THE MASS STRIKE

THE POLITICAL PARTY & THE TRADE UNIONS

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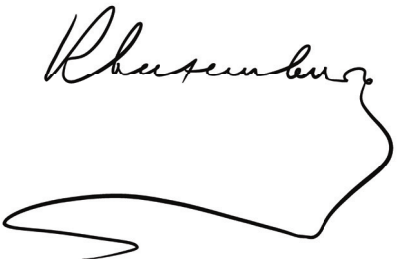

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Almost all works and pronouncements of international socialism on the subject of the mass strike date from the time before the Russian Revolution [of 1905—Ed.], the first historical experiment on a very large scale with this means of struggle. It is therefore evident that they are, for the most part, out of date. Their standpoint is essentially that of Engels, who in 1873 wrote as follows in his criticism of the revolutionary blundering of the Bakuninists[1] in Spain:

> The general strike, in the Bakuninists' program, is the lever which will be used for introducing the social revolution. One fine morning all the workers in every industry in a country, or perhaps in every country, will cease work, and thereby compel the ruling classes either to submit in about four weeks, or to launch an attack on the workers so that the latter will have the right to defend themselves and may use the opportunity to overthrow the old society. The proposal is by no means new: French and Belgian socialists have paraded it continually since 1848, but for all that, it is of English origin. During the rapid and powerful development of Chartism among the English workers that followed the crisis of 1837, the "holy month"—a suspension of work on a national scale—was preached as early as 1839, and was received with such favor that in July 1842 the factory workers of the north of England attempted to carry it out. And at the Congress of the Alliancists at Geneva on September 1, 1873, the general strike played a great part, but it was admitted on all sides that to carry it out, it was necessary to have a perfect organization of the working class and a full war chest. And that is the crux of the question. On the one hand, the governments, especially if they are encouraged by the workers' abstention from political action, will never allow the funds of the workers to become large enough, and on the other hand, political events and the encroachments of the ruling classes will bring about the liberation of the workers long before the proletariat gets the length of forming this ideal

[1] Mikhail Bakunin (1814-1876) was a Russian emigrant to Germany, member of the First International and founder of the anarchist movement.

> organization and this colossal reserve fund. But if they had these, they would not need to make use of the roundabout way of the general strike in order to attain their object.

Here we have the reasoning that was characteristic of the attitude of international social democracy towards the mass strike in the following decades. It is based on the anarchist theory of the general strike—that is, the theory of the general strike as a means of inaugurating the social revolution, in contra-distinction to the daily political struggle of the working class—and exhausts itself in the following simple dilemma: either the proletariat as a whole are not yet in possession of the powerful organization and financial resources required, in which case they cannot carry through the general strike, or they are already sufficiently well organized, in which case they do not need the general strike. This reasoning is so simple and at first glance so irrefutable that, for a quarter of a century, it has rendered excellent service to the modern labor movement as a logical weapon against the anarchist phantom and as a means of carrying out the idea of political struggle to the widest circles of the workers. The enormous strides taken by the labor movement in all capitalist countries during the last twenty-five years are the most convincing evidence of the value of the tactics of political struggle, which were insisted upon by Marx and Engels in opposition to Bakuninism; and German social democracy, in its position of vanguard of the entire international labor movement, is not in the least the direct product of the consistent and energetic application of these tactics.

The [1905] Russian Revolution has now effected a radical revision of the above piece of reasoning. For the first time in the history of the class struggle it has achieved a grandiose realization of the idea of the mass strike and—as we shall discuss later—has even matured the general strike and thereby opened a new epoch in the development of the labor movement. It does not, of course, follow from this that the tactics of political struggle recommended by Marx and Engels were false or that criticism applied by them to anarchism was incorrect. On the contrary, it is the same train of ideas, the same method, the Engels-Marxian tactics, which lay at the foundation of the previous practice of the German social democracy, which now in the Russian Revolution are producing new factors and new conditions in the class struggle. The Russian Revolution, which is

the first historical experiment on the model of the mass strike, does not merely provide no vindication of anarchism, but actually means *the historical liquidation of anarchism*. The sorry existence to which this cerebral tendency was condemned in recent decades by the powerful development of social democracy in Germany may, to a certain extent, be explained by the exclusive domination and long duration of the parliamentary period. A tendency patterned entirely upon the "first blow" and "direct action," a tendency, "revolutionary" in the most naked, pitchfork sense, can only temporarily languish in the calm of parliamentarian day and, on a return of the period of direct open struggle, can come to life again and unfold its inherent strength.

Russia, in particular, appeared to have become the experimental field for the heroic deeds of anarchism. A country in which the proletariat had absolutely no political rights and extremely weak organizations, a many-colored complex of various sections of the population, a chaos of conflicting interests, a low standard of education among the masses of the people, extreme brutality in the use of violence on the part of the prevailing regime—all this seemed as if created to raise anarchism to a sudden if perhaps short-lived power. And finally, Russia was the historical birthplace of anarchism. But the fatherland of Bakunin was to become the burial place of his teachings. Not only did and do the anarchists in Russia not stand at the head of the mass strike movement; not only does the whole political leadership of revolutionary action and also of the mass strike lie in the hands of the social democratic organizations, which are bitterly opposed as "bourgeois parties" by Russian anarchists; or partly in the hands of such socialist organizations as are more or less influenced by the social democracy and more or less approximate to it—such as the terrorist party, the "socialist revolutionaries"—but the anarchists simply do not exist as a serious political tendency in the Russian Revolution. Only in a small Lithuanian town with particularly difficult conditions—a confused medley of different nationalities among the workers, an extremely scattered condition of small-scale industry, a very severely oppressed proletariat—in Bialystok, are, among the seven or eight different revolutionary groups, a handful of half-grown "anarchists" who promote confusion and bewilderment among the workers to the best of their ability; and lastly in

Moscow, and perhaps in two or three other towns, a handful of people of this ilk make themselves noticeable.

But apart from these few "revolutionary" groups, what is the actual role of anarchism in the Russian Revolution? It has become the sign of the common thief and plunderer; a large proportion of the innumerable thefts and acts of plunder of private persons are carried out under the name of "anarchist-communism"—acts that rise up like a troubled wave against the revolution in every period of depression and in every period of temporary defensive. Anarchism has become in the Russian Revolution, not the theory of the struggling proletariat, but the ideological signboard of the counterrevolutionary lumpenproletariat, who, like a school of sharks, swarm in the wake of the battleship of the revolution. And there, with the historical career of anarchism, is well-nigh ended.

On the other hand, the mass strike in Russia has been realized not as means of evading the political struggle of the working class, and especially of parliamentarism, not as a means of jumping suddenly into the social revolution by means of a theatrical coup, but as a means, firstly, of creating for the proletariat the conditions of the daily political struggle and especially of parliamentarism. The revolutionary struggle in Russia, in which mass strikes are the most important weapon, is by the working people and above all by the proletariat, conducted for those political rights and conditions whose necessity and importance in the struggle for the emancipation of the working class, Marx and Engels first pointed out, and in opposition to anarchism fought for with all their might in the International. Thus has historical dialectics, the rock on which the whole teaching of Marxian socialism rests, brought it about that today, anarchism, with which the idea of the mass strike is indissolubly associated, has itself come to be opposed to the mass strike in practice; while on the contrary, the mass strike that, as the opposite of the political activity of the proletariat, was combated, appears today as the most powerful weapon of the struggle for political rights. If, therefore, the Russian Revolution makes imperative a fundamental revision of the old standpoint of Marxism on the question of the mass strike, it is once again Marxism whose general method and points of view have thereby, in new form, carried off the prize. The Moor's beloved can die only by the hand of the Moor.

II.
The Mass Strike, a Historical and not an Artificial Product

The first revision of the question of the mass strike that results from the experience of Russia relates to the general conception of the problem. Till the present time the zealous advocates of an "attempt with the mass strike" in Germany of the stamp of Bernstein, Eisner,[2] etc., and also the strongest opponents of such an attempt as represented in the trade-union camp by, for example, Bombelburg, stand, when all is said and done, on the same conception—and that is the anarchist one. The apparent polar opposites do not mutually exclude each other but as always, condition, and at the same time supplement each other. For the anarchist mode of thought is direct speculation on the "great Kladderadatsch,"[3] on the social revolution merely as an external and inessential characteristic. According to it, what is essential is the whole abstract, unhistorical view of the mass strike and of all the conditions of the proletarian struggle generally.

For the anarchist there exists only two things as material suppositions of his "revolutionary" speculations—first, imagination, and second, goodwill and courage to rescue humanity from the existing capitalist vale of tears. This fanciful mode of reasoning sixty years ago gave the result that the mass strike was the shortest, surest, and easiest means of springing into the better social future. The same mode of reasoning recently gave the result that the trade-union struggle was the only real "direct action of the masses" and also the only real revolutionary struggle—which, as is well known, is the latest notion of the French and Italian "syndicalists."[4] The fatal thing for anarchism has always been that the methods of struggle improvised in the air were not only a reckoning without their host. That is, they were purely utopian, but that they, while not reckoning in the least with the despised evil reality, unexpectedly became in this evil reality—practical assistants to the reaction, where previously they had only been, for the most part, revolutionary speculations.

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[2] Kurt Eisner (1867-1919) was a leading member of the SPD who edited the paper *Vorwärts* from 1898-1905. Initially a revisionist and opponent of Luxemburg, he moved leftward, opposed World War I as a pacifist, and helped found the independent SPD (U-SPD).

[3] A loud noise or uproar. August Bebel often used the term in reference to the onset of capitalism's collapse.

[4] An anarchist trade unionism that opposes political organization and advocates working-class emancipation exclusively through independent trade union activity.

On the same ground of abstract, ahistorical methods of observation stand those today who would, in the manner of a board of directors, put the mass strike in Germany on the calendar on an appointed day, and those who, like the participants in the trade-union congress at Cologne, would by a prohibition of "propaganda" eliminate the problem of the mass strike from the face of the earth. Both tendencies proceed on the common, pure-anarchistic assumption that the mass strike is a purely technical means of struggle which can be "decided" at pleasure and strictly according to conscience, or "forbidden"—a kind of pocketknife that can be kept in the pocket clasped "ready for any emergency," and according to the decision, can be unclasped and used. The opponents of the mass strike do indeed claim for themselves the merit of taking into consideration the historical groundwork and the material conditions of the present situation in Germany in opposition to the "revolutionary romanticists" who hover in the air, and do not at any point reckon with the hard realities and the possibilities and impossibilities. "Facts and figures; figures and facts!" they cry, like Mr. Gadgrind in Dickens's *Hard Times*.

