the full sense of the word, a regular army of tried warriors would systematically gather and receive their training. On the ladders and scaffolding of this general organizational structure there would soon develop and come to the fore Social Democratic Zhelyabovs from among our revolutionaries and Russian Bebel's from among our workers who would take their place at the head of the mobilized 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 congress" and opposite me were the editors and contributors of the *Rabocheye Dyelo*. Comrade Martynov rises and, turning to me, says sternly: "Permit me to ask you, has an auto-

mous 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 had 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 such tasks as it can solve and that tactics is a process of 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. I shall try to hide behind the back of Pisarev.

Pisarev wrote concerning the rift between dreams and reality,

There are rifts and rifts. 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 workingmen.... There is nothing in such dreams that would distort or paralyze labor 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 endeavor.... 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.¹³⁴

¹³⁴ Lenin is quoting from D. I. Pisarev's article "Errors of Immature Thought" (Pisarev, *Selected Works in Two Volumes*, Russ. ed., 1935, Vol. 2, pp. 124-25).—Ed.

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 Organization Do We Require?

From what has been said the reader will see that our "tactics-as-a-plan" consists in rejecting an immediate *call* for attack, in demanding "a regular siege of the enemy fortress," or in other words, in demanding that all efforts be directed towards gathering, organizing and *mobilizing* permanent troops. When we ridiculed the *Rabocheye Dyelo* for its leap from Economism to shouting for an attack (for which it clamored in April 1901, in the *Listok Rabochevo Dyela*, 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 coming from those who totally lack principles and who evade all arguments by references to a profound "tactics-as-a-process," any more than we were surprised by the fact that these accusations 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 is exerting every effort to cause it to repeat itself and he zealously imitates Tkachov in strongly condemning "revolutionary culturism," in shouting about "sounding the tocsin," 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, the copy of it is only a farce.¹³⁵ The attempt to seize power, which had been prepared by the preaching of Tkachov and carried out by means of the "terrifying" terror which did really terrify, was majestic, but the "excitative" terror of a little Tkachov is simply ridiculous and is particularly ridiculous when supplemented by the idea of an organization of average workers.

¹³⁵ Lenin refers here to the following passage in Marx's *The Eighteenth 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" (Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Works*, Eng. ed., FLPH, Moscow, 1951, Vol. I, p. 225).—Ed.

"If the *Iskra* would only emerge from its sphere of literariness," wrote Nadezhdin, "it would realize that these (instances like the worker's letter to the *Iskra*, No. 7, etc.) are symptoms of the fact that soon, very soon that 'attack' will commence, and to speak now [*sic!*] of an organization linked up with an all-Russian newspaper means propagating armchair ideas and armchair work." What an unimaginable muddle: on the one hand excitative terror and an "organization of average workers" along with the opinion that it is far "easier" to gather around something "more concrete," like a local newspaper—and on the other hand, the view to talk "now" about an all-Russian organization means propagating armchair thoughts, or, to put it plainly and bluntly, "now" is already too late! But what about the "extensive organization of local newspapers"—is it not too late for that, my dear L. Nadezhdin? And compare with this the *Iskra's* point of view and tactics: excitative terror—is nonsense; to talk about an organization of average workers and about the *extensive* publication of local newspapers means opening the door wide to Economism. We must speak about a single all-Russian organization of revolutionaries, and it will never be too late to talk about that until the real, and not paper, attack commences.

Yes, as far as organization is concerned the situation is anything but brilliant... Yes, the *Iskra* is absolutely right when it says that the mass of our military 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 crowd is not ours at all*, and consequently, it *will not ask us* when to commence military operations, it will simply go and "rebel".... When the crowd itself breaks out with its elemental destructive force it *may* overwhelm and brush aside the "regular troops" among whom we had been preparing all the time to introduce the extremely systematic organization, but had never *managed* to do so. [Our italics.]

Astonishing logic! *Precisely because* the "crowd is not ours," it is stupid and unseemly to shout about "attack" this very minute, because an attack means assault by regular troops and not a spontaneous outburst

of the crowd. It is precisely because the crowd *may* overwhelm and brush aside the regular troops that we must without fail "manage to keep up" with the spontaneous upsurge by our work of "introducing extremely systematic organization" among the regular troops, for the more we "manage" to introduce such organization the more probable will it be that the regular troops will not be overwhelmed by the crowd, but will take their place in front at the head of the crowd. Nadezhdin is confused because he imagines that troops, which are being systematically organized, are engaged in something that isolates them from the crowd, when as a matter of fact 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 crowd and the conscious destructive force of the organization 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 organization of terrorists, and such an organization would indeed prevent our troops from coming closer to the crowd, which, unfortunately, is still not ours, and which, unfortunately, does not yet ask us, or rarely asks us when and how to commence military operations.

"We will miss the revolution itself," continues Nadezhdin in his attempt to scare the *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 the one quoted above clearly demonstrates the absurdity of the "eve-of-the-revolution point of view" specially invented by the *Svoboda*.¹³⁶ To put it candidly, this special "point of view" boils down to this: it is too late "now" to discuss and prepare. If that is the case, oh most worthy opponent of "literariness," what was the use of writing a pamphlet of 132 pages on "questions of theory¹³⁷ and tactics?" Don't you

¹³⁶ *The Eve of Revolution*, p. 62.

¹³⁷ In his *Review of Questions of Theory*, L. Nadezhdin, by the way, made almost no contribution whatever to the discussion of questions of theory apart, perhaps, from the following passage, which is a very 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 also is the question as to whether Mr. Adamovich has proved that Mr. Struve has already deserved distinction, 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 striking illustration of L. Nadezhdin's infinite disregard for theory. We have proclaimed "the

think it would have been more becoming for “the eve-of-the-revolution point of view” to have issued 132,000 leaflets containing the brief call: “Beat them up?”

