

# **LENIN'S *WHAT IS TO BE DONE***



## **ITS CONTRIBUTION TO MARXIST THEORY AND THE FOUNDATION OF THE PARTY**

### **STUDY GUIDE**

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## Note on Lenin's use of the term "Social-Democracy" in *What Is To Be Done?*

*Until the outbreak of World War One the Social-Democratic movement contained the various national Marxist parties. World War One was to split the Social-Democratic movement of parties into two camps throughout the world. The Social-Democratic movement took a nationalist-chauvinist position regarding the war, supporting their own bourgeois governments in fighting the workers of other nations. Lenin and the Russian party opposed the war and opposed the participation of workers in fighting workers of other countries.*

*In 1918 after the success of the October Socialist Revolution in Russia, led by the Bolshevik party, the Bolsheviks changed their name to the Communist Party. In 1919 the Communist International (Comintern) was founded, and thereafter participating revolutionary national parties renamed their parties as Communist, distinguishing themselves from the reformist Social Democrats. Today in Canada the New Democratic Party represents the social-democratic type. Other social-democratic organizations include the British Labour Party and the German SPD, etc.*

### The context

Lenin wrote this book from political exile in the year 1901. *What Is To Be Done?* was published in 1902. In December 1895, Lenin had been arrested for his revolutionary group's activities, jailed for a year and then exiled to Siberia for a term of three years. After his exile ended in 1900, Lenin found refuge in Western Europe, where he continued his writing and action. The timing of Lenin's book is also important. The Russian 1905 bourgeois revolution and 1917 socialist revolution lay ahead in terms of the development of material conditions and a party organization with mass support capable of defeating the autocracy

and leading a Russian working-class to socialism. In *What Is To Be Done* Lenin was laying a foundation for these social conquests.

In this book Lenin begins the development of his case for creating a working-class party of a new type that was to differ from the reformist parties of the Second International. It was to become a party united by a fighting all-Russia newspaper and accountable within central party coordination that could lead the working-class of the peoples of Imperial Russia to socialist revolution and working-class rule.

In this book Lenin ripped apart the ideology of "Economism"\* as an opportunist political current. The first chapter of the book is a defence of the revolutionary Marxist position in the working-class movement, showing that the followers of Bernstein\* used the slogan "freedom of criticism" as a false front for their dilution of the foundational premises of Marxism. Here Lenin is not attacking freedom of criticism as a legitimate principle within the elected bodies of the party, but the abuse of the principle of "freedom of criticism" by a non-revolutionary tendency that desired the "freedom" to insinuate anti-working class ideas into the revolutionary movement. The economists rejected the political education of the working-class in the tenets of scientific socialism. They clung to an opportunist ideology that would leave the proletariat "free" to be mired in a non-revolutionary trade union consciousness, "free" to be open to class-cooperation with the Bosses and to be hostile to socialist revolution.

He who does not deliberately close his eyes cannot fail to see that the new "critical" trend in socialism is nothing more nor less than a new variety of *opportunism*. And if we judge people, not by the glittering uniforms they

\*Descriptions for terms and names marked with an asterisk are available on page 18.

don or by the high-sounding appellations they give themselves, but by their actions and by what they actually advocate, it will be clear that ‘freedom of criticism’ means freedom for an opportunist trend in Social-Democracy, freedom to convert Social-Democracy into a bourgeois party of reform, freedom to introduce bourgeois ideas and bourgeois elements into socialism...

(I, A. para.6)

Economism in Russia was obsessed by the idea of the spontaneity of the working-class movement, stressing above all the economic aspect of the class struggle of the workers and advocating a reformist ideology against the political struggle. Lenin wrote scathingly of their opportunist line that would disarm the working class, both ideologically and organizationally, in its struggle against the autocracy and bourgeois ideology.

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

economic struggle *spontaneously* assumes a political character, that is to say, without the intervention of the “revolutionary bacilli — the intelligentsia”, without the intervention of the class-conscious Social-Democrats. The economic struggle of the English workers, for instance, also assumed a political character without any intervention on the part of the socialists. The task of the Social-Democrats, however, is not exhausted by political agitation on an economic basis; their task is to *convert* trade-unionist politics into Social-Democratic political struggle, to *utilise* the sparks of political consciousness which the economic struggle generates among the workers, for the purpose of *raising* the workers to the level of *Social-Democratic* political consciousness. The Martynovs, however, instead of raising and stimulating the spontaneously awakening political consciousness of the workers, *bow to spontaneity* and repeat over and over *ad nauseam*, that the economic struggle “Impels” the workers to realise their own lack of political rights. It is unfortunate, gentlemen, that the spontaneously awakening trade-unionist political consciousness does not “*impel*” you to an understanding of your Social-Democratic tasks.—*Lenin*) The “economic struggle of the workers against the employers and the government”, about which you make as much fuss as if you had discovered a new America, is being waged in all parts of Russia, even the most remote, by the workers themselves who have heard about strikes, but who have heard almost nothing about socialism. The “activity” you want to stimulate among us workers, by advancing concrete demands that promise palpable results, we are already displaying and in our everyday, limited trade union work we put forward these concrete demands, very often without any assistance whatever from the intellectuals. But *such* activity is not enough for us; we are not children to be fed on the thin gruel of “economic” politics alone; we want to know everything that others know, we want to learn the details of *all* aspects of political life and to take part *actively* in every single political event. In order that we may do this, the intellectuals must talk to us less of what we already know.

