

WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

BURNING QUESTIONS OF OUR MOVEMENT

. . . Party struggles . . . give a party strength and life. . . The best proof of the weakness of a party is its diffuseness and its blurring of clear-cut differences. . . A party becomes stronger by purging itself.

[From a letter by Lassalle to Marx, dated June 24, 1852.]

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*Burning Questions
of Our Movement*

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for years as an excellent handbook for agitators on economic questions in backward localities, or among backward strata of the workers. Examples of successful strikes, information about the higher standard of life, of better conditions of labour, in one district, would encourage the workers in other districts to take up the fight again and again. Fourthly, having made a start in generalising the trade-union struggle, and having in this way strengthened the contacts 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 occupy either too small or too large a share of our general Social-Democratic work. A local organisation, that is cut off from the organisations in other towns, finds it very difficult, and sometimes almost impossible, to maintain a correct sense of proportion (and the example of *Rabochaya Mysl* shows what a monstrous exaggeration is sometimes made in the direction of trade unionism). But an All-Russian organisation of revolutionists, that stands undeviatingly on the basis of Marxism, leads the whole of the political struggle and possesses a staff of professional agitators, will never find it difficult to determine the proper proportion.

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THE "PLAN" FOR AN ALL-RUSSIAN POLITICAL NEWSPAPER

"THE most serious blunder *Iskra* made in this connection," writes B. Krichewsky [*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 general party organisation" [*i. e.*, the article entitled "Where to Begin"] and Martynov echoes this idea by declaring that *Iskra's* tendency to belittle the march of the drab, every-day struggle in comparison with the propaganda of brilliant and complete ideas . . . was crowned by the plan for the organisation of a party that it advances in an article in No. 4, entitled "Where to Begin?" [*ibid.*, p. 61]. Finally, L. Nadezhdin has recently joined in the chorus of indignation against the "plan" (the quotation marks were meant to express sarcasm). In a pamphlet we have just received written by him, entitled *The Eve of Revolution* (published by the Revolutionary Socialist group, *Svoboda*, whose acquaintance we have already made), he declares that: "To speak now of an organisation to be linked up with an All-Russian newspaper means to propagate armchair ideas and armchair work" [p. 126], that it is a manifestation of "literariness," etc.

It does not surprise us that our terrorist agrees with the champions of the "forward march of the drab, every-day struggle," because we have already traced the roots of this intimacy between them in the chapters on politics and organisation. But we must here draw attention to the fact that L. Nadezhdin is the only one who has conscientiously tried to understand the ideas expressed in an article he disagrees with, and has made an attempt to reply to it, whereas *Rabocheye Dyelo* has said nothing that is material to the subject, but has tried only to confuse the question by a whole series of inappropriate, demagogic sallies. Unpleasant though the task may be, we must spend a little time on cleaning this Augean stable.

A. WHO WAS OFFENDED BY THE ARTICLE "WHERE TO BEGIN"?

We shall quote a bouquet of the expletives and exclamations that *Rabocheye Dyelo* hurled at us. "A newspaper cannot create a party

organisation; on the contrary, a party organisation must create a newspaper. . . . "A newspaper, standing above the party, *outside of its control* and independent of it, thanks to its having its own staff of agents. . . ." "By what miracle has *Iskra* forgotten about the actual existence of the Social-Democratic organisations of the party to which it belongs? . . ." "Those who possess firm principles and a corresponding plan are the supreme regulators of the real struggle of the party and dictate to it their plan. . . ." "The plan drives our lives and virile organisations into the kingdom of shadows and desires to call into being a fantastic network of agents. . . ." "If *Iskra's* plans were carried out, every trace of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, which is growing up in Russia, would be completely wiped out. . . ." "The propagandist organ becomes an uncontrolled autocratic legislator for the whole of the practical revolutionary struggle. . . ." "What should be the attitude of our party towards the proposal for its *complete* subordination to an autonomous editorial board?", etc., etc.

As the reader can see from the contents and tone of the above quotations, *Rabocheye Dyelo* feels offended. But it is offended, not for its own sake, but for the sake of the organisations and committees of our party which it alleges *Iskra* desires to drive into the kingdom of shadows, and the traces of which it desires to obliterate. Terrible, isn't it? But a curious thing should be noted. The article "Where to Begin" appeared in May, 1901. The articles in *Rabocheye Dyelo* appeared in September, 1901. Now we are in the middle of January, 1902. During these five months, *not a single committee and not a single organisation of the party* (neither before nor after September) protested against this monster which desires to drive them into the kingdom of shadows; and yet scores and hundreds of communications from all parts of Russia have appeared during this period in *Iskra*, and in numerous local and non-local publications. How is it that those whom it is desired to drive into the kingdom of shadows are not aware of it and have not felt offended about it, but a third party is offended over it?