Those who make nation-wide political agitation the cornerstone of their program, their tactics and *their organizational work* as the *Iskra* does, stand in least risk of missing the revolution. The people who were engaged over the whole of Russia in spinning the network of organizations linked up with an all-Russian newspaper not only did not miss the spring events, but, on the contrary, enabled us to foretell them. Nor did they miss the demonstrations that were described in the *Iskra*, Nos. 13 and 14; on the contrary, they took part in those demonstrations, clearly appreciating their duty of coming to the aid of the spontaneously rising crowd and, at the same time, through the medium of the newspaper, helping all the comrades in Russia to become more closely acquainted with the demonstrations and to utilize their 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, ability to 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 upon a plan of organization centered around an all-Russian newspaper, by means of joint work for a common newspaper. Only such organization will ensure the *flexibility* required of a militant Social Democratic organization, i.e., the ability to adapt itself immediately to the most diverse and rapidly changing conditions of struggle, the ability, “on the one hand, to avoid open battle with an enemy of overwhelming strength when he has concentrated all his forces at one spot and, on the other, to be able to take advantage of the awkwardness of this enemy and attack him whenever and wherever he least expects.”¹³⁸ It would be a grievous

eve of the revolution,” *therefore* “it really makes no difference” whether the orthodoxians will succeed in finally driving the critics from their positions or not!! And 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!

¹³⁸ *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). To this we shall remark:

error indeed to build up the Party organization 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 everything, because very frequently it is almost impossible to foresee when periods of outbreaks will give way to periods of calm. And in those cases when it is possible to do so, it will not be possible to utilize this foresight for the purpose of reconstructing our organization, because in an autocratic country these changes take place with astonishing rapidity, being sometimes connected with a single night raid by the tsarist janizaries.¹³⁹ 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 intense calm. For that reason, the principal content of the activity of our Party organization, the focus of this activity, should be work that is possible and necessary in the period of the most powerful outbreaks as well as in the period of complete calm, namely, work of political agitation, linked up over the whole of Russia, illuminating all aspects of life and conducted among the broadest possible strata of the masses. But this work is *unthinkable* in contemporary Russia without an all-Russian newspaper, issued very frequently. The organization which will form around this newspaper, an organization 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 honor, the prestige and continuity of the Party in periods of acute revolutionary "depression," to preparing for, fixing the time for and carrying out the *nation-wide armed insurrection*.

unless we are able to devise political tactics and an organizational plan designed for *work over a very long period* and at the same time, *by the very process of this work*, ensure our Party's readiness to be at its post and fulfill its duty in every contingency whenever the march of events is accelerated, we shall prove to be but miserable political adventurers. Only Nadezhdin, who began to describe himself as a Social Democrat but yesterday, can forget that the aim of Social Democracy is radically to transform the conditions of life of the whole of humanity and that for that reason it is not permissible for a Social Democrat to be "perturbed" by the question of the duration of the work.

¹³⁹ *Janizaries*—elite rifle troops of the Ottoman Empire, abolished in 1826. The Janizaries were known for their plunder of the population and wanton brutality. Lenin uses the term to describe the tsarist police.—*Ed.*

Indeed, picture to yourselves a very ordinary occurrence in Russia—the complete discovery and arrest of our organization in one or several localities. With *all* the local organizations lacking a *single*, common regular task, such raids frequently result in the interruption of our work for many months. If, however, all the local organizations had one common task, then, even in the event of a very serious raid, two or three energetic persons could in the course of a few weeks establish new youth circles, which, as is well known, spring up very quickly even now, and bring them into contact with the common center. And when the common task, hampered by the raid, is apparent to all, new circles could come into being and make connections with the center 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 for 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 agents¹⁴⁰ that would form in the course of establishing and distributing a common newspaper would not have to “sit around and wait” for the call for an uprising, but could carry on the regular work that would guarantee the highest probability of success in the event of an uprising. Such work would strengthen our contacts with the broadest strata of the masses of the workers and with all those strata who are discontented with the autocracy, which is of such importance for an uprising. It is precisely such work that would serve to cultivate the ability properly to estimate the general political situation and, consequently, the ability to select the proper moment for the uprising. It is precisely such work that would

¹⁴⁰ 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 sensibilities of the heroes of the seventies and yet offends the amateurs of the nineties? 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 literariness and diffusiveness. The thing we need is a military organization of agents. However, the numerous Martynovs (particularly abroad) whose favorite pastime is “mutual promotion of each other to the post of general” may instead of saying “passport agent” prefer to say, “Chief of the Special Department for Supplying Revolutionists With Passports.” etc.

train *all* local organizations to respond simultaneously to one and the same political questions, incidents and events that agitate the whole of Russia, to react to these "incidents" in the most vigorous, uniform and expedient manner possible; for an uprising is in essence the most vigorous, most uniform and most expedient "reaction" of the whole of the people to the conduct of the government. And lastly, it is precisely such work that would train all revolutionary organizations throughout Russia to maintain the most continuous, and at the same time the most secret, contact with each other, thus creating *real* Party unity—for without such contacts it will be impossible collectively to discuss the plan of the uprising and take the necessary preparatory measures on the eve of it, which must be kept in the strictest secrecy.

In a word, the "plan for an all-Russian political newspaper," far from representing the fruits of the labor of armchair workers, infected with dogmatism and literariness (as it seemed to those who gave but little thought to it), is a most practical plan for immediate and all-round preparations for the uprising, while at the same time never for a moment forgetting our ordinary, everyday work.

Conclusion

The history of Russian Social Democracy can be distinctly divided into three periods:

The first period covers about ten years, approximately the years 1884 to 1894. This was the period of the rise and consolidation of the theory and program of Social Democracy. The number of adherents of the new trend in Russia could be counted in units. Social Democracy existed without a working-class movement; as a political party it was undergoing a process of fetal development.

The second period covers 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. With the speed of an epidemic there spread among the intelligentsia a universal passion to fight Narodism and go among the workers; a universal passion among the workers for strike action. The movement made enormous strides. The majority of the leaders were quite young people who had by no means reached “the age of thirty-five” which to Mr. N. Mikhailovsky appeared to be a sort of natural border line. 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 work was very wide. Many of them began their revolutionary thinking as adherents of Narodnaya Volya. Nearly all of them in their early youth enthusiastically worshiped the terrorist heroes. It required a struggle to abandon the captivating impressions of these heroic traditions, and it was accompanied by the break 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 them to educate themselves, to read the illegal literature of diverse tendencies 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 the theory of Marxism which brightly illuminated 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 definitely replaced the second period in 1898 (1898-?). This was a period of disunity, dissolution and vacillation. In the period of adolescence a youth's voice breaks. And so, in this period, the voice of Russian Social Democracy began to break, began to strike a false note—on the one hand, in the productions of Messrs. Struve and Prokopovich, Bulgakov and Berdyaev, and on the other hand, in the productions of V. I-n and R. M., B. Krichевsky and Martynov. But it was only the leaders who wandered about separately and went back; the movement itself continued to grow, and advanced with enormous strides. The proletarian struggle spread to new strata of the workers, extended to the whole of Russia and at the same time indirectly stimulated the revival of the democratic spirit among the students and among other strata of the population. The consciousness of the leaders, however, failed to face up to the breadth and power of the spontaneous upsurge; among Social Democrats, a different brand predominated—a brand of Party workers who had been trained almost exclusively on “legal Marxist” literature which proved to be all the more inadequate the more the spontaneity of the masses called for consciousness. The leaders not only lagged behind in regard to theory (“freedom of criticism”) and practice (“amateurishness”), but tried to justify their backwardness by all sorts of high-flown arguments. Social Democracy was degraded to the level of trade unionism by the Brentano-ites in legal literature, and by the tail-enders in illegal literature. The *Credo* program began to be put into operation, especially when the “amateurishness” of the Social Democrats caused a revival of revolutionary non-Social Democratic tendencies.