What the trade-union opponent of the mass strike understands by the "historical basis" and "material conditions" is two things—on the one hand the weakness of the proletariat, and on the other hand, the strength of Prussian-German militarism. The inadequate organization of the workers and the imposing Prussian bayonet—these are the facts and figures upon which these trade-union leaders base their practical policy in the given case. Now while it is quite true that the trade-union cash box and the Prussian bayonet are material and very historical phenomena, the conception based upon them is not historical materialism in Marx's sense but a policeman-like materialism in the sense of Puttkammer.[5] The representatives of the capitalist police state reckon much, and indeed, exclusively, with the occasional real power of the organized proletariat as well as with the material might of the bayonet, and from the comparative example of these two rows of figures the comforting conclusion is always drawn that the revolutionary labor movement is produced by individual demagogues and agitators; and that therefore there is in the prisons and bayonets an adequate means of subduing the unpleasant "passing phenomena."

[5] Robert von Puttkammer (1828-1900) was a conservative German minister of the interior who upheld Bismarck's antisocialist laws in the 1870s and 1880s.

The class-conscious German workers have at last grasped the humor of the policeman-like theory that the whole modern labor movement is an artificial, arbitrary product of a handful of conscienceless "demagogues and agitators."

It is exactly the same conception, however, that finds expression when two or three worthy comrades unite in a voluntary column of night watchmen in order to warn the German working class against the dangerous agitation of a few "revolutionary romanticists" and their "propaganda of the mass strike"; or, when on the other side, a noisy indignation campaign is engineered by those who, by means of "confidential" agreements between the executive of the party and the general commission of the trade unions,[6] believe they can prevent the outbreak of the mass strike in Germany.

If it depended on the inflammatory "propaganda" of revolutionary romanticists or on confidential or public decisions of the party direction, then we should not even yet have had in Russia a single serious mass strike. In no country in the world—as I pointed out in March 1905 in the *Sächische Arbetierzeitung*—was the mass strike so little "propagated" or even "discussed" as in Russia. And the isolated examples of decisions and agreements of the Russian party executive, which really sought to proclaim the mass strike of their own accord—as, for example, the last attempt in August of this year after the dissolution of the Duma—are almost valueless.

If, therefore, the Russian Revolution teaches us anything, it teaches above all that the mass strike is not artificially "made," not "decided" at random, not "propagated," but that it is a historical phenomenon, which, at a given moment, results from social conditions with historical inevitability. It is not, therefore, by abstract speculations on the possibility or impossibility, the utility or the injuriousness of the mass strike, but only by an examination of those factors and social conditions out of which the mass strike grows in the present phase of the class struggle—in other words, it is not by *subjective criticism* of the mass strike from the standpoint of what is desirable, but only by *objective investigation* of the sources of the

[6] In Germany the "Free Trade Unions" (social democratic) coexisted with company unions, church unions, and "radical" bourgeois unions. The Catholic unions included opposition to social democracy in their statutes.

mass strike from the standpoint of what is historically inevitable, that the problem can be grasped or even discussed.

In the unreal sphere of abstract logical analysis it can be shown with exactly the same force on either side that the mass strike is absolutely impossible and sure to be defeated, and that it is possible and that its triumph cannot be questioned. And therefore the value of the evidence led on each side is exactly the same—and that is nil. Therefore, the fear of the "propagation" of the mass strike, which has even led to formal anathemas against the persons alleged to be guilty of this crime, is solely the product of the droll confusion of persons. It is just as impossible to "propagate" the mass strike as an abstract means of struggle as it is to propagate the "revolution." "Revolution" like "mass strike" signifies nothing but an external form of the class struggle, which can have sense and meaning only in connection with definite political situations.

If anyone were to undertake to make the mass strike generally, as a form of proletarian action, the object of methodological agitation, and to go house-to-house canvassing with this "idea" in order to gradually win the working class to it, it would be as idle and profitless and absurd an occupation as it would be to make the idea of the revolution or of the fight at the barricades the object of a special agitation. The mass strike has now become the center of the lively interest of the German and the international working class because it is a new form of struggle, and as such is the sure symptom of a thoroughgoing internal revolution in the relations of the classes and in the conditions of the class struggle. It is a testimony to the sound revolutionary instinct and the quick intelligence of the mass of the German proletariat that, in spite of the obstinate resistance of their trade-union leaders, they are applying themselves to this new problem with such keen interest.

But it does not meet the case, in the presence of this interest and of this fine, intellectual thirst and desire for revolutionary deeds on the part of the workers, to treat them to abstract mental gymnastics on the possibility or impossibility of the mass strike; they should be enlightened on the development of the Russian Revolution, the international significance of that revolution, the sharpening of class antagonisms in Western Europe, the wider political perspectives of the class struggle in Germany, and the role and the tasks of the masses in the coming struggles. Only in this form

will the discussion on the mass strike lead to the widening of the intellectual horizon of the proletariat, to the sharpening of their way of thinking, and to the steeling of their energy.

Viewed from this standpoint, however, the criminal proceedings desired by the enemies of "revolutionary romanticism" appear in all their absurdity, because, in treating of the problem, one does not adhere strictly to the text of the Jena resolution. The "practical politicians" agree to this resolution if need be, because they couple the mass strike chiefly with the fate of universal suffrage, from which it follows that they can believe two things—first, that the mass strike is of a purely defensive character, and second, that the mass strike is even subordinate to parliamentarism. That is, has been turned into a mere appendage of parliamentarism. But the real kernel of the Jena resolution in this connection is that, in the present position of Germany, an attempt on the part of the prevailing reaction on the parliamentary vote would in all probability be the moment for the introduction of, and the signal for, a period of stormy political struggles in which the mass strike as a means of struggle in Germany might well come into use for the first time.

But to seek to narrow and to artificially smother the social importance, and to limit the historical scope of the mass strike as a phenomenon and as a problem of the class struggle by the wording of a congress resolution, is an undertaking that for shortsightedness can only be compared with the veto on discussion of the trade-union congress at Cologne. In the resolution of the Jena Congress, German social democracy has officially taken notice of the fundamental change that the Russian Revolution has effected in the international conditions of the proletarian class struggle and has announced its capacity for revolutionary development and its power of adaptability to the new demands of the coming phase of the class struggle. Therein lies the significance of the Jena resolution. As for the practical application of the mass strike in Germany, history will decide that as it decided it in Russia—history in which German social democracy with its decisions is, it is true, an important factor, but at the same time, only one factor among many.

III.

Development of the Mass Strike Movement in Russia

The mass strike, as it appears for the most part in the discussion in Germany, is a very clear and simply thought out, sharply sketched, isolated phenomenon. It is the political mass strike exclusively that is spoken of. What is meant by it is a single grand rising of the industrial proletariat springing from some political motive of the highest importance, undertaken on the basis of an opportune and mutual understanding on the part of the controlling authorities of the party and of the trade unions, and carried through in the spirit of party discipline and in perfect order—and in still more perfect order brought to the directing committees as a signal given at the proper time, by which committees the regulation of support, the cost, the sacrifice—in a word, the whole material balance of the mass strike—is exactly determined in advance.

Now, when we compare this theoretical scheme with the real mass strike as it appeared in Russia five years ago, we are compelled to say that this representation, which in the German discussion occupies the central position, hardly corresponds to a single one of the many mass strikes that have taken place, and on the other hand, that the mass strike in Russia displays such a multiplicity of the most varied forms of action that it is altogether impossible to speak of "the" mass strike, of an abstract schematic mass strike. All the factors of the mass strike, as well as its character, are not only different in the different towns and districts of the country, but its general character has often changed in the course of the revolution. The mass strike has passed through a definite history in Russia and is passing still further through it. Who, therefore, speaks of the mass strike in Russia must, above all things, keep its history before his eyes.

The present official period, so to speak, of the Russian Revolution is justly dated from the rising of the proletariat on January 22, 1905, when the demonstration of 200,000 workers ended in a frightful bloodbath before the czar's palace. The bloody massacre in St. Petersburg was, as is well known, the signal for the outbreak of the first gigantic series of mass strikes, which spread over the whole of Russia within a few days and which carried the call to action of the revolution from St. Petersburg to every corner of the empire and among the widest sections of the proletariat. But the St. Petersburg rising of January 22 was only the critical moment of a mass strike that the proletariat of the czarist capital had previously entered upon in January 1905. The January mass strike was without doubt carried

through under the immediate influence of the gigantic general strike that in December 1904 broke out in the Caucasus, in Baku, and for a long time kept the whole of Russia in suspense. The events of December in Baku were on their part only the last and powerful ramification of those tremendous mass strikes, which, like a periodic earthquake, shook the whole of south Russia, and whose prologue was the mass strike in Batumi in the Caucasus in March 1902.

This first mass strike movement in the continuous series of present revolutionary eruptions is finally separated by five or six years from the great general strike of the textile workers in St. Petersburg in 1896 and 1897, and if this movement is apparently separated from the present revolution by a few years of apparent stagnation and strong reaction, everyone who knows the inner political development of the Russian proletariat to their present stage of class consciousness and revolutionary energy will realize that the history of the present period of the mass struggles begins with those general strikes in St. Petersburg. They are therefore important for the problems of the mass strike because they already contain, in the germ, all the principal factors of later mass strikes.

Again, the St. Petersburg general strike of 1896 appears as a purely economic partial wage struggle. Its causes were the intolerable working conditions of the spinners and weavers in St. Petersburg; a working day of thirteen, fourteen, or fifteen hours, miserable piecework rates, and a whole series of contemptible chicaneries on the part of the employers. This condition of things, however, was patiently endured by workers for a long time until an apparently trivial circumstance filled the cup to overflowing. The coronation of the present czar, Nicholas II, which had been postponed for two years for fear of the revolutionaries, was celebrated in May 1896, and on that occasion the St. Petersburg employers displayed their patriotic zeal by giving their workers three days of compulsory holidays, for which, curious to relate, they did not desire to pay their employees. The workers, angered by this, began to move. After a conference of about three hundred of the intelligent workers in the Ekaterinhof Garden, a strike was decided upon, and the following demands were formulated: first, payment of wages for the coronation holidays; second, a working day of ten hours; third, increased rates for piecework. This happened on May 24. In a week every weaving and spinning establishment was at a standstill and

40,000 workers were in the general strike. Today this event, measured by the gigantic mass strike of the revolution, may appear as a little thing. In the political polar rigidity of the Russia of that time a general strike was something unheard of; it was even a complete revolution in miniature. There began, of course, the most brutal persecution. About one thousand workers were arrested and the general strike was suppressed.

Here already we see all the fundamental characteristics of the later mass strikes. The next occasion of the movement was wholly accidental, even unimportant—its outbreak elementary; but in the success of the movement the fruits of the agitation, extending over several years, of the social democracy were seen and in the course of the general strike the social democratic agitators stood at the head of the movement, directed it, and used it to stir up revolutionary agitation. Furthermore the strike was outwardly a mere economic struggle for wages, but the attitude of the government and the agitation of the social democracy made it a political phenomenon of the first rank. And lastly, the strike was suppressed; the workers suffered a "defeat." But in January of the following year the textile workers of St. Petersburg repeated the general strike once more and this time achieved a remarkable success: the legal introduction of a working day of eleven hours throughout the whole of Russia. What was nevertheless a much more important result was this: since that first general strike of 1896, which was entered upon without a trace of organization or of strike funds, an intensive trade-union fight began in Russia proper, which spread from St. Petersburg to the other parts of the country and opened up entirely new vistas to social democratic agitation and organization, through which, in the apparently death-like peace of the following period, the revolution was prepared by underground work.