(To prove that this imaginary speech of a worker to an Economist is based on fact, we

shall refer to two witnesses who undoubtedly have direct knowledge of the working-class movement and who are least of all inclined to be partial towards us “doctrinaires”; for one witness is an Economist (who regards even *Rabocheye Dyelo* as a political organ!), and the other is a terrorist. The first witness is the author of a remarkably truthful and vivid article entitled “The St. Petersburg Working-Class Movement and the Practical Tasks of Social-Democracy”, published in *Rabocheye Dyelo* No. 6. He divides the workers into the following categories: (1) class-conscious revolutionaries; (2) intermediate stratum; (3) the remaining masses. The intermediate stratum, he says, “is often more interested in questions of political life than in its own immediate economic interests, the connection between which and the general social conditions it has long understood” ... *Rabochaya Mysl* “is sharply criticised”: “It keeps on repeating the same thing over and over again, things we have long known, read long ago.” “Again nothing in the political review!” (pp. 30-31.)

But even the third stratum, “the younger and more sensitive section of the workers, less corrupted by the tavern and the church, who hardly ever have the opportunity of getting hold of political literature, discuss political events in a rambling way and ponder over the fragmentary news they get about student riots”, etc. The terrorist writes as follows: They read over once or twice the petty details of factory life in other towns, not their own, and then they read no more ... dull, they find it.... To say nothing in a workers’ paper about the government ... is to regard the workers as being little children.... The workers are not little children” (*Svoboda*, published by the Revolutionary-Socialist Group, pp. 69-70).—*Lenin*) and tell us more about what we do not yet know and what we can never learn from our factory and “economic” experience, namely, political knowledge. You intellectuals can acquire this knowledge, and it is your *duty* to bring it to us in a hundred- and a thousand-fold greater measure than you have done up to now; and you must bring it to us, not only in the form of discussions, pamphlets, and articles (which very often — pardon our frankness — are rather dull), but precisely in the form of vivid exposures of what our government and

our governing classes are doing at this very moment in all spheres of life. Devote more zeal to carrying out this duty and talk less about “*raising the activity of the working masses*”. We are far more active than you think, and we are quite able to support, by open street fighting, even demands that do not promise any “palpable results” whatever. It is not for you to “raise” our activity, because *activity is precisely the thing you yourselves lack*. Bow less in subservience to spontaneity, and think more about raising your own activity, gentlemen! (III, C, para.5)

In the last footnote we cited the opinion of an Economist and of a non-Social -Democratic terrorist, who showed themselves to be accidentally in agreement. Speaking generally, however, there is not an accidental, but a necessary, inherent connection between the two, of which we shall have need to speak later, and which must be mentioned here in connection with the question of education for revolutionary activity. The Economists and the root, namely, *subservience to spontaneity*, with which we dealt in the preceding chapter as a general phenomenon and which we shall now examine in relation to its effect upon political activity and the political struggle. At first sight, our assertion may appear paradoxical, so great is the difference between those who stress the “drab everyday struggle” and those who call for the most self sacrificing struggle of individuals. But this is no paradox. The Economists and the terrorists merely bow to different poles of spontaneity; the Economists bow to the spontaneity of “the labour movement pure and simple”, while the terrorists bow to the spontaneity of the passionate indignation of intellectuals, who lack the ability or opportunity to connect the revolutionary struggle and the working-class movement into an integral whole. (III, D, para. 1)

The second chapter of *What Is to Be Done?* deals with the relationship between spontaneity and class-consciousness within the working-class movement. The Economists claimed that Social-Democracy must not spread socialist consciousness among the working class; in their thinking, it was necessary to wait for the spontaneous working-

class movement to arrive at a socialist consciousness by its own efforts. Lenin showed that scientific socialist education is contained in the teachings of Marx and Engels, etc, and is continually applied anew to the changing conditions of the workers by the Marxist party. While it is true that the class struggle of the broad strata of the workers is a struggle that grows spontaneously out of the reality of capitalist relations, nevertheless the broad working-class movement is strong only to the extent that the organizational bodies of the party of the communists are cohesive and command the respect of its militants while carrying out its revolutionary work within the working-class.

Lenin compares the ideas of an Economist to that of a terrorist and finds seemingly conflicting views, but only on the surface. He writes that both “bow to different poles of spontaneity”: the Economist to the spontaneously developed level of consciousness of the mass of the working class, and the other to the “spontaneity of the passionate indignation of intellectuals.” Social Democrats (in today’s sense of the political term “Social Democrats”) are the most common advocates of Economist ideas today, while Anarchists and other ultra-leftist ideologies are the most common advocates of the impatience expressed by the “terrorist”. Social Democrats reject the need for a Communist Party to convert labour struggle into the struggle for socialism and raise workers to the level of Communist political consciousness. The ultra-left ignores the same need as it separates itself from mass struggle and relies on individualist and sectarian strategies and tactics. Elsewhere, in *Left-Wing Communism*, Lenin writes: “Anarchism was not infrequently a kind of penalty for the opportunist sins of the working-class movement. The two

monstrosities complemented each other.”

As Lenin pointed out, and as our own Canadian labour history shows, the working class when denied a Marxist political education remains stuck in a trade-union consciousness, in concessions rather than in militant fight-back, and in a craven struggle for survival by appealing to the politicians of the bourgeoisie. In order to win power, socialist ideology must be introduced into the working-class movement in the course of its struggle against bourgeois ideology.