And if the reader reproaches me for having dealt in excessive detail with a certain *Rabocheye Dyelo*, I shall say to him in reply: the *Rabocheye Dyelo* acquired “historical” significance because it most strikingly reflected the “spirit” of this third period.¹⁴¹ It was not the consistent R.M.

¹⁴¹ I could also reply with the German proverb: *Den Sack schlägt man, den Esel meint man* (you beat the sack, but the blows are intended for the ass). It was not the *Rabocheye Dyelo* alone, but also *the mass* of practical workers *and theoreticians* that was carried away by the fashion of “criticism,” they became confused on the question of spontaneity and lapsed from the Social Democratic to the trade unionist conception of our political and organizational tasks.

but the weathercock Krichevskys and Martynovs who could properly express the disunity and vacillation, the readiness to make concessions to “criticism,” to “Economism” and to terrorism. It is not the lofty contempt for practical work displayed by some worshiper of the “absolute” that is characteristic of this period, but the combination of pettifogging practice and utter disregard for theory. It was not so much the downright rejection of “great watchwords” that the heroes of this period engaged in as in their vulgarization: scientific Socialism ceased to be an integral revolutionary theory and became a hodgepodge “freely” diluted with the contents of every new German textbook that appeared; the slogan “class struggle” did not impel them forward to wider and more strenuous activity but served as a soothing syrup, because the “economic struggle is inseparably linked up with the political struggle”; the idea of a party did not serve as a call for the creation of a militant organization of revolutionaries, but was used to justify some sort of a “revolutionary bureaucracy” and infantile playing at “democratic” forms.

When this third period will come to an end and the fourth begin we do not know (at all events it is already heralded by many signs). 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 strength 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 summing up, as it were, all that has been expounded above, we may give the following brief reply to the question, what is to be done?:

Liquidate the Third Period.

Appendix

The Attempt to Unite the
Iskra with the *Rabocheye*
Dyelo

It remains for us to describe the tactics the *Iskra* adopted and consistently pursued in its organizational relations with the *Rabocheye Dyelo*. These tactics have already been fully expressed in the *Iskra*, No. 1, in an article entitled "The Split of the Union of Russian Social Democrats Abroad."¹⁴² 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 recognized as its representative abroad, had *split* into two organizations; that the question of the Party's representation remains an open one, having been settled only temporarily and conditionally by the election at the International Congress at Paris of two members to represent Russia on the International Socialist Bureau, one from each of the two sections of the divided Union. We declared that fundamentally the *Rabocheye Dyelo* was *wrong*; in principle we emphatically took the side of the Emancipation of Labor group, but at the same time we refused to enter into the details of the split and noted the services rendered by the Union in the sphere of purely practical work.¹⁴³

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 because the Union had frequently declared its agreement in principle with the Emancipation of Labor group, without, apparently, claiming independence 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 the *Iskra* (December 1900) three members separated from the Union, formed the so-called "Group of Initiators" and offered their services: 1. to the foreign section of the *Iskra* organization; 2. to the Revolutionary *Sotsial Demokrat* Organization; and 3. to the Union as mediators in negotiations for reconciliation. The first two organizations at once announced their agreement, *the third turned down* the offer. True, when a speaker related these facts at the "Unity" Congress last year, a member of the Managing Committee of the Union declared

¹⁴² See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, 4th Eng. ed., Vol. 4, pp. 378-79.—*Ed.*

¹⁴³ Our opinion of the split was based not only upon a perusal of the literature on the subject but also on information gathered abroad by several members of our organization.

that their rejection of the offer was due *entirely* to the fact that the Union was dissatisfied with the composition of the Initiators' Group. While I consider it my duty to quote this explanation I cannot, however, refrain from observing that it is an unsatisfactory one: knowing that two organizations had agreed to enter into negotiations, the Union could have approached them through other intermediaries, or directly.

In the spring of 1901 both the *Zarya* (No. 1, April) and the *Iskra* (No. 4, May) entered into open polemics with the *Rabocheye Dyelo*.¹⁴⁴ The *Iskra* particularly attacked the "historical turn" taken by the *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 these polemics, the Union agreed to the resumption of negotiations for reconciliation through the mediation of a new group of "conciliators." A preliminary conference of representatives of the three organizations named above took place in June and framed a draft agreement on the basis of a very detailed "agreement on principles" that the Union published in the pamphlet *Two Congresses* and the League in the pamphlet *Documents of the "Unity" Congress*.