The outbreak of the Caucasian strike in March 1902 was apparently as accidental and as much due to pure economic partial causes (although produced by quite other factors) as that of 1896. It was connected with the serious industrial and commercial crisis that in Russia was the precursor of the Japanese war, which combined, were the most powerful factors of the nascent revolutionary ferment. The crisis produced an enormous mass of unemployment that nourished the agitation among the proletarian masses, and therefore the government, to restore tranquility among the workers, undertook to transport the "superfluous hands" in batches to their

respective home districts. One such measure, which was to affect about four hundred petroleum workers, called forth a mass protest in Batumi, which led to demonstrations, arrests, a massacre, and finally to a political trial in which the purely economic and partial affair suddenly became a political and revolutionary event. The reverberation of the wholly "fruitless" expiring and suppressed strike in Batumi was a series of revolutionary mass demonstrations of workers in Nizhny Novgorod, Saratov, and other towns, and therefore a mighty surge forward of the general wave of the revolutionary movement.

Already in November 1902 the first genuine revolutionary echo followed in the shape of a general strike at Rostov-on-Don. Disputes about the rates of pay in the workshops of the Vladicaucasus [Vladikavkaz] Railway gave the impetus to this movement. The management sought to reduce wages and therefore the Don committee of social democracy issued a proclamation with a summons to strike for the following demands: a nine-hour day, increase of wages, abolition of fines, dismissal of obnoxious engineers, etc. Entire railway workshops participated in the strike. Presently all other industries joined in and suddenly an unprecedented state of affairs prevailed in Rostov: all industrial work was at a standstill and every day monster meetings of fifteen thousand to twenty thousand were held in the open air, sometimes surrounded by a cordon of Cossacks, at which for the first time, social democratic popular speakers appeared publicly, inflammatory speeches on socialism and political freedom were delivered and received with immense enthusiasm, and revolutionary appeals were distributed by tens of thousands of copies. In the midst of rigid absolutist Russia, the proletariat of Rostov won for the first time the right of assembly and freedom of speech by storm. It goes without saying that there was a massacre here. The disputes over wages in the Vladicaucasus [Vladikavkaz] Railway workshops grew in a few days into a political general strike and a revolutionary street battle. As an echo to this there followed immediately a general strike at the station of Tichoretzkaya on the same railway. Here too a massacre took place and also a trial, and thus even Tichoretzkaya has taken its place in the indissoluble chain of the factors of the revolution.

The spring of 1903 gave the answer to the defeated strikes in Rostov and Tichoretzkaya; the whole of south Russia in May, June, and July was aflame. Baku, Tiflis, Batumi, Elisavetgrad [Kropyvnytskyi], Odessa, Kiev,

Nikolaev [Mykolaiv] and Ekaterinoslav [Dnipro] were in a general strike in the literal meaning of those words. But here again the movement did not arise on any preconceived plan from one another; it flowed together from individual points in each one from different causes and in a different form. The beginning was made by Baku where several partial wage struggles in individual factories and departments culminated in a general strike. In Tiflis the strike was begun by 2,000 commercial employees who had a working day from six o'clock in the morning to eleven at night. On the fourth of July they all left their shops and made a circuit of the town to demand from the proprietors of the shops that they close their premises. The victory was complete; the commercial employees won a working day from eight in the morning to eight in the evening, and they were immediately joined by all the factories, workshops, and offices, etc. The newspapers did not appear, and tramway traffic could not be carried on under military protection.

In Elisavetgrad [Kropyvnytskyi] on July 4, a strike began in all the factories with purely economic demands. These were mostly conceded, and the strike ended on the fourteenth. Two weeks later, however, it broke out again. The bakers this time gave the word and the bricklayers, the joiners, the dyers, the mill-workers, and finally all factory workers joined them.

In Odessa the movement began with a wage struggle in the course of which the "legal" workers' union, founded by government agents according to the program of the famous gendarme Zubatov,[7] was developed. Historical dialectics had again seized the occasion to play one of its malicious little pranks. The economic struggles of the earlier period (among them the great St. Petersburg general strike of 1896) had misled Russian social democracy into exaggerating the importance of so-called economics, and in this way the ground had been prepared among the workers for the demagogic activities of Zubatov. After a time, however, the great revolutionary stream turned round the little ship with the false flag, and compelled it to ride right at the head of the revolutionary proletarian flotilla. The Zuba-

[7] Sergei Vasilyevich Zubatov (1864-1917) was the czar's chief of secret police (the *Okhrana*) who after 1901 organized alternative worker associations to counter the impact of the social democratic unions. He committed suicide after the 1917 revolution.

tovian unions gave the signal for the great general strike in Odessa in the spring of 1904, as for the general strike in St. Petersburg in January 1905. The workers of Odessa, who were not to be deceived by the appearance of friendliness on the part of the government for the workers and of its sympathy with purely economic strikes, suddenly demanded proof by example, and compelled the Zubatovian "workers union" in a factory to declare a strike for very moderate demands. They were immediately thrown onto the streets, and when they demanded the protection of the authorities that was promised them by their leader, the gentleman vanished and left the workers in the wildest excitement.

The social democrats at once placed themselves at the head of affairs, and the strike movement extended to other factories. On the first day of July, 2,500 dockers struck work for an increase of wages from eighty kopecks to two rubles and the shortening of the workday by half an hour. On the sixteenth of July, the seamen joined the movement. On the thirteenth, the tramway staff began a strike. Then a meeting took place of all the strikers, seven thousand or eight thousand men; they formed a procession that went from factory to factory, growing like an avalanche, and presently a crowd of forty thousand to fifty thousand betook themselves to the docks in order to bring all work there to a standstill. A general strike soon reigned throughout the whole city.

In Kiev, a strike began in the railway workshops on July 21. Here also the immediate cause was miserable conditions of labor, and wage demands were presented. On the following day the foundry men followed the example. On July 23, an incident occurred that gave the signal for the general strike. During the night two delegates of the railwaymen were arrested. The strikers immediately demanded their release, and as this was not conceded, they decided not to allow trains to leave the town. At the station all the strikers with their wives and families sat down on the railway track—a sea of human beings. They were threatened with rifle salvos. The workers bared their breasts and cried, "Shoot!" A salvo was fired into the defenseless seated crowd, and thirty to forty corpses, among them women and children, remained on the ground. On this becoming known, the whole town of Kiev went on strike on the same day. The corpses of the murdered workers were raised on high by the crowd and carried round in a mass demonstration. Meetings, speeches, arrests, isolated street fights—

Kiev was in the midst of the revolution. The movement was soon at an end. But the printers had won a shortening of the working day by one hour and a wage increase of one ruble; in a yeast factory the eight-hour day was introduced; the railway workshops were closed by order of the ministry; other departments continued partial strikes for their demands.

In Nikolaev [Mykolaiv] the general strike broke out under the immediate influence of news from Odessa, Baku, Batumi, and Tiflis, in spite of the opposition of the social democratic committee, who wanted to postpone the outbreak of the movement until the time came when the military should have left the town for maneuvers. The masses refused to hold back; one factory made a beginning, the strikes went from one workshop to another, and the resistance of the military only poured oil on the fire. Mass processions with revolutionary songs were formed in which all workers, employees, tramway officials, men and women took part. The cessation of work was complete. In Ekaterinoslav [Dnipro] the bakers came out on strike on August 5; on the seventh the men in the railway workshops; and then all the other factories on August 8. Tramway traffic stopped and the newspapers did not appear.

Thus the colossal general strike in south Russia came into being in the summer of 1903. By many small channels of partial economic struggles and little "accidental" occurrences, it flowed rapidly to a raging sea and changed the entire south of the czarist empire for some weeks into a bizarre revolutionary workers' republic.

> Brotherly embraces, cries of delight and of enthusiasm, songs of freedom, merry laughter, humor and joy were seen and heard in the crowd of many thousands of persons which surged through the town from morning till evening. The mood was exalted; one could almost believe that a new, better life was beginning on the earth. A most solemn and at the same time an idyllic, moving spectacle.

So wrote at the time the correspondent of the liberal *Osvobozhdeniye* of Peter Struve.

The year 1904 brought with it war, and for a time, an interval of quiet in the mass strike movement. At first a troubled wave of "patriotic" demonstrations arranged by the police authorities spread over the coun-

try. The "liberal" bourgeois society was for the time being struck to the ground by the czarist official chauvinism. But soon the social democrats took possession of the arena; revolutionary workers' demonstrations were opposed to the demonstrations of the patriotic lumpenproletariat, which were organized under police patronage. At last the shameful defeats of the czarist army woke the liberal society from its lethargy. Then began the era of democratic congresses, banquets, speeches, addresses, and manifestos. Absolutism, temporarily suppressed through the disgrace of the war, gave full scope to these gentlemen, and by-and-by they saw everything in rosy colors. For six months bourgeois liberalism occupied the center of the stage, and the proletariat remained in the shadows. But after a long depression, absolutism again roused itself, the camarilla gathered all its strength, and by a single powerful movement of the Cossack's heel the whole liberal movement was driven into a corner. Banquets, speeches, and congresses were prohibited out of hand as "intolerable presumption," and liberalism suddenly found itself at the end of its tether.

But exactly at the point where liberalism was exhausted, the action of the proletariat began. In December 1904 the great general strike due to unemployment broke out in Baku; the working class was again on the field of battle. As speech was forbidden and rendered impossible, action began. In Baku for some weeks in the midst of the general strike, the social democrats ruled as absolute masters of the situation; and the peculiar events of December in the Caucasus would have caused an immense sensation if they had not been so quickly put in the shade by the rising tide of the revolution that they themselves had set into motion. The fantastic, confused news of the general strike in Baku had not reached all parts of the czarist empire, when in January 1905 the mass strike in St. Petersburg broke out.

Here also, as is well known, the immediate cause was trivial. Two men employed at the Putilov Works were discharged on account of their membership in the legal Zubatovian union. This measure called forth a solidarity strike on January 16 of the whole of the twelve thousand employees in this works. The social democrats seized the occasion of the strike to begin a lively agitation for the extension of the demands and set forth demands for the eight-hour day, the right of combination, freedom of speech and of the press, etc. The unrest among the Putilov workers

communicated itself quickly to the remainder of the proletariat, and in a few days 140,000 workers were on strike. Joint conferences and stormy discussions led to the working out of that proletarian charter of bourgeois freedom with the eight-hour day at its head with which, on January 22, 200,000 workers, led by Father Gapon,[8] marched to the czar's palace. The conflict of the two Putilov workers who had been subjected to disciplinary punishment, had changed within a week into the prologue of the most violent revolution in modern times.