In Lenin’s words,

the only choice is—either bourgeois or socialist ideology. There is no middle course (for mankind has not created a ‘third’ ideology, and, moreover, in a society torn by class antagonisms there can never be a non-class or an above-class ideology). Hence, to belittle the socialist ideology *in any way, to turn aside from it in the slightest degree* means to strengthen bourgeois ideology. (II,B,para 6).

Lenin was also reviewing and characterizing the weaknesses of the revolutionary Social Democrat study-circles in the prior period of 1894-1901. He viewed the tactics of his contemporary revolutionary Marxists as both naive and ineffective, since the tsarist secret police continually infiltrated their groups and sent their leaders into exile to Siberia. A small underground party centre had to be brought together out of this chaos in order to form a mass party in the future.

Lenin wrote:

We shall try to answer this question by giving a brief description of the activity of a typical Social-Democratic study circle of the period 1894-1901. We have noted that the entire student youth of the period was absorbed in Marxism. Of course, these students were

not only, or even not so much, interested in Marxism as a theory; they were interested in it as an answer to the question, "What is to be done?", as a call to take the field against the enemy. These new warriors marched to battle with astonishingly primitive equipment and training. In a vast number of cases they had almost no equipment and absolutely no training. They marched to war like peasants from the plough, armed only with clubs. A student's circle establishes contacts with workers and sets to work, without any connection with the old members of the movement, without any connection with study circles in other districts, or even in other parts of the same city (or in other educational institutions), without any organisation of the various divisions of revolutionary work, without any systematic plan of activity covering any length of time. The circle gradually expands its propaganda and agitation; by its activities it wins the sympathies of fairly large sections of workers and of a certain section of the educated strata, which provide it with money and from among whom the "committee" recruits new groups of young people. The attractive power of the committee (or League of Struggle) grows, its sphere of activity becomes wider, and the committee expands this activity quite spontaneously; the very people who a year or a few months previously spoke at the students' circle gatherings and discussed the question, "Whither?", who established and maintained contacts with the workers and wrote and published leaflets, now, establish contacts with other groups of revolutionaries, procure literature, set to work to publish a local newspaper, begin to talk of organising a demonstration, and finally turn to open warfare (which may, according to circumstances, take the form of issuing the first agitational leaflet or the first issue of a newspaper, or of organising the first demonstration). Usually the initiation of such actions ends in an immediate and complete fiasco. Immediate and complete, because this open warfare was not the result of a systematic and carefully thought-out and gradually prepared plan for a prolonged and stubborn struggle, but simply the result of the spontaneous growth of traditional study circle work; because, naturally, the police, in almost every case, knew the principal leaders of the local movement, since they had

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

careless and cause police raids! (IV, A, par.1)

As mentioned, Lenin vehemently opposed the ideological line of 'revolutionary spontaneity' as a dangerous concept that crippled the working class in the fight for socialism. In fact, the proponents of revolutionary spontaneity were withholding the weapon of scientific socialist knowledge from the workers in their struggle with the Boss. Lenin wrote:

Since there can be no talk of an independent ideology formulated by the working masses themselves in the process of their movement, (This does not mean, of course, that the workers have no part in creating such an ideology. They take part, however, not as workers, but as socialist theoreticians, as Proudhons and Weitlings; in other words, they take part only when they are able, and to the extent that they are able, more or less, to acquire the knowledge of their age and develop that knowledge. But in order that working men *may succeed in this more often*, every effort must be made to raise the level of the consciousness of the workers in general; it is necessary that the workers do not confine themselves to the artificially restricted limits of "*literature for workers*" but that they learn to an increasing degree to master *general literature*. It would be even truer to say "are not confined", instead of "do not confine themselves", because the workers themselves wish to read and do read all that is written for the intelligentsia, and only a few (bad) intellectuals believe that it is enough "for workers" to be told a few things about factory conditions and to have repeated to them over and over again what has long been known. — *Lenin*) the only choice is — either bourgeois or socialist ideology. There is no middle course (for mankind has not created a "third" ideology, and, moreover, in a society torn by class antagonisms there can never be a non-class or an above-class ideology). Hence, to belittle the socialist ideology *in any way, to turn aside from it in the slightest degree* means to strengthen bourgeois ideology. There is much talk of spontaneity. But the *spontaneous* development of the working-class movement leads to its subordination to bourgeois

ideology, *to its development along the lines of the Credo programme*; for the spontaneous working-class movement is trade-unionism, is *Nur-Gewerkschaftlerei*, and trade unionism means the ideological enslavement of the workers by the bourgeoisie. Hence, our task, the task of Social-Democracy, is to *combat spontaneity, to divert* the working-class movement from this spontaneous, trade-unionist striving to come under the wing of the bourgeoisie, and to bring it under the wing of revolutionary Social Democracy. The sentence employed by the authors of the Economist letter published in *Iskra*, No. 12, that the efforts of the most inspired ideologists fail to divert the working-class movement from the path that is determined by the interaction of the material elements and the material environment is therefore *tantamount to renouncing socialism*. If these authors were capable of fearlessly, consistently, and thoroughly considering what they say, as everyone who enters the arena of literary and public activity should be, there would be nothing left for them but to "fold their useless arms over their empty breasts" and surrender the field of action to the Struves and Prokopoviches, who are dragging the working-class movement "along the line of least resistance", i.e., along the line of bourgeois trade-unionism, or to the Zubatovs, who are dragging it along the line of clerical and gendarme "ideology". (II,B,para 6)