The contents of this agreement on principles (or as it is 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 all and every manifestation of opportunism generally, and of Russian opportunism in particular. Paragraph I reads: "We repudiate all and every attempt to introduce opportunism into the proletarian class struggle—attempts which have found expression in 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 organizational and agitational activity Social Democracy must not for a moment forget that the immediate task of the Russian proletariat is—to overthrow the autocracy" (5, a); "...agitation, not only on the basis of the everyday struggle between wage labor and capital" (5, b); "...not recognizing... a stage of purely economic struggle and of struggle for partial political

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. 5, pp. 1-12—Ed.

demands” (5, c); “...we consider it important for the movement to criticize tendencies that make a principle of the primitiveness... and narrowness of the lower forms of the movement” (5, d). Even a complete outsider, who has read these resolutions at all attentively, will have realized from the very way in which they are formulated that they are directed against people who were opportunists and “Economists,” who, even for a moment, forget about the task of overthrowing the autocracy, who recognize the theory of stages, who have elevated narrowness to a principle, etc. And anyone who has the least acquaintance with the polemics conducted by the Emancipation of Labor group, the *Zarya* and the *Iskra* against the *Rabocheye Dyelo*, cannot doubt for a single moment that these resolutions repudiate, point by point, the very errors into which the *Rabocheye Dyelo* had wandered. Consequently, when one of the Union members declared at the “Unity” Congress that the articles in No. 10 of the *Rabocheye Dyelo* were prompted, not by a new “historical turn” on the part of the Union, but by the excessive “abstractness” of the resolutions,¹⁴⁵ this was quite justly ridiculed by one of the speakers. Far from being abstract, he said, the resolutions are incredibly concrete: a single glance at them is sufficient to see that they are out to “catch” someone. This remark was the occasion for a characteristic episode at the congress. On the one hand, B. Krichevsky seized upon the word “catch” in the belief that this was a slip of the tongue which betrayed our evil intentions (“to set a trap”) and pathetically exclaimed: “Whom are they out to catch, whom?” “Whom indeed?”—Plekhanov rejoined sarcastically. “I will stimulate Comrade Plekhanov’s perspicacity,” replied B. Krichevsky. “I will explain to him that the trap was set *for the editorial board of the 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), in opposing the Union’s amendments to the resolutions and wishing 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 words under discussion will hardly be pleased with this “defense.” I think the

¹⁴⁵ This assertion is repeated in *Two Congresses*, p. 25.

words “catch someone” were “true words spoken in jest”: We have always accused the *Rabocheye Dyelo* of instability and vacillation and, naturally, we *had* to try to *catch* it in order to put a stop to this 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 in such a comradely manner¹⁴⁶ that B. Krichevsky himself and one other member of the Managing Committee of the Union signed the June resolutions.

The articles in the *Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 10 (our comrades saw this issue for the first time when they arrived at the congress, a few days before the meetings started), clearly showed that a new turn had taken place in the Union in the period between the summer and the autumn: the Economists had again gained the upper hand, and the editorial board, which turned with every “wind,” again set out to defend “the most pronounced Bernsteinians” and “freedom of criticism,” to defend “spontaneity,” and through the mouth of Martynov, to preach the “theory of restricting” the sphere of our political influence (for the alleged purpose of making this influence more complex). Once again Parvus’ apt observation that it was difficult to catch an opportunist with a formula was proved correct. An opportunist will put his name to *any* formula and as readily abandon it, because opportunism is 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,” to carry on “agitation not only on the basis of the everyday struggle between wage labor and capital,” etc., etc. But tomorrow they will change their form of expression and revert to their old tricks on the pretext of defending spon-

¹⁴⁶ 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 Labor group and that the Union’s particular service was its publishing and organizing activity. In other words, we expressed our complete readiness to forget the past and to recognize the usefulness (for the cause) of the work of our comrades of the Union on *the condition* that it completely ceased the vacillation which we tried to “catch.” Any impartial person reading the June resolutions will only interpret them in that way. If the Union, after having *caused* a split by its new turn towards Economism (in its articles in No. 10 and in the amendments), now solemnly accuses us of prevaricating (*Two Congresses*, p. 30) because of what we said about its services, then of course, such an accusation can only evoke a smile.

taneity 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 did not and does not now see any heretical departure from the general principles of the draft adopted at the conference” (*Two Congresses*, p. 26), the Union only reveals a complete lack of ability, or of desire, to understand the essential points of the disagreements.

After the appearance of the *Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 10, we could make only one effort: open a general discussion in order to ascertain whether all the members of the Union agree with these articles and with its editorial board. The Union 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 because with an elected editorial board which “turns” with every wind, however light, everything depends precisely upon the direction of the wind, and we defined that direction at private meetings at which no one, except members of the organizations intending to unite, were present. The amendments to the June resolutions submitted in the name of the Union have removed the last shadow of a 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 the *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 three words “was vague”—but if that were so, all that was required was a more precise definition of the nature of a widespread error), and to delete “Millerandism” (although B. Krichевsky defended it in the *Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 2-3, pp. 83-84, and still more openly in the *Vorwärts*).¹⁴⁷ 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

¹⁴⁷ A controversy over this subject had started in the *Vorwärts* between its present editor, Kautsky, and the editorial board of the *Zarya*. We shall not fail to acquaint the Russian reader with this controversy. [*Iskra*, No. 18 (March 10, 1902), published in its section “From the Party” an item entitled “The *Zarya*’s Polemics with the *Vorwärts*,” which summed up the controversy.—*Ed.*]

calling for the introduction of system and unity in all these manifestations of the struggle, the Union added the absolutely superfluous words to the effect 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). More, even the direct *narrowing down* of “politics” was introduced into 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, after such amendments had been introduced all the speakers on our side, one after another, refused to take the floor, considering that it was useless to continue negotiations with people who were again turning towards Economism and who were striving to secure for themselves freedom of vacillation.

“It was precisely the preservation of the independent features and the autonomy of the *Rabocheye Dyelo* which the Union considered the *sine qua non* of the durability of our future agreement, that the *Iskra* regarded as the stumbling block to agreement” (*Two Congresses*, p. 25). This is very inexact. We never had any designs against the *Rabocheye Dyelo*’s autonomy.¹⁴⁸ We did indeed *absolutely refuse to recognize* the independence of its features, if by “independent features” is meant independence on questions of principle regarding theory and practice: The June resolutions did indeed absolutely repudiate such independence of features because, in practice, *such* “independent features” have always meant, as we have pointed out, all sorts of vacillations that foster the disunity which prevails among us and which is intolerable from the Party point of view. The *Rabocheye Dyelo*’s articles in its issue No. 10, and its “Amendments” clearly revealed its desire to preserve precisely 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 recognize the *Rabocheye Dyelo*’s “independent features” in the sense that it should concentrate on definite literary functions. A proper distribution of these functions

¹⁴⁸ That is, if the editorial consultations in connection with the establishment of a joint supreme council of the combined organizations are not to be regarded as a restriction of autonomy. But in June the *Rabocheye Dyelo* agreed to this.