The events that followed upon this are well known; the bloodbath in St. Petersburg called forth gigantic mass strikes and a general strike in the months of January and February in all the industrial centers and towns in Russia, Poland, Lithuania, the Baltic Provinces, the Caucasus, Siberia, from north to south and east to west. On closer inspection, however, it can be seen that the mass strike was appearing in other forms than those of the previous period. Everywhere at that time the social democratic organizations went before with appeals; everywhere revolutionary solidarity with the St. Petersburg proletariat was expressly stated as the cause and aim of the general strike; everywhere, at the same time, there were demonstrations, speeches, conflicts with the military.

But even here there was no predetermined plan, no organized action, because the appeals of the parties could scarcely keep pace with the spontaneous risings of the masses; the leaders scarcely had time to formulate the watchwords of the onrushing crowd of the proletariat. Furthermore, the earlier mass and general strikes had originated from individual coalescing wage struggles, which, in the general temper of the revolutionary situation and under the influence of the social democratic agitation, rapidly became political demonstrations; the economic factor and the scattered condition of trade unionism were the starting point—all-embracing class action and political direction the result. The movement was now reversed.

The general strikes of January and February broke out as unified revolutionary actions to begin with under the direction of the social democrats, but this action soon fell into an unending series of local, partial,

[8] Georgy Apollonovich Gapon (1870-1906) was the orthodox priest and czarist police informer who led the workers' protest to the czar's palace in St. Petersburg, marking the start of the 1905 Revolution. Czarist troops attacked the crowd in what came to be known as the "Bloody Sunday" massacre.

economic strikes in separate districts, towns, departments, and factories. The entire spring of 1905 and into the middle of the summer there fermented throughout the whole of the immense empire an uninterrupted economic strike of almost the entire proletariat against capital—a struggle that embraced, on the one hand, all the petit bourgeois and liberal professions, commercial employees, technicians, actors and members of artistic professions, and on the other hand, penetrated to the domestic servants, the minor police officials, and even to the stratum of the lumpenproletariat, and simultaneously surged from the towns to the country districts and even knocked at the iron gates of the military barracks.

This is a gigantic, many-colored picture of a general arrangement of labor and capital that reflects all the complexity of social organization and of the political consciousness of every section and of every district; and the whole long scale runs from the regular trade-union struggle of a tried and tested troop of the proletariat drawn from large-scale industry to the formless protest of a handful of rural proletarians, to the first slight stirrings of an agitated military garrison; from the well-educated and elegant revolt in cuffs and white collars in the counting house of a bank, to the shy-bold murmurings of a clumsy meeting of dissatisfied policemen in a smoke-grimed dark and dirty guardroom.

According to the theory of the lovers of "orderly and well-disciplined" struggles, according to plan and scheme, according to those especially who always ought to know better from afar "how it should have been done," the decay of the great political general strike of January 1905 into a number of economic struggles was probably "a great mistake," which crippled that action and changed it into a "straw fire." But social democracy in Russia, which had taken part in the revolution but had not "made" it, and which had even to learn its law from its course itself, was at the first glance put out of countenance for a time by the apparently fruitless ebb of the storm-flood of the general strike. History, however, which had made that "great mistake," thereby accomplished, heedless of the reasoning of its officious schoolmaster, a gigantic work for the revolution that was as inevitable as it was, in its consequences, incalculable.

The sudden general rising of the proletariat in January under the powerful impetus of the St. Petersburg events was outwardly a political act of the revolutionary declaration of war on absolutism. But this first general

direct action reacted inwardly all the more powerfully as it for the first time awoke class feeling and class consciousness in millions upon millions as if by an electric shock. And this awakening of class feeling expressed itself forthwith in the circumstances that the proletarian mass, counted by millions, quite suddenly and sharply came to realize how intolerable was the social and economic existence that they had patiently endured for decades in the chains of capitalism. Thereupon, there began a spontaneous general shaking of and tugging at these chains. All the innumerable sufferings of the modern proletariat reminded them of the old bleeding wounds. Here was the eight-hour day fought for, there, piecework was resisted, here were brutal foremen "driven off" in a sack on a handcar. At another place infamous systems of fines were fought against, everywhere better wages were striven for, and here and there the abolition of homework. Backward degraded occupations in large towns, small provincial towns, which had hitherto dreamed in an idyllic sleep, the village with its legacy from feudalism—all these, suddenly awakened by the January lightning, bethought themselves of their rights and now sought feverishly to make up for their previous neglect.

The economic struggle was not here really a decay, a dissipation of action, but merely a change of front, a sudden and natural alteration of the first general engagement with absolutism, in a general reckoning with capital, which in keeping with its character, assumed the form of individual, scattered wage struggles. Political class action was not broken in January by the decay of the general strike into economic strikes—rather the reverse: after the possible content of political action in the given situation and at the given stage by the revolution was exhausted, it broke, or rather changed, into economic action.

In point of fact, what more could the general strike in January have achieved? Only complete thoughtlessness could expect that absolutism could be destroyed at one blow by a single "long-drawn" general strike after the anarchist plan. Absolutism in Russia must be overthrown by the proletariat. But in order to be able to overthrow it, the proletariat requires a high degree of political education, of class consciousness and organization. All these conditions cannot be fulfilled by pamphlets and leaflets, but only by the living political school, by the fight and in the fight, in the continuous course of the revolution. Further, absolutism cannot be overthrown at

any desired moment in which only adequate "exertion" and "endurance" is necessary. The fall of absolutism is merely the outer expression of the inner social and class development of Russian society.

Before absolutism can, and so that it may be overthrown, the bourgeois Russia in its interior, in its modern class divisions, must be formed. That requires the drawing together of the various social layers and interests, besides the education of the proletarian revolutionary parties, and not less of the liberal, radical, petit bourgeois, conservative, and reactionary parties; it requires self-consciousness, self-knowledge and the class consciousness not merely of the layers of the people, but also of the layers of the bourgeoisie. But this also can be achieved and come to fruition in no way but in the struggle, in the process of revolution itself, through the actual school of experience, in collision with the proletariat as well as with one another, in incessant mutual friction. This class division and class maturity of bourgeois society, as well as its action in the struggle against absolutism, is on the one hand hampered and made difficult by the peculiar leading role of the proletariat and, on the other hand, is spurred on and accelerated. The various undercurrents of the social process of the revolution cross one another, check one another, and increase the internal contradictions of the revolution, but in the end accelerate and thereby render still more violent its eruptions.

This apparently simple and purely mechanical problem may therefore be stated thus; the overthrow of absolutism is a long, continuous social process, and its solution demands a complete undermining of the soil of society; the uppermost part be placed lowest and the lowermost part highest, the apparent "order" must be changed to a chaos, and the apparently "anarchistic" chaos must be changed into a new order. Now in this process of the social transformation of the old Russia, not only the January lightning of the first general strike, but also the spring and summer thunderstorms that followed it, played an indispensable part. The embittered general relations of wage labor and capital contributed in equal measure to the drawing together of the various layers of the people and those of the bourgeoisie, to the class consciousness of the revolutionary proletariat and to that of the liberal and conservative bourgeoisie. And just as the urban wage struggle contributed to the formation of a strong monarchist industrial party in Moscow, so the conflagration of the violent rural rising

in Livonia led to the rapid liquidation of the famous aristocratic-agrarian *zemstvo*[9] liberalism.

But at the same time, the period of the economic struggles of the spring and summer of 1905 made it possible for the urban proletariat, by means of active social democratic agitation and direction, to assimilate later all the lessons of the January prologue and to grasp clearly all the further tasks of the revolution. There was connected with this too, another circumstance of an enduring social character: *a general raising of the standard of life of the proletariat*—economic, social, and intellectual.

The January strikes of 1905 ended victoriously almost throughout. As proof of this, some data from the enormous, and for the most part still inaccessible, mass of material may be cited here relating to a few of the most important strikes carried through in Warsaw alone by the social democrats of Poland and Lithuania. In the great factories of the metal industry of Warsaw: Lilpop, Ltd.; Ran and Lowenstein; Rudzki and Co.; Borman, Schwede, and Co.; Handtke, Gerlach, and Pulst; Geisler Bros.; Eberherd, Wolski, and Co.; Konrad and Yarnuszkiewicz, Ltd.; Weber and Daehu; Ewizdzinski and Co.; Wolonski Wire Works; Gostynski and Co., Ltd.; Brun and Son; Fraget; Norblin; Werner; Buch; Kenneberg Bros.; Labor; Dittunar Lamp Factory; Serkowski; Weszk—twenty-two factories in all—the workers won after a strike of four to five weeks (starting January 25-26) a nine-hour day, a 25 percent increase of wages, and obtained various smaller concessions. In the large workshops of the timber industry of Warsaw, namely Karmanski, Damieki, Gromel, Szerbinskik, Twemerowski, Horn, Devensee, Tworkowski, Daab, and Martens—twelve workshops in all—the strikes had won by the twenty-third of February the nine-hour day; they were not satisfied with this but insisted upon the eight-hour day, which they also won, together with an increase in wages, after a further strike of a week.

The entire bricklaying industry began a strike on February 27 and demanded, in conformity with the watchword of social democracy, the eight-hour day; they won the ten-hour day on March 11 together with an increase of wages for all categories, regular weekly payment of wages,

[9] Zemstvos were rural political assemblies in czarist Russia formed in 1864, dominated by landowners.

etc. The painters, the cartwrights, the saddlers, and the smiths all won the eight-hour day without decrease of wages.

The telephone workshops struck for ten days and won the eight-hour day and an increase of wages of 10 percent to 15 percent. The large linen-weaving establishment of Hielle and Dietrich (ten thousand workers) after a strike lasting nine weeks, obtained a decrease of the working day by one hour and a wage increase of 5 percent to 10 percent. And similar results in endless variation were to be seen in the older branches of industry in Warsaw, Lodz, and Sosnovitz.

In Russia proper the eight-hour day was won in December 1904 by a few categories of oil workers in Baku; in May 1905 by the sugar workers of the Kiev district; in January 1905 all the printing works in Samara (where at the same time an increase of piecework rates was obtained and fines were abolished); in February in the factory in which medical instruments for the army are manufactured, in a furniture factory, and in the cartridge factory in St. Petersburg. Further, the eight-hour day was introduced in the mines at Vladivostok, in March in the government mechanical workshops dealing with government stock, and in May among the employees of the Tiflis electric town railway. In the same month a working day of eight and a half hours was introduced in the large cotton-weaving factory of Marosov (and at the same time the abolition of night work and a wage increase of 8 percent were won); in June an eight-hour day in a few oil works in St. Petersburg and Moscow; in July a working day of eight and a half hours among the smiths at the St. Petersburg docks; and in November in all the private printing establishments of the town of Orel (and at the same time an increase of time rates of 20 percent and piecework rates of 100 percent, as well as the setting up of a conciliation board on which workers and employer were equally represented.)

The nine-hour day in all the railway workshops (in February), in many government, military, and naval workshops, in most of the factories of the town of Berdiansk, in all the printing works of the towns of Poltava and Minsk; nine and a half hours in the shipyards, mechanical workshops, and foundries in the town of Nikolaev [Mykolaiv]; in June, after a general strike of waiters in Warsaw, in many restaurants and cafes (and at the same time a wage increase of 20 percent to 40 percent, with a two-week holiday in the year).