This is to be explained by the fact that the committees and other organisations 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 certain plan of organisation by which the setting up of this organisation could be approached from all sides," and as they knew very well that *not one* of these "sides"

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will dream of "setting to work to build it" until it is convinced of its necessity, and of the correctness of the architectural plan, they naturally felt no offence at the boldness of the people who in *Iskra* said: "In view of the urgency and importance of the question, we take it upon ourselves to submit to our comrades an outline of a plan which is developed in greater detail in a pamphlet that we are preparing for the press." Assuming people were actuated by motives of good-will, 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 were 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 oppose the outline of a plan, not only by "picking it to pieces" and advising comrades to reject it, but also by *inciting* those inexperienced in revolutionary affairs against the authors of the plan *merely on the grounds* that they *dare* to "legislate" and come out as the "supreme regulators," *i. e.*, because they dare to *propose* an outline of a plan? Can our party develop and make progress if an attempt to *broaden* the outlook of local party workers so that they may be able to appreciate broader views, tasks, plans, etc., is objected to, not on the ground that these views are wrong, but on the grounds that the very "desire" to *broaden* is "offensive"? L. Nadezhdin also "picked our plan to pieces," but he did not sink to such demagoguery—demagoguery that cannot be explained by naïveté or by primitiveness of 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 deserves serious treatment, while *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 demonstrate to the world the nature of the catchwords like "broad democracy." We are accused of forgetting the committees, of desiring or attempting to drive them into the kingdom of shadows, etc. How can we reply to these charges when, owing to considerations of secrecy, we are *not in a position* to tell the reader *anything* about our real relationships with the committees? The people who broadcast slashing accusations which excite the people appear to be ahead of us because of their recklessness

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and their neglect of the duty of a revolutionist carefully to conceal from the eyes of the world the relationships and contacts he has, 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 for the reader who is not enlightened on all party affairs, the only way in which we can fulfil our duty to him is to tell him, not about what is and what is *im Werden* * but about a particle of what has taken place and what it is permissible to tell him in view of its being an event of the past.

The Bund hints that we are "pretenders"; ** the League abroad accuses us of attempting to obliterate all traces of the party. Gentlemen, you will get complete satisfaction when we relate to the public *four facts* concerning the past.

First fact.*** The members of one of the Leagues of Struggle, who took a direct part in the formation of our party, and in sending a delegate to the party congress which established the party, came to an agreement with one of the members of the *Iskra* group about the foundation of a special workers' library in order to satisfy the needs of the whole of the movement. The attempt to publish a library failed, and the pamphlets written for it: *The Tasks of Russian Social-Democrats*, and *The New Factory Act*,**** by a roundabout way, and through the medium of third parties, found their way abroad, and were there published.

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

* What is in the process of becoming.—Ed.

** *Iskra*, No. 8. The reply of the Central Committee of the Bund to our article on the national question.

*** We deliberately refrain from relating these facts in the order in which they occurred.

**** See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. II.—Ed.

***** The author of this pamphlet asks me to state that this pamphlet, like the one he wrote previously, was sent to the League on the assumption that the editors of its publications were the Emancipation of Labour group (owing to certain circumstances, he could not then—February, 1899—know about the change in the editorship). This pamphlet will be republished by the League at an early date.

Third fact. The Central Committee of the Bund, *via* a provincial town, came to one of the members of *Iskra* with the proposal that he accept the post of editor of the revived *Rabochaya Gazeta* and, of course, received his consent. This proposal was later modified. The comrade in question was invited to act as a contributor, in view of a new arrangement that had been made with the editorial board. To this also consent was, of course, given. Articles were sent (which we managed to preserve); "Our Programme" which was a direct protest against Bernsteinism, against the change of policy in legal literature and in *Rabochaya Mysl*; "Our Immediate Tasks" ("The publication of a party organ that shall appear regularly and have close contacts with all the local groups"; the drawbacks of the prevailing "primitive methods"); "Urgent questions" (an examination of the argument that it is necessary *first of all* to develop the activities of local groups before undertaking the publication of a central organ; an insistence on the paramount importance of a "revolutionary organisation," and on the necessity of "developing organisation, discipline, and the technique of secrecy to the highest stage of perfection").* The proposal to resume publication of *Rabochaya Gazeta* was not carried out, and the articles were not published.