naturally called for: 1) a scientific magazine, 2) a political newspaper, and 3) popular symposiums of articles, and popular pamphlets. Only by agreeing to such a distribution of functions would the *Rabocheye Dyelo* have proved that it *sincerely* desired to abandon once and for all its erring ways, against which the June resolutions were directed. Only such a distribution of functions would have removed all possibility of friction, and would have effectively guaranteed a durable agreement which, at the same time, would have served as a basis for a fresh revival and 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 opportunist tendencies was caused, not by any “organizational” 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 Group of Initiators of whom I speak in the pamphlet *What Is to Be Done?*, p. 141,¹⁴⁹ have asked me to make the following correction to my description of the part they played in the attempt to reconcile the Social Democratic organizations abroad: Of the three members of this group, only one left the Union at the end of 1900; the others left in 1901, only after they had become convinced that it was impossible to obtain the Union's consent to a conference with the *Iskra* organization abroad and the Revolutionary *Sotsial Demokrat* Organization, which is what the Group of Initiators had proposed. The Managing Committee of the Union first rejected this proposal, claiming that the persons making up the Group of Initiators were "not competent" to act as mediators and expressed the desire to enter into direct contact with the *Iskra* organization abroad. Soon after, however, the Managing Committee of the Union informed the Group of Initiators that after the appearance of the first number of the *Iskra* containing the report of the split in the Union, it had altered its decision and no longer desired to have communication with the *Iskra*. After this, how can one explain the statement made by a member of the Managing Committee of the Union that the latter's rejection of a conference was called forth *entirely* by its dissatisfaction with the composition of the Group of Initiators? It is true that it is equally difficult to explain why the Managing Committee of the Union agreed to a conference in June last; for the article in the first issue of the *Iskra* still remained in force and the *Iskra*'s "negative" attitude to the Union was still more strongly expressed in the first issue of the *Zarya*, and in No. 4 of the *Iskra*, both of which appeared prior to the June Conference.

N. Lenin

Iskra, No. 19, April 1, 1902

Published according to the *Iskra* text

¹⁴⁹ See p. 185 of this book.—Ed.

Endnotes

a *What Is to Be Done? Burning Questions of Our Movement*—a book written by Lenin in the latter part of 1901 and in the beginning of 1902. In “Where To Begin?”, published in the *Iskra*, No. 4 (May 1901), Lenin wrote that the article represents “the outlines of a plan which is described in greater detail in a pamphlet now in preparation for the press.”

Lenin began the actual writing of the book in the autumn of 1901. In his “Preface to ‘Documents of the “Unity” Congress,’” written in November 1901, Lenin stated that the book “was in preparation and would appear at an early date.” Lenin subsequently described his article, “A Conversation with the Advocates of Economism” (*Iskra*, No. 12, December 1901) as a synopsis of *What Is to Be Done?* In February 1902 Lenin wrote the preface to the book, which appeared in the early days of March in Stuttgart where it was published by Dietz. An announcement of its publication was printed in the *Iskra*, No. 18, March 10, 1902.

The ideas Lenin advanced and expounded in *What Is to Be Done?* were upheld and developed by Comrade Stalin. His pamphlet *Briefly About the Disagreements in the Party*, written in the spring of 1905, is intimately connected with *What Is to Be Done?* (J. V. Stalin, *Works*, Russ. ed., Vol. 1, pp. 89-130). The defense of Lenin’s ideas, enunciated in *What Is to Be Done?*, is taken up by Comrade Stalin also in his article “A Reply to *Sotsial Demokrat*,” published in the newspaper *Proletariats Brdazola* (*The Struggle of the Proletariat*) in August 1905 (J. V. Stalin, *Works*, Russ. ed., Vol. 1, pp. 160-72). Lenin gave a high appraisal of this article, noting, in particular, that it contained a “splendid presentation of the question of the celebrated ‘introduction of consciousness from without.’”

In republishing *What Is to Be Done?* in 1907 in the collection *Twelve Years*, Lenin omitted section A of Chapter V “Who Was Offended by the Article ‘Where To Begin?’” and announced in the preface that the book was being published “with very slight abridgements, omitting only details concerning organizational relationships and minor polemical remarks.” Lenin added five footnotes to the new edition.

The text of *What Is to Be Done?* given in Vol. 5 of V. I. Lenin’s *Collected Works* (from which this translation has been made) follows the 1902 edition, checked with the text of the 1907 edition.

b *Iskra* (*The Spark*)—the first all-Russian illegal Marxist newspaper, founded by Lenin in 1900. It played a decisive role in the formation of the Marxist party, in the defeat of the “Economists,” in the unification of the dispersed Social Democratic groups and in preparation for the Second Congress of the R.S.D.L.P.

The publication of a revolutionary newspaper in Russia was impossible owing to police persecution. While still in exile in Siberia, Lenin worked out all the details of a plan to publish the paper abroad and proceeded to carry out this plan as soon as his term of exile ended in January 1900.

The first issue of Lenin's *Iskra* appeared on December 11 (24), 1900, in Leipzig, after which it was published in Munich, London (from April 1902) and, beginning with the spring of 1903, in Geneva.

The editorial board of the *Iskra* was made up of V. I. Lenin, G. V. Plekhanov, Y. O. Martov, P. B. Axelrod, A. N. Potresov and V. I. Zasulich. N. K. Krupskaya became secretary of the editorial board in the spring of 1900. Lenin was the *Iskra's* actual editor-in-chief and leader of its activities. His articles in the *Iskra* dealt with all the fundamental problems of building the Party and of the class struggle of the proletariat in Russia as well as with outstanding events on the international scene.

Groups and committees of the R.S.D.L.P. supporting the Lenin-*Iskra* line were organized in many cities of Russia, including St. Petersburg and Moscow.

Iskra organizations were founded by and worked under the direct guidance of professional revolutionaries trained by Lenin (N. E. Bauman, I. V. Babushkin, S. I. Gusev, M. I. Kalinin and others).

On Lenin's initiative, and with his immediate participation, the *Iskra* editorial board drew up a draft program of the Party (published in issue No. 21), and prepared the Second Congress of the R.S.D.L.P., which was held in July-August 1903.

By that time most of the Social Democratic organizations in Russia had associated themselves with the *Iskra*, approved its tactics, program and organizational plan, and recognized it as their leading organ. In a special resolution the Second Congress recorded the exceptional role of the paper in the struggle to create the Party and adopted the *Iskra* as the Central Organ of the R.S.D.L.P.