(It is often said that the working class *spontaneously* gravitates towards socialism. This is perfectly true in the sense that socialist theory reveals the causes of the misery of the working class more profoundly and more correctly than any other theory, and for that reason the workers are able to assimilate it so easily, *provided*, however, this theory does not itself yield to spontaneity, *provided* it subordinates spontaneity to itself. Usually this is taken for granted, but it is precisely this which *Rabocheye Dyelo* forgets or distorts. The working class spontaneously gravitates towards socialism; nevertheless, most widespread (and continuously and diversely revived) bourgeois ideology spontaneously imposes itself upon the working class to a still greater degree. — *Lenin*) (II,B, para. 8, Note)

Lenin was attempting to draw together the

various groups and tendencies of Russian Marxist revolutionary groups into an All-Russia unified party. As the quotation above shows, in 1901 there yet existed no united Marxist party. Lenin argued for the necessity of an underground party united by revolutionary socialist theory and a revolutionary newspaper disseminated throughout the Russian Empire. As a revolutionary communist he was convinced that to reach a truly Marxist ideological consciousness the party with its socialist theory from Marx and Engels must be fused into the working class. This is why the Economists had to be defeated. Without Marxist theory the working class becomes subordinate to Capital, and its struggles are confined only to economic demands. Without the convergence of the Marxist theory of the party with organized labour, the working-class movement in Russia would be left in confusion:

We have said that *there could not have been* Social-Democratic consciousness among the workers. It would have to be brought to them from without. The history of all countries shows that the working class, exclusively by its own effort, is able to develop only trade union consciousness, i.e., the conviction that it is necessary to combine in unions, fight the employers, and strive to compel the government to pass necessary labour legislation, etc (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.—*Lenin*.) The theory of socialism, however, grew out of the philosophic, historical, and economic theories elaborated by educated representatives of the propertied classes, by intellectuals. By their social status the founders of modern scientific socialism, Marx and Engels, themselves belonged to the bourgeois intelligentsia. In the very same way, in Russia, the theoretical doctrine of Social-Democracy arose altogether independently of the spontaneous growth of the working-

class movement; it arose as a natural and inevitable outcome of the development of thought among the revolutionary socialist intelligentsia. In the period under discussion, the middle nineties, this doctrine not only represented the completely formulated programme of the Emancipation of Labour group, but had already won over to its side the majority of the revolutionary youth in Russia. (II, A, para. 2)

In *What Is To Be Done?* Lenin argued for a model of an underground socialist party organization that in the specificity of Russia’s context could lead the Russian working-class to victory in a socialist revolution. Lenin was not isolated in his thinking, but in line of the editorial board of *Iskra*\* and the leader in the emerging great socialist awakening in Russia. *What Is To Be Done?* is the most important early document from Russian pre-revolutionary conditions of the movement. Only a unified party merging the workers with the intellectuals who had gone over to the side of the revolution would lead to working-class power.

In the third chapter of *What Is To Be Done?* Lenin specifically criticized the Economists for their reformist political views of work in the trade unions and explained the revolutionary policy of the Marxist party. The Economists’ option for “spontaneity” led them to marginalize not only the place of socialist theory but also the political responsibilities of the working class and its party. Lenin showed that confining the political struggle of the workers to a struggle for economic reforms would only condemn the class to continued wage-slavery. The immediate task of Russia’s working class, as Lenin pointed out, was to overthrow the tsarist autocracy in order to prepare the ground for the coming struggle leading to socialist revolution.

The enemies of the communist movement continue to this day to

misrepresent Lenin's model of the party and revolution laid out in *What Is to Be Done?* as an anti-democratic one that allegedly subordinates the working-class under the thumb of a 'totalitarian' system of intellectuals and professional revolutionaries. Nothing could be further from the truth. As even a casual and selective reading of Lenin's writings demonstrates he was a democrat through and through. In point of fact, Lenin had accepted the concept of the role of revolutionary intellectuals within the movement upon analyzing the writings of Karl Kautsky\*, editor of *Die Neue Zeit* ("The New Times") – who since the death of Engels was Social-Democracy's leading Marxist theoretician. Kautsky in this period represented the revolutionary socialist ideological line of the Marxist movement – only later to diverge from revolutionary Marxist thought in 1914-1917. Lenin writes about why it was necessary that class-consciousness be brought to the workers from outside its economic struggle:

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

We deliberately select this blunt formula, we deliberately express ourselves in this sharply

simplified manner, not because we desire to indulge in paradoxes, but in order to "impel" the Economists to a realisation of their tasks which they unpardonably ignore, to suggest to them strongly the difference between trade-unionist and Social-Democratic politics, which they refuse to understand. We therefore beg the reader not to get wrought up, but to hear us patiently to the end.