Fourth fact. A member of the committee that organised the second regular congress of our party communicated to a member of the *Iskra* group the programme of the congress, and proposed that group for the office of editing 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; the *Iskra* group was notified of the place and time of the congress and (not being sure of being able, for certain reasons, to send a delegate to the congress), 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 like this, when complete confusion reigns, but may even compromise the grand idea of establishing a party, in the event of an early and complete discovery of the organisation, and a raid by the police, 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 organisations to support the revived common organ, which will

* See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. II.—Ed.

establish *real contacts* between all the committees and *really* train a group of leaders to lead the whole movement; that the committees and the party could very easily 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 pretenders, or by *Rabocheye Dyelo*, who accuses us of trying to relegate the committees to the kingdom of shadows, and to "substitute" an organisation for advocating the idea of a single newspaper for the organisation of a party. Yes, we did report to the committees, on *their repeated invitation*, on the necessity for accepting a definite plan of work in common. It was precisely for the party organisations that we drew up this plan, in articles published in *Rabochaya Gazeta*, and in the report to the party congress, again on the invitation of those who occupied such an influential position in the party that they took the initiative in its (actual) revival. And only after the *two-fold* attempt of the party organisation, *in conjunction with ourselves*, to revive the central organ of the party *officially* had failed, did we think it our bounden duty to publish an *unofficial* organ, in order that with this *third* attempt the comrades may have before them the results of an *experiment* and not merely problematical proposals. Now certain results of this experiment are available to the view of all, and all comrades may now judge as to whether we properly understood our duties, and what must be thought of people who strive to mislead those who are unacquainted with the immediate past, simply because they are chagrined at our having proved to some their inconsistency on the "national" question, and to others the inadmissibility of their waverings in matters of principle.

B. CAN A NEWSPAPER BE A COLLECTIVE ORGANISER?

The main points in the article "Where to Begin" deal *precisely* with this question, and reply to it positively. As far as we know, the only attempt to examine this question and to reply to it in the

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negative, was made by L. Nadezhdin, whose argument we reproduce in full:

... The manner in which the question of the necessity for an All-Russian newspaper is presented in *Iskra*, No. 4, pleases us very much, but we cannot agree that such a presentation is suitable in an article bearing the title, "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 manifestoes, can serve as the basis for a militant organisation in revolutionary times. We must set to work to build up strong political organisations in the localities. We lack such organisations; we have been carrying on our work mainly among intelligent workers, while the masses have been engaged almost exclusively in the economic struggle. *If we do not build up strong political organisations locally, what will be the use of even an excellently organised all-Russian newspaper?* It will be a burning bush, burning without being consumed and consuming nothing! *Iskra* thinks that as a matter of fact people will gather around it, and they will organise. *But they will find it more interesting to gather and organise around something more concrete!* This something more concrete may be the extensive publication of local newspapers, the immediate setting to work to rally the forces of labour for demonstrations, constant work by local organisations among the unemployed (regularly distribute pamphlets and leaflets among them, convene meetings for them, call upon them to resist the government, etc.). We must organise 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 the Revolution*, p. 54.]

We have emphasised the passages in this eloquent tirade which most strikingly illustrate the author's incorrect judgement of our plan, and the incorrectness of the point of view generally that he opposes to that of *Iskra*. Unless we set up strong political organisations in the localities—even an excellently organised 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 organisations except through the medium of an All-Russian newspaper*. The author missed the most important statement *Iskra* made *before it proceeded* to explain its "plan": That it was necessary "to call for the establishment of a revolutionary organisation, capable of combining all the forces, and of leading the movement *not only in name but in deed, i. e., that will be ready at any moment to support every protest and every outbreak*, and to utilise these for the purpose of increasing and strengthening the militant forces required for decisive battle." After the February and March events, every one will agree with this in principle, continues *Iskra*, but we do not need a solution of this problem in principle *but a practical solution of it*; we must immediately bring forward a definite plan of construction in

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order that every one may set to work to build *from every side*. And now we are again being dragged away from a practical solution towards something that is correct in principle, indisputable and great, but absolutely inadequate and absolutely incomprehensible to the broad masses of workers, namely, to "build up strong political organisations!" This is not the point that is now being discussed, most worthy author! The point is, *How* to train and what training it should be?

It is not true to say that "we have been carrying on our work mainly among intelligent workers, while the masses have been engaged almost exclusively in the economic struggle." Presented in such a form, this postulate goes wrong on the point which *Svoboda* always goes wrong on, and which is radically wrong, and that is, it sets up the intelligent workers in contrast to the "masses." Even the intelligent workers have been "engaged almost exclusively in the economic struggle" during the past few years. Moreover, the masses will never learn to conduct the political struggle until we help to train leaders for this struggle, both from among the intelligent workers and from among the intellectuals; and such leaders can be trained *solely* by systematic and every-day appreciation of *all* aspects of our political life, of *all attempts* at protest and struggle on the part of various classes and on various pretexts. Therefore, to talk about "training political organisations" and at the same time to *contrast* a "paper organisation" of a political newspaper to "live political work in the localities" is simply ridiculous! Why, *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 Zemstvoists, "popular indignation against the reckless tsarist Bashibuzuks," etc. Every one who is at all acquainted with the movement knows perfectly well that the majority of local organisations *never dream* of these things, that many of the prospects of "live political work" *have never* been realised by a single organisation, that the attempt to call attention to the growth of discontent and protest among the Zemstvo intelligentsia rouses feelings of consternation and amazement in Nadezhdin ("Good Lord, is this newspaper intended for the Zemstvoists?"—*The Eve of the Revolution*, p. 129), among the Economists (Letter to *Iskra* No. 12) and among many of the practical workers. Under these circumstances, it is possible to "begin" *only* by stirring up people to *think* about all these things, to stir them up to summarise