The Second Congress appointed an editorial board consisting of Lenin, Plekhanov and Martov. Contrary to the Congress decision, Martov refused to serve on the board, and issues 46-51 of the *Iskra* were edited by Lenin and Plekhanov. Subsequently, Plekhanov took his stand with the Mensheviks and demanded that all the former Menshevik editors, who had been rejected by the Congress, be included in the editorial board. Lenin could not agree to this, and on October 19 (November 1), 1903, resigned from the editorial board in order to involve himself in the Central Committee of

the Party and to strike at the Menshevik opportunists from this position. Issue 52 of the *Iskra* was edited by Plekhanov alone. On November 13 (26), 1903, acting on his own and in defiance of the will of the Congress, Plekhanov co-opted the former Menshevik editors to the editorial board. Beginning with the 52nd issue of the *Iskra*, the Mensheviks converted it into their organ. From that time Lenin's Bolshevik *Iskra*, known in the Party as the old *Iskra*, was replaced by the Menshevik opportunist *Iskra* as the new *Iskra*.

c *Rabochaya Gazeta* (*The Workers' Gazette*)—illegal organ of the Kiev Social Democratic group. Two issues appeared: No. 1 in August and No. 2 in December (dated November) 1897. The First Congress of the R.S.D.L.P. adopted the *Rabochaya Gazeta* as the official organ of the Party, but it discontinued publication after the Congress as a result of a police raid on the printing press and the arrest of members of the Central Committee.—*Ed.*

d *Lassalleans* and *Eisenachers*—two parties in the German working class movement in the sixties and early seventies of the nineteenth century.

Lassalleans—adherents and followers of Ferdinand Lassalle. The General German Labor League, founded by Lassalle in 1863, made up the core of the movement. Proceeding from the possibility of a peaceful transformation of capitalism into Socialism with the aid of workers' associations supported by the capitalist state, the Lassalleans advocated the struggle for universal franchise and peaceful parliamentary activities as a substitute for the revolutionary struggle of the working class.

Marx trenchantly criticized the Lassalleans, pointing out that "over a course of several years they were a hindrance to the organization of the proletariat and ended up by becoming no more than a tool in the hands of the police." Marx gives an appraisal of the theoretical views of the Lassalleans and of their tactics in *Critique of the Gotha Program*, *Alleged Splits in the International* and in correspondence with Engels.

Eisenachers—supporters of Marxism, ideologically influenced by Marx and Engels. Led by Wilhelm Liebknecht and August Bebel, they founded the Social Democratic Labor Party of Germany at the Eisenach Congress in 1869.

The two parties, which fought each other bitterly, were impelled to merge by the rise of the workers' movement and intensified reprisals by the government. The merger was effected at the Gotha Congress in 1875, when a single Socialist Labor Party of Germany was formed, in which the Lassalleans represented the opportunist wing.

Lenin describes the Lassalleans and Eisenachers in his article “August Bebel,” written in August 1913.

e *Guesdites* and *Possibilists*—two trends in the French Socialist movement; they originated in 1882 following the split in the French Labor Party.

Guesdites—supporters of Jules Guesde. They represented the Left, Marxist trend and maintained that the proletariat must pursue an independent revolutionary policy. In 1901 the Guesdites founded the Socialist Party of France.

Possibilists—a petit-bourgeois, reformist trend which sought to deflect the proletariat from revolutionary methods of struggle. They proposed to confine the activities of the working class to what was “possible” under capitalism. In 1902, in conjunction with other reformist groups, they founded the French Socialist Party.

The Socialist Party of France and the French Socialist Party merged in 1905. During the imperialist war of 1914-18 Jules Guesde, in common with the leadership of the French Socialist Party, took his stand as a social-chauvinist.

f *Fabians*—members of the reformist and opportunist Fabian Society, formed by a group of British bourgeois intellectuals in 1884. The society took its name from the Roman General Fabius Cunctator (the “Delayer”), famous for his procrastinating tactics and avoidance of decisive battles. The Fabian Society represented, as Lenin put it, “the most finished expression of opportunism and liberal-labor politics.” The Fabians sought to deflect the proletariat from the class struggle and advocated the possibility of a peaceful, gradual transition from capitalism to socialism by means of reforms. During the imperialist world war (1914-18) the Fabians took a social-chauvinist stand. For a characterization of the Fabians see Lenin’s “Preface to the Russian Edition of *Letters by J. P. Becke, J. Dietzgen, F. Engels, K. Marx and Others to P. A. Sorge and Others*” (V. I. Lenin, *Marx-Engels-Marxism*, Moscow, 1953, pp. 245-46), “The Agrarian Program of Social Democracy in the Russian Revolution” (*Collected Works*, 4th Russ. ed., Vol. 15, p. 154), and “English Pacifism and English Dislike of Theory” (*ibid.*, Vol. 21, p. 234).

g *Narodnaya Volya-ites*—from Narodnaya Volya (People’s Freedom), a secret society founded in 1879 for revolutionary struggle against the tsarist autocracy.

The Narodnaya Volya was smashed by the tsarist government soon after its members had assassinated Alexander II on March 1 (13), 1881. Following this the majority of the Narodniks abandoned the revolutionary struggle against tsardom, began to advocate reconciliation and agreement with the tsarist autocracy. These Epigoni of Narodism, the liberal Narodniks of the eighties and nineties of the nineteenth century actually voiced the interests of the kulaks.—*Ed.*

h *Union of Russian Social Democrats Abroad*—founded in Geneva in 1894 on the initiative of the Emancipation of Labor group which at first supervised its activities and edited its publications. Opportunist elements (the “young leaders,” the “Economists”) subsequently gained the upper hand in the Union. In November 1898, at the Union’s first congress, the Emancipation of Labor group declined to bear further responsibility for the editorship of its publications. The final break with the Union and the secession of the Emancipation of Labor group occurred in April 1900, at the Union’s second congress, when the Emancipation of Labor group and its followers left the congress and founded their own organization, the *Sotsial Demokrat* group.—*Ed.*

i *Zarya* (The Dawn)—a Marxist journal of politics published in Stuttgart by the editors of the *Iskra* in 1901-02.

