

In regard to these essential rectifications of wrong and assertions of right we feel ourselves to be intimate partners of all the Governments and

peoples associated together against the imperialists. We cannot be separated in interest or divided in purpose. We stand together until the end.

1. Why, according to Wilson, had the United States entered the war?
 2. A number of the points of Wilson's plan touch on questions of national borders. Who, according to the president, should have the greatest role in deciding such questions?
 3. What was to be the function of "general association of nations"?
 4. The Fourteen Points was a masterful piece of political propaganda, but Wilson was less successful at translating them into reality. Why?
 5. Does The Fourteen Points reflect any peculiarly American characteristics? Would the plan have been different if written by a French or British statesman?
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Lenin

What Is to Be Done?

(1902)

Vladimir Ilich Ulyanov (1870–1924) took his famous pseudonym, Lenin, after he began his career as a professional revolutionary. Lenin was from a middle-class family and was strongly influenced by his older brother, who also was engaged in revolutionary politics. In 1887 his brother was captured by the tsarist regime and executed. From that moment, Lenin dedicated himself to the overthrow of the Russian government. He became a Marxist and joined the underground movement. In 1895 Lenin, too, was arrested and briefly imprisoned in Siberia. After 1900 he lived abroad, the exiled leader of the Bolshevik wing of the Social Democratic party. It was not until the outbreak of World War I that Lenin was able to return to Russia and begin the work of creating a Marxist revolution. In 1917 the feeble government of the tsar was over-

thrown and eventually replaced by a provisional government led by Alexander Kerensky. It was Kerensky's government that Lenin worked to remove, tirelessly advocating its replacement by a truly revolutionary Marxist workers' regime. He succeeded in November 1917 and spent the rest of his life consolidating power in the new Soviet Union.

What Is to Be Done? is an early statement of Lenin's belief in the need for a truly socialist revolution. Against those who advocated a democratic trade union movement, as had developed in the Western democracies, Lenin called for a socialist revolution led by a cadre of party professionals. Only these revolutionaries could create the fundamental change that Lenin believed was necessary for Russia.

We have said that *there could not yet be* Social-Democratic consciousness among the workers. It could only be brought to them from without. The history of all countries shows that the working class, exclusively by its own effort, is able to develop only trade union consciousness, i.e., the conviction that it is necessary to combine in unions, fight the employers and strive to compel the government to pass necessary labour legislation, etc. The theory of Socialism, however, grew out of the philosophic, historical and economic theories that were elaborated by the educated representatives of the propertied classes, the intellectuals. According to their social status, the founders of modern scientific Socialism, Marx and Engels, themselves belonged to the bourgeois intelligentsia.

Since there can be no talk of an independent ideology being developed the masses of the workers themselves in the process of their movement the *only* choice is: either the bourgeois or the socialist ideology. There is no middle course (for humanity has not created a "third" ideology, and, moreover, in a society torn by class antagonisms there can never be a non-class or above-class ideology). Hence, to belittle the socialist ideology in any way, to turn away from it in the slightest degree means to strengthen bourgeois ideology. There is a lot of talk about spontaneity, but the *spontaneous* development of the working-class movement leads to its becoming subordi-

nated to the bourgeois ideology, *leads to its developing according to the program of the Credo*, for the spontaneous working-class movement is trade unionism, 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.

As a matter of fact, it is possible to "raise the activity of the masses of the workers" *only* provided this activity is *not restricted* to "political agitation on an economic basis." And one of the fundamental conditions for the necessary expansion of political agitation is the organization of *comprehensive* political exposure. The masses *cannot* be trained in political consciousness and revolutionary activity in any other way except by means of such exposures. Hence, activity of this kind is one of the most important functions of international Social-Democracy as a whole, for even the existence of political liberty does not in the least remove the necessity for such exposures; it merely changes somewhat the sphere against which they are directed.