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and generalise all the flashes of discontent and active struggle. "Live political work" can be commenced in our time, when Social-Democratic tasks are being degraded, *exclusively* with live political education, which is impossible unless we have a frequently issued and properly distributed All-Russian newspaper.

Those who regard *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 ultimate goal. These people have not taken the trouble to study the two comparisons that were drawn to illustrate the plan proposed. *Iskra* wrote: The publication of an All-Russian political newspaper must be *the main line* that must guide us in our work of unswervingly developing, deepening, and expanding this organisation (*i. e.*, a revolutionary organisation always prepared to support every protest and every outbreak). Pray tell me: When a bricklayer lays bricks in various parts of an enormous structure, the like of which has never been seen before, is it a "paper" line that he uses to help him to find the correct place to place each brick, to indicate to him the ultimate goal of the work as a whole, to enable him 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 a period in our party life, when we have bricks and bricklayers, but we lack the guiding line, visible to all, by which to guide our movements? Let them shout that in stretching out the line, we desire 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 had a perfect right to do* after the events related above took place. But we did not do that. We wished to have our hands free to conduct an irreconcilable struggle against all pseudo-Social-Democrats; we wanted our line of policy, if properly laid, to be respected because it was correct, and not because it was carried out by an official organ.

"The question of combining local activity in central organs runs in a vicious circle," L. Nadezhdin tells us pedantically, "for this requires homogeneous elements, and this homogeneity can be created only by something that combines; but this combining element may be the product of strong local organisations which at the present time are not distinguished for their homogeneity." This

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truism is as heavy and indisputable as the one that: We must build up strong political organisations. And 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 the link that can be least torn out of our hands, the one that is most important at the given moment, the one that guarantees the command of the whole chain, and having found it, to cling to that link as tightly as possible.* If we possessed a staff of experienced bricklayers who had learned to work so well together that they could dispense with a guiding line and could place their bricks exactly where they are required without one (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, that bricks are often laid where they are not needed at all, that they are not laid according to the general line, and 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 merely a collective propagandist and collective agitator, it is also a collective organiser. In that 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 organised labour.**

Does this sound anything like the attempt of an armchair author to exaggerate his rôle? The scaffolding put up around a building is not required at all for habitation, it is made of the cheapest material, it is only put up temporarily and when finished with, as soon as the shell of the structure is completed, is destroyed. As for the building up of revolutionary organisations, experience shows that sometimes they may be built without scaffolding,—take the seventies

* Comrade Krichensky 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 subject for two leading articles for No. 12 of *Rabocheye Dyelo*!

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

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: "*Iskra* thinks that people will gather around it and will organise, but they will find it more interesting to organise around something more concrete!" So! so! "*They will find it more interesting to gather around something more concrete. . . .*" There is a Russian proverb which says: "Don't spit into the 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 *Rabochaya Mysl* have said in the name of this—something more concrete! See how restricted our movement is by our own narrowness, lack of initiative, and hesitation and yet this is justified by the traditional argument about "finding it more interesting to gather around something more concrete!" And Nadezhdin, who regards himself as being particularly sensitive to "life," who so severely condemns "armchair" authors, who (with pretensions to being witty) charges *Iskra* with a weakness for seeing Economism everywhere, and who imagines that he stands far above this discrimination between the "orthodox" and the "critics,"—fails to see that with this sort of argument he is playing into the hands of the very narrowness with which he is so indignant and that he is drinking from a well that has actually been spat into! 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 as "spontaneously" as the revolutionists of the seventies, if he clutches at such things as "excitative terror," "agrarian terror," "sounding-the-tocsin," etc. Glance at this something "more concrete" around which he thinks it is "much easier" to rally and organise: 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 adapted for the purpose of "rallying and organising." This very Nadezhdin a few pages further on says: "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 combining centres that we have at the present time are a pure