The ten-hour day in almost all the factories of the towns of Lodz, Sosnovitz, Riga, Kovno, Oval, Dorfat, Minsk, Kharkov, in the bakeries of Odessa, among the mechanics in Kishinev, at a few smelting works in St. Petersburg, in the match factories of Kovno (with an increase of wages of 10 percent), in all the government marine workshops, and among all the dockers.

The wage increases were in general smaller than the shortening of hours but always more significant: in Warsaw in the middle of March 1905 a general increase of wages of 15 percent was fixed by the municipal factories department; in the center of the textile industry, Ivanovo Vosnesensk, the wage increase amounted to 7 percent to 15 percent, in Kovno the increase affected 73 percent of the workers. A fixed minimum wage was introduced in some of the bakeries in Odessa, in the Neva shipbuilding yards in St. Petersburg, etc.

It goes without saying that these concessions were withdrawn again, now here and now there. This however was only the cause of renewed strife and led to still more bitter struggles for revenge, and thus the strike period of the spring of 1905 has of itself become the prologue to an endless series of ever-spreading and interlacing economic struggles that have lasted to the present day. In the period of the outward stagnation of the revolution, when the telegraph carried no sensational news from the Russian theater of war to the outside world, and when the West European laid aside his newspaper in disappointment with the remark that there "was nothing happening" in Russia, the great underground work of the revolution was in reality being carried on without cessation, day by day and hour by hour, in the very heart of the empire. The incessant intensive economic struggle effected, by rapid and abbreviated methods, the transition of capitalism from the stage of primitive accumulation, of patriarchal, unmethodical methods of working, to a highly modern, civilized one.

At the present time the actual working day in Russian industry leaves behind not only the Russian factory legislation (that is, the legal working day of eleven hours) but even the actual conditions of Germany. In most departments of large-scale industry in Russia the ten-hour day prevails, which in Germany is declared in social legislation to be an unattainable goal. And what is more, that longed-for "industrial constitutionalism," for which there is so much enthusiasm in Germany, and for the sake of which

the advocates of opportunist tactics would keep every keen wind from the stagnant waters of their all-suffering parliamentarism, has already been born, together with political "constitutionalism," in the midst of the revolutionary storm, from the revolution itself! In actual fact it is not merely a general raising of the standard of life, or the cultural level of the working class that has taken place. The material standard of life as a permanent stage of well-being has no place in the revolution. Full of contradictions and contrasts it brings simultaneously surprising economic victories and the most brutal acts of revenge on the part of the capitalists; today the eight-hour day, and tomorrow wholesale lockouts and actual starvation for millions.

The most precious, because lasting, thing in this rapid ebb and flow of the wave is its mental sediment: the intellectual, cultural growth of the proletariat, which proceeds by fits and starts, and which offers an inviolable guarantee of their further irresistible progress in the economic as in the political struggle. And not only that. Even the relations of the worker to the employer are turned round; since the January general strike and the strikes of 1905 that followed upon it, the principle of the capitalist "mastery of the house" is de facto abolished. In the larger factories of all important industrial centers the establishment of workers' committees has, as if by itself, taken place, with which alone the employer negotiates and which decide all disputes.

And finally another thing, the apparently "chaotic" strikes and the "disorganized" revolutionary action after the January general strike are becoming the starting point of a feverish *work of organization*. Dame History, from afar, smilingly hoaxes the bureaucratic lay figures who keep grim watch at the gate over the fate of the German trade unions. The organizations, which, as the indispensable hypothesis for an eventual German mass strike, should be fortified like an impregnable citadel—these organizations are in Russia, on contrary, already born from the mass strike. And while the guardians of the German trade unions for the most part fear that the organizations will fall in pieces in a revolutionary whirlwind like rare porcelain, the Russian Revolution shows us the exactly opposite picture; from the whirlwind and the storm, out of the fire and glow of the mass strike and the street fighting rise again, like Venus from the foam, fresh, young, powerful, buoyant trade unions.

Here again a little example, which, however, is typical of the whole empire. At the second conference of the Russian trade unions, which took place at the end of February 1906 in St. Petersburg, the representative of the Petersburg trade unions, in his report on the development of trade-union organizations, said of the czarist capital:

> January 22, 1905, which washed away the Gapon union, was a turning point. The workers in large numbers have learned by experience to appreciate and understand the importance of organization, and that only they themselves can create these organizations. The first trade union—that of the printers—originated in direct connection with the January movement. The commission appointed to work out the tariffs framed the statutes, and on July 19 the union began its existence. Just about this time the union of office-workers and bookkeepers was called into existence.

In addition to those organizations, which extend almost openly, there arose from January to October 1905, semi-legal and illegal trade unions. To the former belonged, for example, the union of chemists' assistants and commercial employees. Among the illegal unions special attention must be drawn to the watchmakers' union, whose first secret session was held on April 24. All attempts to convene a general open meeting were shattered on the obstinate resistance of the police and the employers in the form of the Chamber of Commerce. This mischance has not prevented the existence of the union. It held secret meetings of members on June 9 and August 14, apart from the sessions of the executive of the union. The tailors union was founded in 1905 at a meeting in a wood at which seventy tailors were present. After the question of forming the union was discussed, a commission was appointed which was entrusted with the task of working out the statutes. All attempts of the commission to obtain a legal existence for the union were unsuccessful. Its activities were confined to agitation and the enrolling of new members in the individual workshops. A similar fate was in store for the shoemakers' union. In July, a secret night meeting was convened in a wood near the city. Over 100 shoemakers attended; a report was read on the importance of trade unionism, on its history in Western Europe, and its tasks in Russia. It was then decided to

form a trade union; a commission of twelve was appointed to work out the statutes and call a general meeting of shoemakers. The statutes were drawn up, but in the meantime it had not been found possible to print them nor had the general meeting been convened.

These were the first difficult beginnings. Then came the October days, the second general strike, the czar's manifesto of October 30, and the brief "constitution period." The workers threw themselves with fiery zeal into the waves of political freedom in order to use it forthwith for the purpose of the work of organization. Besides daily political meetings, debates, and the formation of clubs, the development of trade unionism was immediately taken in hand. In October and November *forty* new trade unions appeared in St. Petersburg. Presently a "central bureau," that is, a trade-union council, was established, various trade-union papers appeared, and since November a central organ has also been published, the *Trade Union*.

What was reported above concerning Petersburg was also true on the whole of Moscow and Odessa, Kiev and Nikolaev [Mykolaiv], Saratov and Voronezh, Samara and Nizhny Novgorod, and all the larger towns of Russia and, to a still higher degree, of Poland. The trade unions of different towns seek contact with one another and conferences are held. The end of the "constitution period" and the return to reaction in December 1905 put a stop for the time being to the open widespread activity of the trade unions, but did not, however, altogether extinguish them. They operate as organizations in secret and occasionally carry on quite open wage struggles. A peculiar mixture of the legal and illegal condition of trade-union life is being built up, corresponding to the highly contradictory revolutionary situation.

But in the midst of the struggle the work of organization is being more widely extended, in a thoroughgoing, not to say pedantic fashion. The trade unions of the social democracy of Poland and Lithuania, for example, which at the last congress (in July 1906) were represented by five delegates from a membership of 10,000, are furnished with the usual statutes, printed membership cards, adhesive stamps, etc. And the same bakers and shoemakers, engineers, and printers of Warsaw and Lodz, who in June 1905 stood on the barricades and in December only awaited the word from Petersburg to begin street fighting, find time and are eager, between

one mass strike and another, between prison and lockout, and under the conditions of a siege, to go into their trade-union statutes and discuss with them earnestly. These barricade fighters of yesterday and tomorrow have indeed more than once at meetings severely reprimanded their leaders and threatened them with withdrawal from the party because the unlucky trade-union membership cards could not be printed quickly enough—in secret, printing works under incessant police persecution. This zeal and this earnestness continue to this day. For example, in the first two weeks of July 1906, fifteen new trade unions appeared in Ekaterinoslav [Dnipro], six in Kostroma, several in Kiev, Poltava, Smolensk, Cherkasy, Proskurov, down to the most insignificant provincial towns.

In the session of the Moscow trade-union council of June 4 this year, after the acceptance of the reports of individual trade-union delegates, it was decided

> that the trade unions should discipline their members and restrain from street rioting because the time is not considered opportune for the mass strike. In the face of possible provocation on the part of the government, care should be taken that the masses do not stream out in the streets.

Finally, the council decided that if at any time one trade union began a strike, the others should hold back from any wages movement. Most of the economic struggles are now directed by the trade unions.

Thus the great economic struggle that proceeded from the January general strike, and which has not ceased to the present day, has formed a broad background of the revolution from which, in ceaseless reciprocal action with the political agitation and the external events of the revolution, there ever arise here and there now isolated explosions, and now great actions of the proletariat. Thus there flame up against this background the following events, one after the other; at the May Day demonstration there was an unprecedented, absolute general strike in Warsaw, which ended in a bloody encounter between the defenseless crowd and the soldiers. At Lodz in June a mass outing, which was scattered by the soldiers, led to a demonstration of one hundred thousand workers at the funeral of some of the victims of the brutal soldiery and to a renewed encounter with the military, and finally, on June 23, 24, and 25, passed into the first barricade

fight in the czarist empire. Similarly in June the first great revolt of the sailors of the Black Sea Fleet exploded in the harbor at Odessa from a trifling incident on board the armored vessel *Potemkin*, which reacted immediately on Odessa and Nikolaev [Mykolaiv] in the form of a violent mass strike. As a further echo, followed the mass strike and the sailors' revolts in Kronstadt, Libau, and Vladivostok.

In the month of October the grandiose experiment of St. Petersburg was made with the introduction of the eight-hour day. The general council of workers' delegates decided to achieve the eight-hour day in a revolutionary manner. That means that on the appointed day all the workers of Petersburg should inform their employers that they are not willing to work more than eight hours a day, and should leave their places of work at the end of eight hours. The idea was the occasion of lively agitation, was accepted by the proletariat with enthusiasm and carried out, but very great sacrifices were not thereby avoided. Thus, for example, the eight-hour day meant an enormous fall in wages for the textile workers who had hitherto worked eleven hours and that on a system of piecework. This, however, they willingly accepted. *Within a week the eight-hour day prevailed in every factory and workshop in Petersburg*, and the joy of the workers knew no bounds. Soon, however, the employers, stupefied at first, prepared their defenses; everywhere they threatened to close their factories. Some of the workers consented to negotiate and obtained here a working day of ten hours and there one of nine hours. The elite of the Petersburg proletariat, however—the workers in the government engineering establishments—remained unshaken, and a lockout ensued, which threw forty-five thousand to fifty thousand men on the streets for a month. At the settlement the eight-hour day movement was carried into the general strike of December, which the great lockout had hampered to a great extent.