Let us take the type of Social-Democratic study circle that has become most widespread in the past few years and examine its work. It has "contacts with the workers" and rests content with this, issuing leaflets in which abuses in the factories, the government's partiality towards the capitalists, and the tyranny of the police are strongly condemned. At workers' meetings the discussions never, or rarely ever, go beyond the limits of these subjects. Extremely rare are the lectures and discussions held on the history of the revolutionary movement, on questions of the government's home and foreign policy, on questions of the economic evolution of Russia and of Europe, on the position of the various classes in modern society, etc. As to systematically acquiring and extending contact with other classes of society, no one even dreams of that. In fact, the ideal leader, as the majority of the members of such circles picture him, is something far more in the nature of a trade union secretary than a socialist political leader. For the secretary of any, say English, trade union always helps the workers to carry on the economic struggle, he helps them to expose factory abuses, explains the injustice of the laws and of measures that hamper the freedom to strike and to picket (i. e., to warn all and sundry that a strike is proceeding at a certain factory), explains the partiality of arbitration court judges who belong to the bourgeois classes, etc., etc. In a word, every trade union secretary conducts and helps to conduct "the economic struggle against the employers and the government". It cannot be too strongly maintained that this is still not Social-Democracy, that the Social-Democrat's ideal should not be the trade union secretary, but the tribune of the people, who is able to react to every manifestation of tyranny and oppression, no matter where it appears, no matter what stratum or class of the people it affects; who is able to generalise all these

manifestations and produce a single picture of police violence and capitalist exploitation; who is able to take advantage of every event, however small, in order to set forth before all his socialist convictions and his democratic demands, in order to clarify for all and everyone the world-historic significance of the struggle for the emancipation of the proletariat. Compare, for example, a leader like Robert Knight (the well-known secretary and leader of the Boiler-Makers' Society, one of the most powerful trade unions in England), with Wilhelm Liebknecht, and try to apply to them the contrasts that Martynov draws in his controversy with *Iskra*. You will see — I am running through Martynov's article — that Robert Knight engaged more in “calling the masses to certain concrete actions” (Martynov, op. cit., p. 39), while Willielin Liebknecht engaged more in “the revolutionary elucidation of the whole of the present system or partial manifestations of it” (38-39); that Robert Knight “formulated the immediate demands of the proletariat and indicated the means by which they can be achieved” (41), whereas Wilhelm Liebknecht, while doing this, did not hold back from “simultaneously guiding the activities of various opposition strata”, “dictating a positive programme of action for them” [15] (41); that Robert Knight strove “as far as possible to lend the economic struggle itself a political character” (42) and was excellently able “to submit to the government concrete demands promising certain palpable results” (43), whereas Liebknecht engaged to a much greater degree in “one-sided” “exposures” (40); that Robert Knight attached more significance to the “forward march of the drab everyday struggle” (61), whereas Liebknecht attached more significance to the “propaganda of brilliant and completed ideas” (61); that Liebknecht converted the paper he was directing into “an organ of revolutionary opposition that exposed the state of affairs in our country, particularly the political state of affairs, insofar as it affected the interests of the most varied strata of the population” (63), whereas Robert Knight “worked for the cause of the working class in close organic connection with the proletarian struggle” (63) — if by “close and organic connection” is meant the subservience to spontaneity which we examined above, by taking the examples of Krichevsky and Martynov —

and “restricted the sphere of his influence”, convinced, of course, as is Martynov, that “by doing so he deepened that influence” (63). In a word, you will see that de facto Martynov reduces Social-Democracy to the level of trade-unionism, though he does so, of course, not because he does not desire the good of Social-Democracy, but simply because he is a little too much in a hurry to render Plekhanov more profound, instead of taking the trouble to understand him. (III, E, para.2-4)

Lenin was putting forward proposals for Social Democratic intellectuals' political work and organization among the working class appropriate to the particular context of an underground party functioning under autocracy. This was not because Lenin supposed that the bourgeois intellectual possessed some superiority to the working class intellectual. Rather, it was because at this stage of socialist work in Russia, there were not yet sufficient numbers of working class intellectuals available for the task. In years to come, many working class intellectuals were developed by the movement, and came to leadership roles in political action among the proletariat.

The polemic of a prominent socialist newspaper for Russian political exiles called *The Workers' Cause (Rabocheye Dyelo)* was critiqued by Lenin in chapter III of *What Is To Be Done?* It had asked why the revolutionary non-Social-Democratic tendencies had grown rather than the authority of the Social-Democratic revolutionaries. Lenin's answer pointed to the immaturity of the revolutionary Marxists who had been lagging behind the working-class movement:

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

Democracy”.

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

activity of the proletariat. As a result, even the avowed enemies of socialism are filled with respect for this advanced political fighter, and not infrequently an important document from bourgeois, and even from bureaucratic and Court circles, makes its way by some miraculous means into the editorial office of *Vorwärts*. (III, F, para.2)

In chapters 4 and 5 of *What Is To Be Done?*, Lenin fleshed out his plan for building a Marxist party. What was needed was not the poorly organized groups and committees of Social-Democrats, but a single unified organization. Lenin held that building the party must start with an all-Russian Empire political newspaper to circulate the views of revolutionary communism. Lenin’s *Iskra* was such a newspaper. With a network of agents and reporters the newspaper was to be the base around which the party was built, a fighting party of leading party cadre with an extensive network of party organizations spread across the country.

Lenin argued that in order to strengthen the Russian party under the Tsarist Autocracy, Marxist theory and organization must be coherent and professional in theory, in cadre, and in political agitation among the working-class masses. The theory of Economism had to be disposed of.