fiction, they represent a sort of revolutionary bureaucracy, the members of which mutually appoint each other to the posts of generals; and so it will continue until strong local organisations grow up." These remarks while exaggerating the position somewhat, express many a bitter truth, but cannot Nadezhdin 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 isolated in their local organisations? Has he, like the author of the article on organisation published in *Svoboda*, forgotten how the adoption of a broad local press (in 1898) was accompanied by a very strong intensification of Economism and "primitive methods"? 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 "rally and organise" *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 "rallying," the organising significance of a newspaper, and we could put to Nadezhdin, who defends diffusiveness, the very question that he himself has already put ironically: "Has some one left us a legacy of 200,000 revolutionary organisers?" Furthermore, "preparations for demonstrations" cannot be set up in contrast to *Iskra's* plan for the one reason alone that this plan includes the organisation of the widest possible demonstrations *as one of its aims*; the point under discussion is the selection of the practical means. On this point also Nadezhdin has got confused and has lost sight of the fact that only already "rallied and organised" 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 rally and organise. "Work among the unemployed." Again the same confusion, for this too represents one of the military operations of mobilised forces and not a plan to mobilise the forces. The extent to which Nadezhdin underestimates the harm caused by our diffusion, by our lack of "200,000 men," can be seen from the following: Many (including Nadezhdin) have reproached *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 *Iskra* is "guilty without sin." We

strive to "draw a line" even through the countryside, but there are almost no bricklayers there, and we are obliged to encourage *every one* to send us information concerning even the most common facts in the hope that this will increase the number of our contributors in this field and will train us all at least to select the really most outstanding facts. But the material upon which we can train is so scanty that unless we collect it from all parts of Russia we will have very little to train upon at all. No doubt, one who possesses at least as much capacity as an agitator and as much knowledge of the life of the vagrant as apparently Nadezhdin has, could render priceless service to the movement by carrying on agitation among the unemployed—but such a one would be simply burying his talents if he failed to inform *all* Russian comrades 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, may learn from his example.

Absolutely everybody now talks about the importance of unity, about the necessity for "rallying and organising," but the majority of us lack a definite idea of where to begin and how to bring about this unification. Every one will probably 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 "League" but genuinely common work, exchange of material, experience, and forces, distribution of functions, not only in the given districts but in a whole city, according to special tasks. Every one will agree that a big secret apparatus will not pay its way (if one may employ a commercial expression) "with the resources" (in material and man power, of course) of a single district and that a single district 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 such a field, like a single locality, *will prove*, and has already proved in the history of our Social-Democratic movement, to be too restricted: we have already dealt with this in detail above, in connection with political agitation and organisational work. We must first and foremost widen the field, establish *real* contacts between the cities, on the basis of *regular, common work*; for diffusion restricts the activities of our people who are "stuck in a hole" (to use the expression employed by a correspondent to *Iskra*), not knowing what is happening in the world; they have no one to learn from, do not

know how to obtain or to 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 a single, regular, All-Russian enterprise, which will summarise the results of all the diverse forms of activity and thereby *stimulate* our people to march forward untiringly along *all* the innumerable paths which lead to the revolution in the same way as all roads lead to Rome. If we do not want unity in name only, 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 them * the general design, dimensions and character of this cause, will indicate to them precisely the most serious defects of All-Russian activity, where agitation is lacking and where contacts are weak, and point out which small wheel in the great general mechanism could be repaired or replaced by a better one. A circle that has not commenced to work yet, which is only just seeking work, could then start, not like a craftsman in a small separate workshop unaware of the development that has taken place in "industry," or of the general state of the given industry and the methods of production prevailing in it, but as a participant in an extensive enterprise that *reflects* the whole general revolutionary attack upon the autocracy. And the more perfect the finish of each little wheel will be, the larger the number of detail workers working for the common cause, the closer will our network become and the less consternation will inevitable police raids call forth in the common ranks.

The mere function of distributing a newspaper will help to establish *real* contacts (that is, if it were a newspaper worthy of the name, *i. e.*, if it is issued regularly, not once a month like a big magazine, but four times a month). At the present time, communication between cities on revolutionary business is an extreme rarity, and at all events an 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 interchange of

* A *reservation*: that is, if a given circle sympathises with the policy of that newspaper and considers it useful to become a collaborator, meaning by that, not merely a literary collaborator but a revolutionary collaborator generally. *Note for Kadocheye Dyelo*: among the revolutionists who attach value to the cause and not to playing at democracy, who do not separate "sympathy" from active and lively participation, this reservation is taken for granted.