Meanwhile, however, the second tremendous general strike throughout the whole empire follows in October as a reply to the project of the Bulygin Duma[10]—the strike to which the railwaymen gave the summons. This second great action of the proletariat already bears a character essen-

[10] The Bulygin Duma was the first Russian parliament, named after the czar's minister for the interior, Alexander Bulygin, set up in response to the 1905 Revolution. It never in fact convened, and gave way to a more democratic Duma as the czar was forced to make further concessions to the workers.

tially different from that of the first one in January. The element of political consciousness plays a much bigger role. Here also, to be sure, the immediate occasion for the outbreak of the mass strike was a subordinate and apparently accidental thing: the conflict of railwaymen with the management over the pension fund. But the general rising of the industrial proletariat that followed upon it was conducted in accordance with clear political ideas. The prologue of the January strike was a procession to the czar to ask for political freedom: the watchword of the October strike ran away with the constitutional comedy of czarism!

And thanks to immediate success of the general strike, to the czar's manifesto of October 30, the movement does not flow back on itself as in January, but rushes over outwardly in the eager activity of newly acquired political freedom. Demonstrations, meetings, a young press, public discussions, and bloody massacres as the end of the story, and thereupon new mass strikes and demonstrations—such is the stormy picture of the November and December days. In November, at the insistence of the social democrats in Petersburg the first demonstrative mass strike is arranged as a protest demonstration against the bloody deeds and the proclamation a state of siege in Poland and Livonia.

The fermentation after the brief constitutional and the gruesome awakening finally leads in December to the outbreak of the third general mass strike throughout the empire. This time its course and its outcome are altogether different from those in the two earlier cases. Political action does not change into economic action as in January, but it no longer achieves a rapid victory as in October. The attempts of the czarist camarilla with real political freedom are no longer made, and revolutionary action therewith, for the first time, and along its whole length, knocked against the strong wall of the physical violence of absolutism. By the logical internal development of progressive experience the mass strike this time changes into an open insurrection, to armed barricades and street fighting in Moscow. The December days in Moscow close the first eventful year of the revolution as the point in the ascending line of political action and of the mass strike movement.

The Moscow events show a typical picture of the logical development and at the same time of the future of the revolutionary movement on the whole: their inevitable close in a general, open insurrection, which

again on its part cannot come in any other way than through the school of a series of preparatory partial insurrections, which therefore meantime end in partial outward "defeats" and, considered individually, may appear to be "premature."

The year 1906 brings elections to the Duma and the Duma incidents. The proletariat, from a strong revolutionary instinct and clear knowledge of the situation, boycotts the whole czarist constitutional farce, and liberalism again occupies center stage for a few months. The situation of 1904 appears to have come again, a period of speeches instead of acts, and the proletariat for a time walk in shadow in order to devote themselves more diligently to the trade-union struggle and the work of the organization. The mass strikes are no longer spoken of, while the clattering rockets of liberal rhetoric are fired off day after day. At last, the iron curtain is torn down, the actors are dispersed, and nothing remains of the liberal rockets but smoke and vapor. An attempt of the central committee of the Russian social democracy to call forth a mass strike, as a demonstration for the Duma and the reopening of the period of liberal speechmaking, falls absolutely flat. The role of the political mass strike alone is exhausted, but, at the same time, the transition of the mass strike into a general popular rising is not yet accomplished. The liberal episode has passed, the proletarian episode has not yet begun. The stage remains empty for the time being.

IV.
The Interaction of the Political and the Economic Struggle

We have attempted in the foregoing to sketch the history of the mass strike in Russia in a few strokes. Even a fleeting glance at this history shows us a picture that in no way resembles the one usually formed by discussions in Germany on the mass strike. Instead of the rigid and hollow scheme of an arid political action carried out by the decision of the highest committees and furnished with a plan and panorama, we see a bit of pulsating like of flesh and blood, which cannot be cut out of the large frame of the revolution but is connected with all parts of the revolution by a thousand veins.

The mass strike, as the Russian Revolution shows us, is such a changeable phenomenon that it reflects all phases of the political and economic struggle, all stages and factors of the revolution. Its adaptability, its efficiency, the factors of its origin are constantly changing. It suddenly opens new and wide perspectives on the revolution when it appears to have already arrived in a narrow pass and where it is impossible for anyone to reckon upon it with any degree of certainty. It flows now like a broad billow over the whole kingdom, and now divides into a gigantic network of narrow streams; now it bubbles forth from under the ground like a fresh spring and now is completely lost under the earth. Political and economic strikes, mass strikes and partial strikes, demonstrative strikes and fighting strikes, general strikes of individual branches of industry and general strikes in individual towns, peaceful wage struggles and street massacres, barricade fighting—all these run through one another, run side-by-side, cross one another, flow in and over one another—it is a ceaselessly moving, changing sea of phenomena. And the law of motion of these phenomena is clear: it does not lie in the mass strike itself nor in its technical details, but in the political and social proportions of the forces of the revolution.

The mass strike is merely the form of the revolutionary struggle and every disarrangement of the relations of the contending powers, in party development and in class division, in the position of counterrevolution—all this immediately influences the action of the strike in a thousand invisible and scarcely controllable ways. But strike action itself does not cease for a single moment. It merely alters its forms, its dimensions, its effect. It is the living pulse of the revolution and at the same time its most powerful driving wheel. In a word, the mass strike, as shown to us in the Russian Revolution, is not a crafty method discovered by subtle reasoning for the

purpose of making the proletarian struggle more effective, *but the method of motion of the proletarian mass*, the phenomenal form of the proletarian struggle in the revolution.

Some general aspects may now be examined that may assist us in forming a correct estimate of the problem of the mass strike:

1. It is absurd to think of the mass strike as one act, one isolated action. The mass strike is rather the indication, the rallying idea, of a whole period of the class struggle lasting for years, perhaps for decades. Of the innumerable and highly varied mass strikes that have taken place in Russia during the last four years, the scheme of the mass strike was a purely political movement, begun and ended after a cut-and- dried plan, a short single act of one variety only and at that a subordinate variety—a pure demonstration strike. In the whole course of the five-year period we see in Russia only a few demonstration strikes, which, be it noted, were generally confined to single towns. Thus the annual May Day general strike in Warsaw and Lodz in Russia proper on the first of May has not yet been celebrated to any appreciable extent by abstention from work; the mass strike in Warsaw on September 11, 1905, as a memorial service in honor of the executed Marcin Kasprzak;[11] that of November 1905 in Petersburg as a protest demonstration against the declaration of a state of siege in Poland and Livonia; that of January 22, 1906, in Warsaw, Lodz, Czentochon, and in Dombrowa [Dąbrowa] coal basin, as well as, in part, those in a few Russian towns as anniversary celebrations of the Petersburg bloodbath; in addition, in July 1906 a general strike in Tiflis as demonstration of sympathy with soldiers sentenced by court-martial on account of the military revolt; and finally from the same cause, in September 1 906, during the deliberations of the court-martial in Reval. All the above great and partial mass strikes and general strikes were not demonstration strikes but fighting strikes, and as such they originated for the most part spontaneously, in every case from specific local accidental causes, without plan or design, and grew with elemental power into great movements—and then they did

[11] Marcin Kasprzak (1860-1905) was a leader of the polish Social Revolutionary Party "Proletariat" (also called Second Proletariat or Small Proletariat) who worked with Luxemburg and helped her to escape Poland in 1889. The government executed him for his involvement in the 1905 Revolution.

not begin an "orderly retreat," but turned now into economic struggles, now into street fighting, and now collapsed into themselves.

In this general picture the purely political demonstration strike plays quite a subordinate role—isolated small points in the midst of a mighty expanse. Thereby, temporarily considered, the following characteristic discloses itself: the demonstration strikes, which, in contradistinction to the fighting strikes, exhibit the greatest mass of party discipline, conscious direction, and political thought, and therefore must appear as the highest and most mature form of the mass strike—play in reality the greatest part in the *beginnings* of the movement. Thus, for example, the absolute cessation of work on May 1, 1905, in Warsaw, as the first instance of a decision of the social democrats carried throughout in such an astonishing fashion, was an experience of great importance for the proletarian movement in Poland. In the same way the sympathetic strike of the same year in Petersburg made a great impression as the first experiment of conscious systematic mass action in Russia. Similarly the "trial mass strike" of the Hamburg comrades[12] on January 17, 1906, will play a prominent part in the history of the future German mass strike as the first vigorous attempt with the much disputed weapon and also a very successful and convincingly striking test of the fighting temper and the lust for battle of the Hamburg working class. And just as surely will the period of the mass strike in Germany, when it has once begun in real earnest, lead of itself to a real, general cessation of work on May first. The May Day festival may naturally be raised to a position of honor as the first great demonstration under the aegis of the mass struggle. In this sense the "lame horse,"[13] as the May Day festival was termed at the trade-union congress at Cologne, still has a great future before it and an important part to play in the proletarian class struggle in Germany.

[12] Hamburg'S SPD was among the most radical in Germany. Hamburg workers held a successful "trial mass strike" on January 17, 1906.

[13] Unlike in Poland, May Day did not play a major role in Germany's socialist traditions. The first attempt at a workers' celebration of May Day in 1890 was marred by fears from SPD leaders of a return to illegality. The trade unions explicitly opposed May Day worker celebrations after 1906.

But with the development of the earnest revolutionary struggle, the importance of such demonstrations diminishes rapidly. It is precisely those factors that objectively facilitate the realization of the demonstration strike after a preconceived plan and at the party's word of command—namely, the growth of political consciousness and the training of the proletariat—make this kind of mass strike impossible; today the proletariat in Russia, the most capable vanguard of the masses, does not want to know about mass strikes; the workers are no longer in a mood for jesting and will now think only of a serious struggle with all its consequences. And when on the one hand, in the first great mass strike in January 1905, the demonstrative element, not indeed in an intentional, but more in an instinctive, spontaneous form, still played a great part, on the other hand, the attempt of the central committee of the Russian social democrats to call a mass strike in August as a demonstration for the dissolved Duma was shattered by, among other things, the positive disinclination of the educated proletariat to engage in weak half-actions and mere demonstrations.

2. When, however, we have in view the less important strike of the demonstrative kind, instead of the fighting strike as it represents in Russia today the actual vehicle of proletarian action, we see still more clearly that it is impossible to separate the economic factors from one another. Here also the reality deviates from the theoretical scheme, and the pedantic representation in which the pure political mass strike is logically derived from the trade-union general strike as the ripest and highest stage, but at the same time is kept distinct from it, is shown to be absolutely false. This is expressed not merely in the fact that the mass strikes, from that first great wage struggle of the Petersburg textile workers in 1896-97 to the last great mass strike in December 1905, passed imperceptibly from the economic field to the political, so that it is almost impossible to draw a dividing line between them.