The following articles by V. I. Lenin appeared in the *Zarya*: “Casual Notes,” “The Persecutors of the Zemstvo and the Hannibals of Liberalism,” the first four chapters of “The Agrarian Question and the ‘Critics of Marx’” (the *Zarya* title was “Messrs. the ‘Critics’ on the Agrarian Question”), “Review of Internal Affairs,” “The Agrarian Program of Russian Social Democracy.” Four issues of the magazine appeared: No. 1 in April 1901 (actually on March 23, new style), No. 2-3 in December 1901, and No. 4 in August 1902.—*Ed.*

j *Cadets* (*Constitutional Democratic Party*)—the principal bourgeois party in Russia, the party of the liberal-monarchist bourgeoisie. It was founded in October 1905. Feigning democracy and calling themselves the party of “people’s freedom,” the Cadets tried to win the peasantry to their side. They strove to preserve tsarism in the form of a constitutional monarchy. Subsequently, the Cadets became the party of the imperialist bourgeoisie. After the victory of the October Socialist Revolution, the Cadets organized counter-revolutionary conspiracies and revolts against the Soviet Republic.

k *Bezzaglavtsi*—the group that founded and edited the magazine *Bez Zaglaviya* (*Without a Title*) published in St. Petersburg in 1906. The group,

which included S. N. Prokopovich, E. D. Kuskova, V. Y. Bogucharsky and others, openly advocated revisionism, supported the Mensheviks and liberals and was opposed to the proletariat pursuing an independent policy. Lenin called the Bezzaglavtsi pro-Menshevik Cadets or pro-Cadet Mensheviks.—*Ed.*

l *Ilovaisky D. I.* (1832-1920)—historian, author of numerous official textbooks on history widely used in elementary and secondary schools in Russia prior to the revolution. Ilovaisky interpreted history as consisting mainly of the acts of tsars and generals, and explained the historical process by secondary and incidental factors.—*Ed.*

m *Vorwärts (Forward)*—a daily newspaper, central organ of the German Social Democratic Party. It began publication in 1876, with Wilhelm Liebknecht as editor. In its columns Frederick Engels combated all manifestations of opportunism. In the latter half of the nineties, after Engels' death, *Vorwärts* began systematically printing articles by opportunists who dominated the German Social Democratic Party and the Second International. During the First World War *Vorwärts* took the stand of social-chauvinism. It appeared in Berlin until 1933.—*Ed.*

n *The Hanover resolution* regarding "attacks on the basic views and tactics of the party," adopted by the Congress of the German Social Democratic Party in Hanover, September 27 to October 2 (October 9-14), 1899. The discussion of this question at the congress and the adoption of a special resolution were necessitated by the opportunists, led by Bernstein, advocating the revision of Marxist theory and demanding a review of Social Democratic revolutionary policy and tactics. The Hanover resolution rejected the demands of the revisionists but failed to criticize or expose Bernsteinism. Bernstein's supporters voted for the resolution.—*Ed.*

o *The Lübeck resolution*—adopted at the Congress of the German Social Democratic Party in Lübeck, September 9-15 (22-28), 1901. The central issue at the Congress was the struggle against revisionism, which by that time had taken shape as the Right wing of the Party with its own program and press organ, the *Sozialistische Monatshefte (Socialist Monthly)*. The leader of the revisionists, Bernstein, who had been advocating a revision of scientific Socialism long before the Congress, demanded in his Congress speech "freedom to criticize" Marxism. The Congress rejected the resolution by Bernstein's supporters and adopted one which, though directly warning Bernstein, did not lay down the principle that Bernsteinian views were incompatible with membership in the working-class party.—*Ed.*

p The Stuttgart Congress of the German Social-Democratic Party, held on September 21-26 (October 3-8), 1898, was the first congress to discuss the question of revisionism in the German Social-Democratic movement. It heard a statement in absentia from Bernstein, in which he set forth and defended his opportunist views, expounded earlier in a number of articles. Bernstein's opponents at the congress failed to take a united stand. One section (Bebel and others) advocated ideological struggle against Bernstein and criticism of his mistakes, but did not agree to take organizational measures against him. Another section, the minority headed by Rosa Luxemburg, was more resolute in its opposition to Bernsteinism.

q Starover—pseudonym of A. N. Potresov, member of the editorial board of the *Iskra*; subsequently a Menshevik. p. 16.—*Ed.*

r Lenin refers to the symposium Materials Characterizing Our Economic Development, printed legally in 2,000 copies in April 1895. The symposium contained Lenin's article (signed K. Tulin) "The Economic Content of Narodism and a Criticism of It in Mr. Struve's Book (The Reflection of Marxism in Bourgeois Literature)," directed against the "legal Marxists." (V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, 4th Russ. ed., Vol. 1, pp. 315-484) [*Transcriber's Note*: Lenin, *Collected Works*, 4th Eng. ed., Vol. 1, pp. 333-507.—DJR]—*Ed.*

s The "Protest of the Russian Social Democrats" was written by Lenin in 1899, during his exile. It was directed against the *Credo* of a group of "Economists" (S. N. Prokopovich, E. D. Kuskova and others who subsequently became Cadets). On receiving a copy of the *Credo* through his sister, A. I. Yelizarova, Lenin wrote a sharp protest in which he exposed the nature of this declaration.

The Protest was discussed and unanimously endorsed by a meeting of seventeen exiled Marxists, convened by Lenin in the village of Yermakovskoye, Minusinsk District. The exiles in the Turukhansk District and in Orlovo (Vyatka Gubernia) subsequently associated themselves with it.

Lenin forwarded a copy of the Protest to the Emancipation of Labor group abroad, where it was published in early 1900 by G. V. Plekhanov in his *Vademecum for the Editors of the Rabocheye Dyelo*.

t *Byloye (The Past)*—a monthly journal on historical problems published in St. Petersburg in 1906-07. In 1908 its name was changed to *Minuvshiy Gody (Years Past)*, and later it was banned by the tsarist government. Publication was resumed in Petrograd in July 1917 and continued until 1926.—*Ed.*

u *Profession de foi* [*Transcriber's Note*: Profession of faith.—DJR]—means a belief or program which expounds a certain world outlook. Here it refers to a leaflet setting forth the opportunist views of the Kiev Committee, issued at the close of 1899. On many points it was identical with the notorious “Economist” *Credo*. It is criticized by Lenin in his article “Apropos the ‘*Profession de foi*’” (V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, 4th Russ. ed., Vol. 4, pp. 263-73). [*Transcriber's Note*: Lenin, *Collected Works*, 4th Eng. ed., Vol. 4, pp. 286-296.—DJR]—Ed.