experience, of material, of forces and of resources. The scope of organisational work would immediately become ever so much wider and the success of a single locality would serve as a standing encouragement to further perfection and a desire to utilise the experience 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 to the 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 indeed will be suggested by hints in the legal press, by conversations among the public and by shamefaced government communications. Every outbreak, every demonstration, would be weighed and discussed from all its aspects all over Russia; it would stimulate a desire not to lag behind the rest, a desire to excel,—(we Socialists do not by any means reject all rivalry or all "competition!")—and consciously to prepare for that which at first appeared to spring up spontaneously, a desire to take advantage of the favourable conditions in a given district or at a given moment for modifying the plan of attack, etc. At the same time, this revival of local work would render superfluous that convulsive exertion of effort on the part of *all* local workers, working as if in the "throes of death" and the blunt invitation to join put to *every one* willing to perform some service, as is often done to-day when organising every single demonstration or publishing every single number of a local newspaper. In the first place the police would find it much more difficult to dig down to the "roots" because they would not know in what district to seek for them. Secondly, regular common work would train our people to regulate the force of a *given* attack in accordance with the strength of the forces of the given local 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 "transport" from one place to another, not only of literature, but also of revolutionary forces.

In the overwhelming majority of cases, these forces at the present time shed their blood in the cause of restricted local work, but under the circumstances we are discussing, occasions would constantly arise for transferring a capable agitator or organiser from one end of the country to the other. Beginning with short journeys on party business at the party's expense, our people would become accus-

tomed to live at the expense of the party, would become professional revolutionists and would train themselves to become 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 daily 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 blow every spark of class struggle and popular indignation into a general conflagration. Around what is in itself very innocent and very small, but in the full sense of the word a regular and *common* cause, an army of tried warriors would systematically gather and receive their training. On the ladders and scaffolding of this general organisational structure there would soon ascend Social-Democratic Zhelyabovs from among our revolutionists and Russian Bebel's from among our workers who would take their places at the head of the mobilised army and rouse the whole people to settle accounts with the shame and the curse of Russia. That is what we ought to be dreaming about!

"We ought to dream!" I wrote these words and then got scared. It seemed to me that I was sitting at a "unity congress" and that opposite me were the editors and contributors of *Rabocheye Dyelo*. Comrade Martynov rises and turning to me says threateningly: "Permit me to enquire, has an autonomous editorial board the right to dream without first obtaining permission of the party committee?" He is followed by Comrade Krichевsky who (philosophically deepening the words of Comrade Martynov who had long ago deepened the words of Comrade Plekhanov) continues in the same strain even more threateningly: "I go further. I ask, has a Marxist any right at all to dream, knowing that according to Marx, man always sets himself achievable tasks and that tactics is a process of growth of tasks, which grow together with the party?"

The very thought of these menacing questions sends a cold shiver down my back and makes me wish for nothing except a place to conceal myself in. I will try to conceal myself behind the back of Pisarev.

"There are differences and differences," wrote Pisarev concerning the question of the difference between dreams and reality. "My dream may run ahead

of the natural progress of events or may fly off at a tangent in a direction to which no natural progress of events will ever proceed. In the first case the dream will not cause any harm; it may even support and strengthen the efforts of toiling humanity. There is nothing in such dreams that would distort or paralyse labour power. On the contrary, if man were completely deprived of the ability to dream in this way, if he could never run ahead and mentally conceive in an entire and completed picture the results of the work he is only just commencing, then I cannot imagine what stimulus there would be to induce man to undertake and complete extensive and fatiguing work in the sphere of art, science and practical work. . . . Divergence 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 the airy castles he builds 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.

Now of this kind of dreaming there is unfortunately too little in our movement. And those most responsible for this are the ones who boast of their sober views, their "closeness" to the "concrete," i. e., the representatives of legal criticism and of illegal "khvostism."

C. WHAT TYPE OF ORGANISATION DO WE REQUIRE?

From what has been said the reader will understand that our "tactics plan" consists in rejecting an immediate *call* for the attack, in demanding "a regular siege of the enemy fortress," or in other words, in demanding that all efforts be directed towards rallying, organising and *mobilising* permanent troops. When we ridiculed *Rabocheye Dyelo* for its leap from Economism to shouting for an attack (in *Listok Rabochevo Dyela*, No. 6, April, 1901) it of course hurled accusations against us of being "doctrinaire," of failing to understand our revolutionary duty, of calling for caution, etc. Of course we were not surprised to hear these accusations coming from those who totally lack balance and who evade all arguments by references to a profound "tactics-process," any more than we were surprised by the fact that these accusations were repeated by Nadezhdin who has a supreme contempt for durable programmes and tactical bases.

It is said that history never repeats itself. But Nadezhdin is exerting every effort to cause it to repeat itself and zealously imitates Tkachev 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 epigram which says: If an original historical event

represents a tragedy, the copy of it is only a farce. The attempt to seize power, after the ground for the attempt had been prepared by the preaching of Tkachev and carried out by means of the "terrifying" terror which did really terrify was majestic, but the "excitative" terror of a little Tkachev is simply ridiculous and is particularly ridiculous when it is supplemented by the idea of an organisation of average workers.