Again, every one of the great mass strikes repeats, so to speak, on a small scale, the entire history of the Russian mass strike, and begins with a pure economic, or at all events, a partial trade-union conflict, and runs through all the stages to the political demonstration. The great thunderstorm of mass strikes in south Russia in 1902 and 1903 originated, as we have seen, in Baku from a conflict arising from the disciplinary punishment of the unemployed, in Rostov from disputes about wages in the

railway workshops, in Tiflis from a struggle of the commercial employees for reduction of working hours, in Odessa from a wage dispute in a single small factory. The January mass strike of 1905 developed from an internal conflict in the Putilov Works, the October strike from the struggle of the railway workers for a pension fund, and finally the December strike from the struggle of the postal and telegraph employees for the right of combination. The progress of the movement on the whole is not expressed in the circumstances that the economic initial stage is omitted, but much more in the rapidity with which all the stages to the political demonstration are run through and in the extremity of the point to which the strike moves forward.

But the movement on the whole does not proceed from the economic to the political struggle, nor even the reverse. Every great political mass action, after it has attained its political highest point, breaks up into a mass of economic strikes. And that applies not only to each of the great mass strikes, but also to the revolution as a whole. With the spreading, clarifying, and involution of the political struggle, the economic struggle not only does not recede, but extends, organizes, and becomes involved in equal measure. Between the two there is the most complete reciprocal action.

Every new onset and every fresh victory of the political struggle is transformed into a powerful impetus for the economic struggle, extending at the same time its external possibilities and intensifying the inner urge of the workers to better their position and their desire to struggle. After every foaming wave of political action a fructifying deposit remains behind from which a thousand stalks of economic struggle shoot forth. And conversely, the workers' condition of ceaseless economic struggle with the capitalists keeps their fighting energy alive in every political interval; it forms, so to speak, the permanent fresh reservoir of the strength of the proletarian classes, from which the political fight ever renews its strength, and at the same time leads the indefatigable economic sappers of the proletariat at all times, now here and now there, to isolated sharp conflicts, out of which political conflicts on a large scale unexpectedly explode.

In a word: the economic struggle is the transmitter from one political center to another; the political struggle is the periodic fertilization of the soil for the economic struggle. Cause and effect here continually

change places; and thus the economic and the political factor in the period of the mass strike, now widely removed, completely separated, or even mutually exclusive, as the theoretical plan would have them, merely form the two interlacing sides of the proletarian class struggle in Russia. And *their unity* is precisely the mass strike. If the sophisticated theory proposes to make a clever logical dissection of the mass strike for the purpose of getting at the "purely political mass strike," it will by this dissection, as with any other, not perceive the phenomenon in its living essence, but will kill it altogether.

3. Finally, the events in Russia show us that the mass strike is inseparable from the revolution. The history of the Russian mass strikes is the history of the Russian Revolution. When, to be sure, the representatives of our German opportunism hear of "revolution," they immediately think of bloodshed, street fighting, or powder and shot, and the logical conclusion thereof is: the mass strike leads inevitably to the revolution, therefore we dare not have it. In actual fact we see in Russia that almost every mass strike in the long run leads to an encounter with the armed guardians of czarist order, and therein the so-called political strikes exactly resemble the larger economic struggle. The revolution, however, is something other and something more than bloodshed. In contradiction to the police interpretation, which views the revolution exclusively from the standpoint of street disturbances and rioting, that is, from the standpoint of "disorder," the interpretation of scientific socialism sees in the revolution above all a thoroughgoing internal reversal of social class relations. And from this standpoint an altogether different connection exists between revolution and mass strike in Russia from that contained in the commonplace conception that the mass strike generally ends in bloodshed.

We have seen above the inner mechanism of the Russian mass strike, which depends upon the ceaseless reciprocal action of the political and economic struggles. But this reciprocal action is conditioned during the revolutionary period. Only in the sultry air of the period of revolution can any partial little conflict between labor and capital grow into a general explosion. In Germany the most violent, most brutal collisions between the workers and employers take place every year and every day without the struggle overleaping the bounds of the individual departments or individual towns concerned, or even those of the individual factories. Punishment

of organized workers in Petersburg and unemployment as in Baku, wage struggles as in Odessa, struggles for the right of combination as in Moscow are the order of the day in Germany. No single one of these cases, however, changes suddenly into a common class action. And when they grow into isolated mass strikes, which have without question a political coloring, they do not bring about a general storm. The general strike of Dutch railwaymen, which died away in spite of the warmest sympathy, in the midst of the complete impassivity of the proletariat of the country, affords a striking proof of this.

And conversely, only in the period of revolution, when the social foundations and the walls of class society are shaken and subjected to a constant process of disarrangement, can any political class action of the proletariat arouse from their passive condition in a few hours whole sections of the working class who have hitherto remained unaffected, and this is immediately and naturally expressed in a stormy economic struggle. The worker, suddenly aroused to activity by the electric shock of political action, immediately seizes the weapon lying nearest his hand for the fight against his condition of economic slavery: the stormy gesture of the political struggle causes him to feel with unexpected intensity the weight and the pressure of his economic chains. And while, for example, the most violent political struggle in Germany—the electoral struggle or the parliamentary struggle over the customs tariff—exercised a scarcely perceptible direct influence upon the course and the intensity of the wage struggles being conducted at the same time in Germany, every political action of the proletariat in Russia immediately expresses itself in the extension of the area and the deepening of the intensity of the economic struggle.

The revolution thus first creates the social conditions in which this sudden change of the economic struggle into the political and of the political struggle into the economic is possible, a change that finds its expression in the mass strike. And if the vulgar scheme sees the connection between mass strike and revolution only in bloody street encounters with which the mass conclude, a somewhat deeper look into the Russian events shows an exactly opposite connection: in reality the mass strike does not produce the revolution, but the revolution produces the mass strike.

4. It is sufficient in order to comprehend the foregoing to obtain an explanation of the question of the conscious direction and initiative in the

mass strike. If the mass strike is not an isolated act but a whole period of the class struggle, and if this period is identical with a period of revolution, it is clear that the mass strike cannot be called at will, even when the decision to do so may come from the highest committee of the strongest social democratic party. As long as the social democracy has not the power to stage and countermand revolutions according to its fancy, even the greatest enthusiasm and impatience of the social democratic troops will not suffice to call into being a real period of mass strike as a living, powerful movement of the people. On the basis of a decision of the party leadership and of party discipline, a single short demonstration may well be arranged similar to the Swedish mass strike, or to the latest Austrian strike, or even to the Hamburg mass strike of January 17. These demonstrations, however, differ from an actual period of revolutionary mass strikes in exactly the same way that the well-known demonstrations in foreign ports during a period of strained diplomatic relations differ from a naval war. A mass strike born of pure discipline and enthusiasm will, at best, merely play the role of an episode, of a symptom of the fighting mood of the working class upon which, however, the conditions of a peaceful period are reflected.

Of course, even during the revolution, mass strikes do not exactly fall from heaven. They must be brought about in some way or another by the workers. The resolution and determination of the workers also play a part and indeed the initiative and the wider direction naturally fall to the share of the organized and most enlightened kernel of the proletariat. But the scope of this initiative and this direction, for the most part, is confined to application to individual acts, to individual strikes, when the revolutionary period is already begun, and indeed, in most cases, is confined within the boundaries of a single town. Thus, for example, as we have seen, the social democrats have already, on several occasions, successfully issued a direct summons for a mass strike in Baku, in Warsaw, in Lodz, and in Petersburg. But this succeeds much less frequently when applied to general movements of the whole proletariat.

Further, there are quite definite limits set to initiative and conscious direction. During the revolution it is extremely difficult for any directing organ of the proletarian movement to foresee and to calculate which occasions and factors can lead to explosions and which cannot. Here also initiative and direction do not consist in issuing commands according to one's

inclinations, but in the most adroit adaptability to the given situation, and the closest possible contact with the mood of the masses. The element of spontaneity, as we have seen, plays a great part in all Russian mass strikes without exception, be it as a driving force or as a restraining influence. This does not occur in Russia, however, because social democracy is still young or weak, but because in every individual act of the struggle so very many important economic, political and social, general and local, material and psychical factors react upon one another in such a way that no single act can be arranged and resolved as if it were a mathematical problem. The revolution, even when the proletariat with the social democrats at their head, appears in the leading role, is not a maneuver of the proletariat in the open field, but a fight in the midst of the incessant crashing, displacing, and crumbling of the social foundation. In short, in the mass strikes in Russia the element of spontaneity plays such a predominant part not because the Russian proletariat is "uneducated," but because revolutions do not allow anyone to play the schoolmaster with them.

On the other hand, we see in Russia that the same revolution that rendered the social democrats' command of the mass strike so difficult and which struck the conductor's baton from, or pressed into, their hand at all times in such a comical fashion—we see that it resolved of itself all those difficulties of the mass strike that, in the theoretical scheme of German discussion, are regarded as the chief concerns of the "directing body": the question of "provisioning," "discovery of cost," and "sacrifice." It goes without saying that it does not resolve them in the way that they would be resolved in a quiet confidential discussion between the higher directing committees of the labor movement, the members sitting pencil in hand. The "regulation" of all these questions consists of the circumstance that the revolution brings such an enormous mass of people upon the stage that any computation or regulation of the cost of the movement such as can be effected in a civil process, appears to be an altogether hopeless undertaking.

The leading organizations in Russia certainly attempt to support the direct victims to the best of their ability. Thus, for example, the brave victims of the gigantic lockout in St. Petersburg, which followed the eight-hour-day campaign, were supported for weeks. But all these measures are, in the enormous balance of the revolution, but as a drop in the ocean. At

the moment that a real, earnest period of mass strikes begins, all these "calculations" of "cost" become merely projects for exhausting the ocean with a tumbler. And it is a veritable ocean of frightful privations and sufferings that is brought by every revolution to the proletarian masses. And the solution that a revolutionary period makes of this apparently invincible difficulty consists, under the circumstances, of such an immense volume of mass idealism being simultaneously released that the masses are insensible to the bitterest sufferings. With the psychology of a trade unionist who will not stay off his work on May Day unless he is assured in advance of a definite amount of support in the event of his being victimized, neither revolution nor mass strike can be made. But in the storm of the revolutionary period even the proletarian is transformed from a provident paterfamilias demanding support into a "revolutionary romanticist," for whom even the highest good, life itself, to say nothing of material well-being, possesses but little in comparison with the ideals of the struggle.

If, however, the direction of the mass strike in the sense of command over its origin, and in the sense of the calculating and reckoning of the cost, is a matter of the revolutionary period itself, the directing of the mass strike becomes, in an altogether different sense, the duty of social democracy and its leading organs. Instead of puzzling their heads with the technical side, with the mechanism, of the mass strike, the social democrats are called upon to assume *political* leadership in the midst of the revolutionary period. To give the cue for, and the direction to, the fight; to so regulate the tactics of the political struggle in its every phase and at its every moment that the entire sum of the available power of the proletariat, which is already released and active, will find expression in the battle array of the party; to see that the tactics of the social democrats are decided according to their resoluteness and acuteness and that they never fall below the level demanded by the actual relations of forces, but rather rise above it—that is the most important task of the directing body in a period of mass strikes. And this direction changes of itself, to a certain extent, into technical direction. A consistent, resolute, progressive tactic on the part of the social democrats produces in the masses a feeling of security, self-confidence, and desire for struggle; a vacillating weak tactic, based on an underestimation of the proletariat, has a crippling and confusing effect upon the masses. In the first case mass strikes break out "of

themselves" and "opportunely"; in the second case they, remain ineffective amid direct summonses of the directing body to mass strikes. And of both the Russian Revolution affords striking examples.