We must now deal with a question that has undoubtedly come to the mind of every reader. Can a connection be established between primitiveness as growing pains that affect the *whole* movement, and Economism, which is *one* of the currents in Russian Social-Democracy? We think that it can. Lack of practical training, of ability to carry on organisational work is certainly common *to us all*, including those who have from the very outset unswervingly stood for revolutionary Marxism. Of course, were it only lack of practical training, no one could blame the practical workers. But the term “primitiveness” embraces something more than lack of training; it denotes a narrow

scope of revolutionary work generally, failure to understand that a good organisation of revolutionaries cannot be built on the basis of such narrow activity, and lastly — and this is the main thing — attempts to justify this narrowness and to elevate it to a special “theory”, i.e., subservience to spontaneity on this question too. Once such attempts were revealed, it became clear that primitiveness is connected with Economism and that we shall never rid ourselves of this narrowness of our organisational activity until we rid ourselves of Economism generally (i.e., the narrow conception of Marxist theory, as well as of the role of Social-Democracy and of its political tasks). These attempts manifested themselves in a twofold direction. Some began to say that the working masses themselves have not yet advanced the broad and militant political tasks which the revolutionaries are attempting to “impose” on them; that they must continue to struggle for *immediate* political demands, to conduct “the economic struggle against the employers and the government”[1] (and, naturally, corresponding to this struggle which is “accessible” to the mass movement there must be an organisation that will be “accessible” to the most untrained youth). Others, far removed from any theory of “gradualness”, said that it is possible and necessary to “bring about a political revolution”, but that this does not require building a strong organisation of revolutionaries to train the proletariat in steadfast and stubborn struggle. All we need do is to snatch up our old friend, the “accessible” cudgel. To drop metaphor, it means that we must organise a general strike or that we must stimulate the “spiritless” progress of the working-class movement by means of “excitative terror”. [3] Both these trends, the opportunists and the “revolutionists”, bow to the prevailing amateurism; neither believes that it can be eliminated, neither understands our primary and imperative practical task to establish *an organisation of revolutionaries* capable of lending energy, stability, and continuity to the political struggle.

We have quoted the words of B-v: “The growth of the working-class movement is outstripping the growth and development of the revolutionary organisations.” This “valuable remark of a close observer”

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

Recall the matchless, truly “Narcissus-like” superciliousness with which these wisecracks lectured Plekhanov on the “workers’ circles generally” (sic!) being “unable to cope with political tasks in the real and *practical* sense of the word, i.e., in the sense of the expedient and successful *practical* struggle for political demands” (*Rabocheye Dyelo’s* Reply, p. 24). There are circles and circles, gentlemen! Circles of “amateurs” are not, of course, capable of coping with political tasks so long as they have not become aware of their amateurism and do not abandon it. If, besides this, these amateurs are enamoured of their primitive methods, and insist on writing the word “practical” in italics, and imagine that

being practical demands that one's tasks be reduced to the level of understanding of the most backward strata of the masses, then they are hopeless amateurs and, of course, certainly cannot *in general cope with any political tasks*. But a circle of leaders, of the type of Alexeyev and Myshkin, of Khalturin and Zhelyabov, is capable of coping with political tasks in the genuine and most practical sense of the term, for the reason and to the extent that their impassioned propaganda meets with response among the spontaneously awakening masses, and their sparkling energy is answered and supported by the energy of the revolutionary class. Plekhanov was profoundly right, not only in pointing to this revolutionary class and proving that its spontaneous awakening was inevitable, but in setting even the "workers' circles" a great and lofty political task. But you refer to the mass movement that has sprung up since that time in order to *degrade* this task, to *curtail* the energy and scope of activity of the "workers' circles". If you are not amateurs enamoured of your primitive methods, what are you then? You boast that you are practical, but you fail to see what every Russian practical worker knows, namely, the miracles that the energy, not only of a circle, but even of an individual person is able to perform in the revolutionary cause. Or do you think that our movement cannot produce leaders like those of the seventies? If so, why do you think so? Because we lack training? But we are training ourselves, we will go on training ourselves, and we will be trained! Unfortunately it is true that the surface of the stagnant waters of the "economic struggle against the employers and the government" is overgrown with fungus; people have appeared among us who kneel in prayer to spontaneity, gazing with awe (to take an expression from Plekhanov) upon the "posterior" of the Russian proletariat. But we will get rid of this fungus. The time has come when Russian revolutionaries, guided by a genuinely revolutionary theory, relying upon the genuinely revolutionary and spontaneously awakening class, can at last — at long last! — rise to full stature in all their giant strength. All that is required is for the masses of our practical workers, and the still larger masses of those who dreamed of practical work when they were still at school, to pour scorn and ridicule upon any

suggestion that may be made to degrade our political tasks and to restrict the scope of our organisational work. And we will achieve that, rest assured, gentlemen!

In the article "Where To Begin", I wrote in opposition to *Rabocheye Dyelo*: "The tactics of agitation in relation to some special question, or the tactics with regard to some detail of party organisation may be changed in twenty-four hours; but only people devoid of all principle are capable of changing, in twenty-four hours, or, for that matter, in twenty-four months, their view on the necessity — in general, constantly, and absolutely — of an organisation of struggle and of political agitation among the masses." [4] To this *Rabocheye Dyelo* replied: "This, the only one of *Iskra's* charges that makes a pretence of being based on facts, is totally without foundation. Readers of *Rabocheye Dyelo* know very well that from the outset we not only called for political agitation, without waiting for the appearance of *Iskra* ... [saying at the same time that not only the workers' study circles, "but also the mass working-class movement could not regard as its first political task the overthrow of absolutism", but only the struggle for immediate political demands, and that "the masses begin to understand immediate political demands after one, or at all events, after several strikes"], . . . but that with our publications which we furnished from abroad for the comrades working in Russia, we provided the *only* Social-Democratic political and agitational material ... [and in this sole material you not only based the widest political agitation exclusively on the economic struggle, but you even went to the extent of claiming that this restricted agitation was the "most widely applicable". And do you not observe, gentlemen, that your own argument — that this was the only material provided — proves the necessity for *Iskra's* appearance, and its struggle against *Rabocheye Dyelo?*]... On the other hand, our publishing activity actually prepared the ground for the tactical unity of the Party... [unity in the conviction that tactics is a process of growth of Party tasks that grow together with the Party? A precious unity indeed!]... and by that rendered possible the creation of a 'militant organisation' for which the Union Abroad did all that an organisation abroad could do"

(*Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 10, p. 15). A vain attempt at evasion! I would never dream of denying that you did all you possibly could. I have asserted and assert now that the *limits* of what is “possible” for you to do are restricted by the narrowness of your outlook. It is ridiculous to talk of a “militant organisation” to fight for “immediate political demands”, or to conduct the economic struggle against the employers and the government”.