"If *Iskra* would only emerge from its sphere of literariness," wrote Nadezhdin, "it would realise that these [the working man's letter to *Iskra* No. 7, etc.] are symptoms of the fact that soon, very soon the 'attack' will commence, and to talk now [*sic!*] about organisations linked up with an All-Russian newspaper is simply to give utterance to armchair thoughts and to do armchair work." What unimaginable confusion this is: on the one hand excitative terror and an "organisation of average workers" accompanied by the opinion that it is "much easier" to gather around something "more concrete" like a local newspaper,—and on the other hand, to talk "now" about an All-Russian organisation means to give utterance to armchair thoughts, or, to speak more frankly and simply, "Now" is already too late! But what about "the extensive organisation of local newspapers,"—is it not too late for that my dear L. Nadezhdin? And compare this with *Iskra's* point-of-view and tactics: excitative terror—is nonsense; to talk about an organisation of average workers and about the *extensive* organisation of local newspapers means to open the door wide for Economism. We must speak about a single All-Russian organisation of revolutionists and it will never be too late to talk about that until the real, and not the paper attack, commences.

Yes, as far as our situation in regard to organisation is concerned, it is far from brilliant, continues Nadezhdin. Yes, *Iskra* is absolutely right when it says that the mass of our military forces consist of volunteers and insurgents. . . . You do very well in thus soberly presenting the state of our forces. But why in doing so do you forget that the *crowd* is *not ours* 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 crush the "regular troops" to which all may have rallied but which had *not managed* in time to establish itself as an extremely systematic organisation. [Our italics.]

Astonishing logic! *Precisely because* the "crowd is not ours," it is stupid and reprehensible to call for an "attack" this very minute, because an attack must be made by permanent troops and not

by a spontaneous outburst of the crowd. It is precisely because the crowd *may* overwhelm and crush permanent troops that we must without fail "manage" to keep up with the spontaneous rise of the masses in our work of "establishing an extremely systematic organisation" among the permanent troops, for the more we "manage" to establish such an organisation the more probable will it be that the permanent troops will not be overwhelmed by the crowd, but will take their place at the head of the crowd. Nadezhdin drops into confusion because he imagines that these systematically organised troops 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 them into closer proximity and merges* the elemental destructive force of the crowd with the conscious destructive force of the organisation of revolutionists. You gentlemen merely wish to throw the blame for your sins on the shoulders of others. For it is precisely the *Swoboda* group that includes terror in its *programme* and by that calls for an organisation of terrorists, and such an organisation would really prevent our troops from coming into proximity with 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 overlook the revolution itself," continues Nadezhdin in his effort to scare *Iskra*, "in the same way as we overlooked recent events which hurried themselves upon us like a bolt from the blue." This sentence together with the one quoted above clearly demonstrates the absurdity of the "eve of the revolution point-of-view" invented by *Swoboda*. * To speak frankly, this special point-of-view amounts to this that 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 Theory and Tactics"? ** Don't you think that it

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

** In his *Review of Questions of Theory*, L. Nadezhdin made almost no contribution whatever to the discussion of questions of theory apart perhaps from the following passage which appears to be 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 dismissal 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 the revolution has struck" [p. 110]. One can hardly imagine a more striking

would have been more becoming for the "eve of the revolution point-of-view" to have issued 132,000 leaflets containing the brief appeal: "Kill them!"?

Those who place national political agitation as the cornerstone of their programme, *their tactics and their organisational work* as *Iskra* does, stand the least risk of overlooking the revolution. The people who were engaged over the whole of Russia in weaving a network of organisations to be linked up with an All-Russian newspaper not only did not overlook the spring events, but on the contrary, they enabled us to foretell them. Nor did they overlook the demonstrations that were described in *Iskra*, Nos. 13 and 14: on the contrary, they took part in those demonstrations, clearly appreciating their duty to come to the aid of the spontaneously rising crowd and while rendering aid, at the same time, through the medium of the newspaper, to make closer acquaintance with these demonstrations and to place their experience at the disposal of all Russian comrades. And if they live they will not overlook the revolution which first and foremost will demand of us experience in agitation, ability to support (in a Social-Democratic manner) every protest and ability to direct the spontaneous movements, and to guard them from the mistakes of friends and the traps of enemies!

This brings us to the final argument that compels us to insist particularly upon a plan of organisation that shall be centred around an All-Russian newspaper to be brought about by means of joint work for the establishment of a common newspaper. Only such an organisation will secure *flexibility* necessary for the Social-Democratic militant organisation, i. e., an ability to adapt itself immediately to the most diverse and rapidly changing conditions of struggle, an ability to "renounce an open fight against overwhelming and concentrated forces, and yet capable of taking advantage of the awkwardness and immobility of the enemy and attack at a time and place where he least expects attack." * It would be a

illustration of L. Nadezhdin's infinite disregard for theory. We have proclaimed "the eve of the revolution"—*therefore* "it really makes no difference" whether the orthodox Marxists will succeed in driving the critics from their positions or not!! And our wisacre fails to see that it is precisely in the time of revolution that we stand in need of the results of our theoretical combats with the critics in order to be able resolutely to combat their *practical* positions!