v *Special Supplement to the “Rabochaya Mysl”*—a pamphlet published by the editors of the “Economist” *Rabochaya Mysl* in September 1899. The pamphlet, and in particular the article “Our Realities” which appeared over the signature R. M., frankly set forth the opportunist views of the “Economists,” Lenin criticizes this pamphlet in his article “The Retrograde Trend in the Russian Social Democracy” (V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Russ. ed., Vol. 4, pp. 234-62) [*Transcriber's Note*: Lenin, *Collected Works*, 4th Eng. ed., Vol. 4, pp. 255-285.—DJR] and in this book. (See pp. 21-33, pp. 87-88 and pp. 103-04.)—Ed.

w *Emancipation of Labor group*—the first Russian Marxist group, organized by G. V. Plekhanov in Geneva in 1883. At the Second Congress of the R.S.D.L.P. in August 1903, the group announced its dissolution.

The group did much to spread Marxism in Russia. It translated such Marxist works as *Manifesto of the Communist Party* by Marx and Engels, *Wage-Labor and Capital* by Marx, and *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* by Engels, publishing them abroad and illegally spreading them in Russia. Plekhanov and his group dealt a serious blow at Narodism. The group, however, made some serious mistakes, which were the first projections of the future Menshevik views held by Plekhanov and other members of the group.—Ed.

x *The St. Petersburg League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class* was formed by V. I. Lenin in the autumn of 1895 and united all the Marxist workers' circles in St. Petersburg. It was headed by a Central Group that was directed by Lenin. The League of Struggle was the first organization in Russia to combine Socialism with the working-class movement and to pass over from the propaganda of Marxism among a small circle of advanced workers to political agitation among the broad masses of the working class.

The importance of the St. Petersburg League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class consisted in the fact that, as Lenin said, it

was the first real *rudiment of a revolutionary party which was backed by the working-class movement*).—*Ed.*

y The *private meeting* referred to by Lenin was held in St. Petersburg between February 14 and 17 (February 26-March 1, new style), 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 to exile in Siberia, and the “young” leaders of the League of Struggle who took over after Lenin’s arrest.—*Ed.*

z V. V.—pseudonym of V. P. Vorontsov, one of the ideologists of liberal Narodism in the eighties and nineties of the nineteenth century. Lenin’s words “the V. V.’s of Russian Social-Democracy” are an allusion to the “Economists,” who represented the opportunist trend in Russian Social-Democracy.

aa *Bund*—the General Jewish Workers’ Union of Lithuania, Poland and Russia. Founded in 1897, it embraced mainly the Jewish artisans in the western regions of Russia. The Bund joined the R.S.D.L.P. at the latter’s First Congress in March 1898. At the Second R.S.D.L.P. Congress, the Bund delegates insisted on their organization being recognized as the sole representative of the Jewish proletariat in Russia. The Congress rejected this organizational nationalism, whereupon the Bund withdrew from the Party.

In 1906, following the Fourth (“Unity”) Congress, the Bund reaffiliated to the R.S.D.L.P. The Bundists constantly supported the Mensheviks and waged an incessant struggle against the Bolsheviks. Despite its formal affiliation to the R.S.D.L.P., the Bund was an organization of a bourgeois-nationalist character. As opposed to the Bolshevik programmatic demand for the right of nations to self-determination, the Bund put forward the demand for cultural-national autonomy. During the First World War of 1914-18 the Bundists took the stand of social-chauvinism. In 1917 the Bund supported the counter-revolutionary Provisional Government and fought on the side of the enemies of the October Socialist Revolution. During the Civil War prominent Bundists joined forces with the counter-revolution. At the same time a turn began among the rank-and-file members of the Bund in favor of collaboration with the Soviet government. Only when the victory of the proletarian dictatorship over the internal counter-revolution and foreign interventionists became evident did the Bund declare its abandonment of the struggle against the Soviet system.

In March 1921, the Bund went into voluntary liquidation and part of its membership joined the R.C.P.(B.) in the ordinary way—*Ed.*

ab *Iskra*, No. 7 (August 1901), carried in its section “The Workers’ Movement and Letters from the Mills and Factories,” a letter from a weaver which testified to the vast influence Lenin’s *Iskra* exercised on the advanced workers. The letter reads in part: “...I showed the *Iskra* to many fellow workers and the copy has been read to tatters; but we treasure it greatly.... The *Iskra* writes about our own cause, about the cause of all Russia which cannot be evaluated in kopeks or measured in hours of work; when you read the paper you understand why the gendarmes and police are afraid of us workers and of those intellectuals whom we follow. There is no denying that they do not simply make the bosses tremble for their pocketbooks, but inspire fear in the tsar, the employers and the rest.... It will not take much now to set the working folk aflame. All that is wanted is a spark to kindle the fire that is already smoldering among the people. How true are the words ‘the spark will kindle a flame!’.... In the past every strike was an event, but today everyone sees that strikes alone are not enough, that we must now strive for liberty, win it by might and main. Today everyone, old and young, is eager to read, but the sad thing is that there are no books. Last Sunday I gathered eleven people and read them ‘Where To Begin?’, and we discussed it till late in the evening. How true it expresses everything, how it gets to the very heart of things.... And we would like to write a letter to your *Iskra*, to ask you to teach us not only how to begin, but how to live and how to die.”—*Ed.*

ac 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 the *Rabocheye Dyelo* on behalf of the Union of Russian Social-Democrats Abroad and was issued in a separate pamphlet in Geneva in 1901. The pamphlet also contained the report of the Bund (“History of the Jewish Working-Class Movement in Russia and Poland”).

ad *The League*—reference is to the League of Russian Revolutionary Social Democrats Abroad, founded in October 1901 on Lenin’s initiative. Affiliated to the League were the *Iskra-Zarya* organization abroad and the *Sotsial Demokrat* organization (which included the Emancipation of Labor group). The League was the representative of the *Iskra* abroad. It published several issues of its *Bulletin* and a number of pamphlets, including one by V. I. Lenin, *To the Village Poor*. The Second Congress of the R.S.D.L.P. endorsed the League as the sole party organization abroad with the status of a Party committee. Following the Second Congress, the Mensheviks

entrenched themselves in the League and from this position waged a struggle against Lenin and the Bolsheviks.—*Ed.*

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