We are not children to be fed on the thin gruel of "economic" politics alone; we want to know everything that others know, we want to learn the details of *all* aspects of political life and

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

A workers' organization must in the first place be a trade organization; secondly, it must be as broad as possible; and thirdly, it must be as little clandestine as possible (here, and further on, of course, I have only autocratic Russia in mind). On the other hand, the organizations of revolutionaries must consist first, foremost and mainly of people who make revolutionary activity their profession (that is why I speak of organizations of *revolutionaries*, meaning revolutionary Social-Democrats). In view of this common feature of the members of such an organization, *all distinctions as between workers and intellectuals*, and certainly distinctions of trade and profession, must be *utterly obliterated*. Such an organization must of necessity be not too extensive and as secret as possible.

As I have already said time and again that by "wise men," in connection with organization, I mean *professional revolutionaries*, irrespective of whether they are trained from among students

or workingmen. I assert: 1) that no revolutionary movement can endure without a stable organization of leaders that maintains continuity; 2) that the wider the masses spontaneously drawn into the struggle, forming the basis of the movement and participating in it, the more urgent the need of such an organization, and the more solid this organization must be (for it is much easier for demagogues to sidetrack the more backward sections of the masses); 3) that such an organization must consist chiefly of people professionally engaged in revolutionary activity; 4) that in an autocratic state, the more we *confine* the membership of such an organization to people who are professionally engaged in revolutionary activity and who have been professionally trained in the art of combating the political police, the more difficult will it be to wipe out such an organization, and 5) the *greater* will be the number of people of the working class and of the other classes of society who will be able to join the movement and perform active work in it.

To concentrate all secret functions in the hands of as small a number of professional revolutionaries as possible does not mean that the latter will "do the thinking for all" and that the crowd will not take an active part in the *movement*. On the contrary, the crowd will advance from its ranks increasing numbers of professional revolutionaries; for it will know that it is not enough for a few students and for a few workingmen waging the economic struggle, to gather together and form a "committee," but that it takes years to train oneself to be a professional revolutionary; the crowd will "think" not of amateurish methods alone but of such training. The centralization of the secret functions of the *organization* by no means implies the centralization of all the functions of the *movement*. The active participation of the widest mass in the illegal press will not diminish because a "dozen" professional revolutionaries centralize the secret functions connected with this work; on the contrary, it will *increase* tenfold. In this way, and in this way alone, will we ensure that reading of illegal literature, writing for it, and to some extent even distributing it, will *almost cease to be secret*

work, for the police will soon come to realize the folly and futility of setting the whole judicial and administrative machine into motion to intercept every copy of publication that is being broadcast in thousands. This applies not only to the press, but to every function of the movement, even to demonstrations. The active and widespread participation of the masses will not suffer; on the contrary, it will benefit by the fact that a "dozen" experienced revolutionaries, trained professionally no less than the police, will centralize all the secret aspects of the work—drawing up leaflets, working out approximate plans and appointing bodies of leaders for each urban district, for each factory district and for each educational institution, etc. (I know that exception will be taken to my "undemocratic" views, but I shall reply fully to this anything but intelligent objection later on.) The centralization of the most secret functions in an organization of revolutionaries will not diminish, but rather increase

the extent and quality of the activity of a large number of other organizations which are intended for a broad public and are therefore as loose and as non-secret as possible, such as workers' trade unions, workers' self-education circles and circles for reading illegal literature, socialist and also democratic circles among *all* other sections of the population, etc., etc. We must have such circles, trade unions and organizations everywhere in *as large a number as possible* and with the widest variety of functions; but it would be absurd and dangerous to *confuse* them with the organization of *revolutionaries*, to obliterate the border line between them, to dim still more the masses' already incredibly hazy appreciation of the fact that in order to "serve" the mass movement we must have people who will devote themselves exclusively to Social-Democratic activities, and that such people must *train* themselves patiently and steadfastly to be professional revolutionaries.

1. What is Lenin's view of dissent? How closely must people adhere to socialist thought?
 2. Why does Lenin reject trade unionism for the working class?
 3. What must a revolutionary movement have to succeed?
 4. Lenin argues that revolutionary activity must be centralized. Why? How does this reflect his own interests?
 5. Lenin ultimately succeeded in his goal of overthrowing the Russian government. Is *What Is to Be Done?* an effective blueprint for would-be revolutionaries?
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