* *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 disturbed by the prospect of working for a long period of time," writes Nadezhdin

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grievous error indeed to build up the party organisation in the expectation only of outbreaks and street fighting, or only upon the "forward march of the drab, every-day struggle." We must *always* carry on our every-day work and always be prepared for everything, because very frequently, it is almost impossible to foresee beforehand when periods of outbreaks will give way to periods of calm. And even in those cases when it is possible to do so, it will not be possible to utilise this foresight for the purpose of reconstructing our organisation, because in an autocratic country these changes from turmoil to calm take place with astonishing rapidity and are sometimes due merely to a single night raid by the tsarist janizaries. And the revolution itself must not by any means be regarded as a single act (as Nadezhdin apparently imagines) but as a series of more or less powerful outbreaks rapidly alternating with more or less intense calm. For that reason, the principal content of the activity of our party organisation, the "trick" of this activity should be, to carry on work that is possible and necessary both in the period of the most powerful outbreaks as well as in periods of complete calm, that is to say: work of political agitation linked up over the whole of Russia, that will enlighten all aspects of life and will be carried on among the broadest possible strata of the masses. But this work *cannot possibly be carried on* in contemporary Russia without an All-Russian newspaper, issued very frequently. An organisation that is built up around this newspaper, an organisation of *collaborators* of this paper (collaborators in the broad sense of the word, i. e., all those working for it) will be ready *for everything*, from protecting the honour, the prestige, and continuity of the party in periods of acute revolutionary "depression" to preparing for, commencing and carrying out the *national armed insurrection*.

Indeed, picture to yourselves a very ordinary occurrence with us, [p. 62]. On this we shall observe: unless we are able to devise political tactics and an organisational plan based precisely upon calculations for *work over a long period of time* and at the same time, *in the very process of this work*, put our party into readiness to spring to its post and fulfil its duty at the very first, even unexpected, call, as soon as the progress of events becomes accelerated, we will prove to be but miserable political adventurers. Only Nadezhdin, who only yesterday began to describe himself as a Social-Democrat, 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 Social-Democrats to be "disturbed" by the question of the duration of the work.

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—the complete discovery and arrest of our organisation in one or several localities. In view of the fact that *all* the local organisations lack a *single*, common regular task, such raids frequently result in the interruption of our work for many months. If, however, all the local organisations had one common task, then, in the event of a 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 link them up with the centre, and when this common task, which has been interrupted by the raid, is apparent to all, the new circles could spring up and link themselves up with it even more rapidly.

On the other hand, picture to yourselves a popular uprising. Probably every one will now agree that we must think of this uprising and prepare for it. But *how* to prepare for it? Surely the Central Committee cannot appoint agents to go to all the districts for the purpose of preparing for the uprising! Even if we had a Central Committee it could achieve nothing by making such appointments considering the conditions prevailing in contemporary Russia. On the contrary, a network of agents * that would automatically be created in the course of establishing and distributing a common newspaper would not have to "sit around and wait" for the call to rebellion, but would carry on the regular work that would guarantee the highest probability of success in the event of a rebellion. 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 and who are so important to have in the event of an uprising. It is precisely such work that would help 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 train *all* local organisations to respond simultaneously to the same political

* Alas, alas! Again I have let slip that awful word "agents" which jars so awfully on the democratic ear, of Martynov! 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 distinctly 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 would select would be the word "collaborator" if it did not suggest literariness and diffusiveness. The thing we need is a militant organism of agents. The numerous (particularly abroad) Martynovs whose favourite pastime is "playing at generals" may instead of saying "passport agent" prefer to say, "Chief of the Special Department for Supplying Revolutionists with Passports," etc.

questions, incidents and events that excite the whole of Russia, to react to these "events" in the most vigorous, uniform and expedient manner possible; for is not rebellion in essence the most vigorous, most uniform and most expedient "reaction" of the whole people to the conduct of the government? And finally, such work would train all revolutionary organisations all over Russia to maintain the most continuous and at the same time the most secret contact with each other, which will create *real* Party unity,—for without such contacts it will be impossible collectively to discuss the plan of rebellion and to 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" does not represent the fruits of the work of armchair workers, infected with dogmatism and literariness (as it seemed to those who failed to study it properly), on the contrary it is a practical plan to commence immediately to prepare on all sides for the uprising, while at the same time never for a moment forgetting the ordinary, every-day work.