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

Truly matchless is the lofty contempt for the struggle against the police displayed by this worshipper (in the worst sense of the word) of the *spontaneous* movement! He is prepared to *justify* our inability to organise secret activity by the argument that with the spontaneous mass movement it is not at all important for us to struggle against the political police! Very few people indeed would subscribe to this appalling conclusion; to such an extent have our deficiencies in revolutionary organisations become a matter of acute importance. But if Martynov, for example, refuses to subscribe to this, it will only be because he is unable, or lacks the courage, to think out his ideas to their logical conclusion. Indeed, does the “task” of advancing concrete demands by the masses, demands that promise palpable results, call for special efforts to create a stable, centralised, militant organisation of revolutionaries? Cannot such a “task” be carried out even by masses that do not “struggle against the political police” at all? Could this task, moreover, be fulfilled if, in addition to the few leaders,

it were not undertaken by such workers (the overwhelming majority) as are quite *incapable* of “struggling against the political police”? Such workers, average people of the masses, are capable of displaying enormous energy and self-sacrifice in strikes and in street, battles with the police and the troops, and are capable (in fact, are alone capable) of *determining* the outcome of our entire movement — but the struggle against the *political* police requires special qualities; it requires *professional* revolutionaries. And we must see to it, not only that the masses “advance” concrete demands, but that the masses of the workers “advance” an increasing number of such professional revolutionaries. Thus, we have reached the question of the relation between an organisation of professional revolutionaries and the labour movement pure and simple. Although this question has found little reflection in literature, it has greatly engaged us “politicians” in conversations and polemics with comrades who gravitate more or less towards Economism. It is a question meriting special treatment. But before taking it up, let us offer one further quotation by way of illustrating our thesis on the connection between primitiveness and Economism.

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

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

But B-v himself, who has so excellently described the necessity for specialisation, underestimates its importance, in our opinion, in the second part of the argument we have quoted. The number of working-class revolutionaries is inadequate, he says. This is perfectly true, and once again we stress that the “valuable communication of a close observer” fully confirms our view of the causes of the present crisis in Social-Democracy, and, consequently, of the means required to overcome it. Not only are revolutionaries in general lagging behind the spontaneous awakening of the masses, but even worker-revolutionaries are lagging behind the spontaneous awakening of the working-class masses. This *fact* confirms with clear evidence, from the “practical” point of view, too, not only the absurdity but even the *politically reactionary nature* of the “pedagogics” to which we are so often treated in the discussion of our duties to the workers.

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

to discuss these questions with them. But once you do bring up these questions, you must give real replies to them; do not fall back on the “average”, or on the “masses”; do not try to dispose of the matter with facetious remarks and mere phrases. (*Svoboda*, No. 1, p. 66, in the article “Organisation”: “The heavy tread of the army of workers will reinforce all the demands that will be advanced in behalf of Russian Labour” — Labour with a capital L, of course. And the author exclaims: “I am not in the least hostile towards the intelligentsia, but [but — the word that Shchedrin translated as meaning: The ears never grow higher than the forehead!] — but I always get frightfully annoyed when a man comes to me uttering beautiful and charming words and demands that they be accepted for their [his?] beauty and other virtues” (p. 62). Yes, I always get “frightfully annoyed”, too.—*Lenin*)

To be fully prepared for his task, the worker-revolutionary must likewise become a professional revolutionary. Hence B-v is wrong in saying that since the worker spends eleven and a half hours in the factory, the brunt of all other revolutionary functions (apart from agitation) “*must necessarily* fall mainly upon the shoulders of an extremely small force of intellectuals”. But this condition does not obtain out of sheer “necessity”. It obtains because we are backward, because we do not recognise our duty to assist every capable worker to become a *professional* agitator, organiser, propagandist, literature distributor, etc., etc. In this respect, we waste our strength in a positively shameful manner; we lack the ability to husband that which should be tended and reared with special care. Look at the Germans: their forces are a hundredfold greater than ours. But they understand perfectly well that really capable agitators, etc., are not often promoted from the ranks of the “average”. For this reason they immediately try to place every capable working man in conditions that will enable him to develop and apply his abilities to the fullest: he is made a professional agitator, he is encouraged to widen the field of his activity, to spread it from one factory to the whole of the industry, from a single locality to the whole country. He acquires experience and dexterity in his profession; he broadens his outlook and increases his knowledge; he observes at close quarters the prominent

political leaders from other localities and of other parties; he strives to rise to their level and combine in himself the knowledge of the working-class environment and the freshness of socialist convictions with professional skill, without which the proletariat *cannot* wage a stubborn struggle against its excellently trained enemies. In this way alone do the working masses produce men of the stamp of Bebel and Auer. But what is to a great extent automatic in a politically free country must in Russia be done deliberately and systematically by our organisations. A worker-agitator who is at all gifted and “promising” *must not be left* to work 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, if he is to enlarge his experience, widen his outlook, and be able to hold out for at least a few years in the struggle against the gendarmes. As the spontaneous rise of their movement becomes broader and deeper, the working-class masses promote from their ranks not only an increasing number of talented agitators, but also talented organisers, propagandists, and “practical workers” in the best sense of the term (of whom there are so few among our intellectuals who, for the most part, in the Russian manner, are somewhat careless and sluggish in their habits). When we have forces of specially trained worker-revolutionaries who have gone through extensive preparation (and, of course, revolutionaries “of all arms of the service”), no political police in the world will then be able to contend with them, for these forces, boundlessly devoted to the revolution, will enjoy the boundless confidence of the widest masses of the workers. We are directly to *blame* for doing too little to “stimulate” the workers to take this path, common to them and to the “intellectuals”, of professional revolutionary training, and for all too often dragging them back by our silly speeches about what is “accessible” to the masses of the workers, to the “average workers”, etc.

In this, as in other respects, the narrow scope of our organisational work is without a doubt due directly to the fact (although the overwhelming majority of the “Economists” and the novices in practical work do not perceive it) that we restrict our theories

and our political tasks to a narrow field. Subservience to spontaneity seems to inspire a fear of taking even one step away from what is “accessible” to the masses, a fear of rising too high above mere attendance on the immediate and direct requirements of the masses. Have no fear, gentlemen! Remember that we stand so low on the plane of organisation that the very idea that we could rise *too* high is absurd! (IV, D, para 3-5).

In conclusion, Lenin’s *What Is To Be Done?* clarified a scientific socialist forward path to unity and revolution for the creation of a militant underground party at a time of illegality and ideological confusion. Lenin showed that Economism left the working-class up against the Boss without the ideological weapon of revolutionary Marxist education. He showed that revolutionary socialism couldn’t rely on spontaneous revolutionary politics. An all-Russia Marxist newspaper (*Iskra* – *The Spark*) must unify and inform the working masses. Neither should the Marxists resort to a tactic of individual acts of terror. Economism and terrorism equally bow to spontaneity: the Economist to the spontaneously developed level of consciousness of the mass of the working class, and the other to the “spontaneity of the passionate indignation of intellectuals.” Both trends evade the task of spreading a comprehensive political analysis. Lenin insisted that without continual education by the Marxist party’s political agitation and propaganda the working class becomes subordinate to Capital, and its struggles become confined solely to trade-union consciousness and trade-union demands.

## Terms & Names in *What Is To Be Done?*

**Eduard Bernstein** (1850-1932) German Social Democratic theorist who turned from revolution to reformism. In his major work, *Die Voraussetzungen des Socialismus* (1899) (First published in English under the title *Evolutionary Socialism* in 1907), he argued that an extension of political rights within capitalist societies would gradually transform these societies and avert economic crises without the necessity for revolution and working-class rule.

**Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP)**, also known as the Russian Social Democratic Party, was a revolutionary socialist political party formed to unite the various revolutionary organizations of the Russian Empire into one party in 1898. The RSDLP later split into Bolsheviks (majority) and Mensheviks (minority) factions, with the Bolsheviks becoming the **Communist Party** of the Soviet Union.

“**Social-Democracy**” was a term that had been used by Marxists. Social Democracy’s adherents were revolutionary Marxists who agitated for the extension of political democracy to the economic level, for the overthrow of capitalism and for the rule of the working-class majority. Chronologically “Social-Democracy” described most of the adherents of the Second International through 1914-1919. When the Second International betrayed the workers both by failing to organize against worker participation in the imperialist First World War, as well as by denying Russia’s readiness for socialist revolution, Social Democracy split -- with the reformist Social Democratic parties retaining that appellation, and the revolutionaries who aligned with Lenin and the Bolsheviks of The October Socialist Revolution of 1917 taking up their name from the party adhered to by Marx himself in 1848 – the **Communists**.

**Economism** The “economists” Lenin opposed his book, *What Is to be Done?*, which appeared in March 1902, limited the struggles of the working class to an economic struggle for higher wages and better working

conditions. They denied the leading role of a revolutionary Marxist party leading within the working class and the importance of propagating revolutionary theory and class-consciousness, and instead asserted that socialist ideology could arise out of ‘spontaneous’ movement. Therefore, Lenin explained, they were preaching for the bourgeois worldview within the working-class.

**Karl Kautsky** (1854-1938) (16 October 1854-17 October 1938), was one of the best-known theoreticians of the Second International and until 1914 he was thought by many Marxists to be the theoretical champion of the Marxist movement. But he did not oppose German’s entry into World War I. In June 1917, after the February phase of the revolution in Russia, he deviated from a revolutionary line by arguing that Russia was too economically backward for Socialism.

**Iskra** (the Spark) was the first newspaper of Russian Social Democracy. It was also illegal. It was founded by Lenin in 1900, and played a crucial role in the formation of a revolutionary Marxist party of the working class in Russia. *Iskra*’s first issue appeared from Germany in December 1900, and then beginning with July 1902 -- in London, and after the spring of 1903 -- in Geneva, Switzerland.

**Rabocheye Dyelo** ‘*The Workers’ Cause*’: was an Economist journal appearing in Geneva between April 1899 and February 1902 as the organ of the Union of Russian Social-Democrats Abroad.