V.

Lessons of the Working Class Movement in Russia Applicable to Germany

Let us now see how far all these lessons that can be learned from the Russian mass strikes are applicable to Germany. The social and political conditions, the history and status of the labor movement are widely different in Germany and Russia. At first sight the inner law of the Russian mass strikes as sketched above may appear to be solely the product of specifically Russian conditions, which need not be taken into account by the German proletariat. Between the political and the economic struggle in the Russian Revolution there is a very close internal connection; their unity becomes an actual fact in the period of mass strikes. But is that not simply a result of Russian absolutism? In a state in which every form and expression of the labor movement is forbidden, in which the simplest strike is a political crime, it must logically follow that every economic struggle will become a political one.

Further, when contrariwise, the first outbreak of the political revolution has drawn after it a general reckoning of the Russian working class with the employers, that is likewise a simple result of the circumstances that the Russian worker has hitherto had a very low standard of life, and has never yet engaged in a single economic struggle for an improvement of his condition. The proletariat in Russia has first, to a certain extent, to work their way out of these miserable conditions, and what wonder that they eagerly availed themselves, with the eagerness of youth, of the first means to that end as soon as the revolution brought the first fresh breeze into the heavy air of absolutism?

And finally, the stormy revolutionary course of the Russian mass strike as well as their preponderant, spontaneous, elementary character is explained on the one hand by the political backwardness of Russia, by the necessity of first overthrowing the oriental despotism, and on the other hand, by the want of organization and of discipline of the Russian proletariat. In a country in which the working class has had thirty years' experience of political life, a strong social democratic party of three million members, and a quarter of a million selected troops organized in trade unions, neither the political struggle nor the mass strike can possibly assume the same stormy and elemental character as in a semi-barbarous state that has just made the leap from the Middle into the modern bourgeois order. This is the current conception among those who would read the stage of maturity of the social conditions of a country from the text of the written laws.

Let us examine the questions in their order. To begin with it is going the wrong way about the matter to date the beginning of the economic struggle in Russia only from the outbreak of the revolution. As a matter of fact, the strikes and wage disputes in Russia proper were increasingly the order of the day since the nineties of the last century, and in Russian Poland even since the eighties, and had eventually won civic rights for the workers. Of course, they were frequently followed by brutal police measures, but nevertheless they were daily phenomena. For example, in both Warsaw and Lodz as early as 1891, there was a considerable strike fund, and the enthusiasm for trade unionism in these years had even created that "economic" illusion in Poland for a short time, which a few years later prevailed in Petersburg and the rest of Russia.

In the same way there is a great deal of exaggeration in the notion that the proletarian in the czarist empire had the standard of life of a pauper before the revolution. The layer of workers in large industries in the great towns who had been the most active and zealous in the economic as in the political struggle are, as regards the material conditions of life, on a scarcely lower plane than the corresponding layer of the German proletariat, and in some occupations as high wages are to be met with in Russia as in Germany, and here and there, even higher. And as regards the length of the working day, the difference in the large-scale industries in the two countries is here and there insignificant. The notion of the presumed material and cultural condition of helotry of the Russian working class is similarly without justification in fact. This notion is contradicted, as a little reflection will show, by the facts of the revolution itself and the prominent part that was played therein by the proletariat. With paupers, no revolution of this political maturity and of thought can be made, and the industrial workers of St. Petersburg and Warsaw, Moscow and Odessa, who stand in the forefront of the struggle, are culturally and mentally much nearer to the West European type than is imagined by those who regard bourgeois parliamentarism and methodical trade-union practice as the indispensable, or even the only, school of culture for the proletariat. The modern large capitalist development of Russia and the intellectual influence, exerted for a decade and a half, of social democracy, which has encouraged and directed the economic struggle, have accomplished an

important piece of cultural work without the outward guarantees of the bourgeois legal order.

The contrast, however, grows less when, on the other hand, we look a little further into the actual standard of life in the German working class. The great political mass strikes in Russia have from the first aroused the widest layers of the proletariat and thrown them into a feverish economic struggle. But are there not in Germany whole unenlightened sections among the workers to which the warm light of the trade unions has hitherto scarcely penetrated, whole layers that up to the present have never attempted, or vainly attempted, to raise themselves out of their social helotry by means of daily wage struggles?

Let us consider the *poverty of the miners*. Already in the quiet working day, in the cold atmosphere of the parliamentary monotony of Germany—as also in other countries, and even in the El Dorado of trade unionism, Great Britain—the wage struggle of the mine workers hardly ever expresses itself in any other way than by violent eruptions from time to time in mass strikes of typical, elemental character. This only shows that the antagonism between labor and capital is too sharp and violent to allow of its crumbling away in the form of quiet systematic, partial trade-union struggles. The misery of the miners, with its eruptive soil, which even in "normal" times is a storm center of the greatest violence, must immediately explode in a violent economic socialist struggle with every great political mass action of the working class, with every violent sudden jerk that disturbs the momentary equilibrium of everyday social life.

Let us take further the case of the *poverty of the textile workers*. Here also the bitter, and for the most part fruitless outbreaks of the wage struggle that raged through Vogtland every few years, give but a faint idea of the vehemence with which the great agglomerate mass of helots of trustified textile capital must explode during a political convulsion, during a powerful, daring mass action of the German proletariat. Again, let us take the *poverty of the home-workers*, *of the ready-made clothing workers*, *of the electricity workers*, veritable storm centers in which violent struggles will be the more certain to break out with every political atmospheric disturbance in Germany; the less frequently the proletariat take up the struggle in tranquil times, and the more unsuccessfully they fight at any time, the

more brutally will capital compel them to return, gnashing their teeth to the yoke of slavery.

Now, however, whole great categories of the proletariat have to be taken into account, which, in the "normal" course of things in Germany, cannot possibly take part in a peaceful economic struggle for the improvement of their condition and cannot possibly avail themselves of the right of combination. First and foremost we give the example of the glaring *poverty of the railway and the postal employees*. For these government workers there exist Russian conditions in the midst of the parliamentary constitutional state of Germany, that is to say, Russian conditions as they existed only before the revolution, during the untroubled splendor of absolutism. Already in the great October strike of 1905 the Russian railwaymen in the then-formally absolutist Russia, were, as regards the economic and social freedom of their movement, head and shoulders above the Germans. The Russian railway and postal employees won the de facto right of combination in the storm, and if momentarily trial upon trial and victimization were the rule, they were powerless to affect the inner unity of workers.

However, it would be an altogether false psychological reckoning if one were to assume, with the German reaction, that the slavish obedience of the German railway and postal employees will last forever—that it is a rock that nothing can wear away. When even the German trade-union leaders have become accustomed to the existing conditions to such an extent that they, untroubled by an indifference almost without parallel in the whole of Europe, can survey with complete satisfaction the results of the trade-union struggle in Germany, then the deep-seated, long-suppressed resentment of the uniformed state slaves will inevitably find vent with a general rising of the industrial workers. And when the industrial vanguard of the proletariat, by means of mass strikes, grasps at new political rights or attempts to defend existing ones, the great army of railway and postal employees must of necessity bethink themselves of their own special disgrace, and at last rouse themselves for their liberation from the extra share of Russian absolutism that is specially reserved for them in Germany.

The pedantic conception that would unfold great popular movements according to plan and recipe regards the acquisition of the right of combination for the railway workers as necessary before anyone will "dare

to think" of a mass strike in Germany. The actual and natural course of events can only be the opposite of this: only from a spontaneous, powerful mass strike action can the right of combination from the German railway workers, as well as for the postal employees, actually be born. And the problems, which in the existing conditions of Germany are insoluble, will suddenly find their solution under the influence and the pressure of a universal political mass action of the proletariat.

And finally, the greatest and most important: the *poverty of the land workers*. If the British trade unions are composed exclusively of industrial workers, that is quite understandable in view of the special character of the British national economy, and of the unimportant part that agriculture plays, on the whole, in the economic life of Britain. In Germany, a trade-union organization, be it ever so well constructed, if it comprises of only industrial workers, and is inaccessible to the great army of land workers, will give only a weak, partial picture of the conditions of the proletariat. But again it would be a fatal illusion to think that conditions in the country are unalterable and immovable and that the indefatigable educational work of the social democracy, and still more, the whole internal class politics of Germany, does not continually undermine the outward passivity of the agricultural workers and that any great general class action of the German proletariat, for whatever object undertaken, may not also draw the rural proletariat into the conflict.

Similarly, the picture of the alleged economic superiority of the German over the Russian proletariat is considerably altered when we look away from the tables of the industries and departments organized in trade unions and bestow a look upon those great groups of the proletariat who are altogether outside the trade-union struggle, or whose special economic condition does not allow for their being forced into the narrow framework of the daily guerrilla warfare of the trade unions. We see there one important sphere after another, in which the sharpening of antagonisms has the extreme point, in which inflammable material in abundance is heaped up, in which there is a great deal of "Russian absolutism" in its most naked form, and in which economically the most elementary reckonings with capital have first to be made.

In a general political mass strike of the proletariat, then, all these outstanding accounts would inevitably be presented to the prevailing sys-

tem. An artificially arranged demonstration of the urban proletariat, taking place once, a mere mass strike action arising out of discipline, and directed by the conductor's baton of a party executive, could therefore leave the broad masses of the people cold and indifferent. But a powerful and reckless fighting action of the industrial proletariat, born of a revolutionary situation, must surely react upon the deeper-lying layers and ultimately draw all those into a stormy general economic struggle who, in normal times, stand aside from the daily trade-union fight.

But when we come back to the organized vanguard of the German industrial proletariat, on the other hand, and keep before our eyes the objects of the economic struggle that have been striven for by the Russian working class, we do not at all find that there is any tendency to look down upon the things of youth, as the oldest German trade unions had reason to do. Thus the most important general demand of the Russian strikes since January 22—the eight-hour day—is certainly not an unattainable platform for the German proletariat, but rather in most cases, a beautiful, remote ideal. This applies also to the struggle for the "mastery of the household" platform, to the struggle for the introduction of workers' committees into all the factories, for the abolition of piecework, for the abolition of homework in handicraft, for the complete observance of Sunday rest, and for the recognition of the right of combination. Yes, on closer inspection all the economic objects of struggle of the Russian proletariat are also for the German proletariat very real and touch a very sore spot in the life of the workers.

It therefore inevitably follows that the pure political mass strike, which operates to one's advantage, is, in Germany, a mere lifeless theoretical plan. If mass strikes result, in a natural way from a strong revolutionary ferment, in a determined political struggle of the urban workers, they will equally naturally, exactly as in Russia, change into a whole period of elementary economic struggles. The fears of the trade-union leaders, therefore, that the struggle for economic interests in a period of stormy political strife, in a period of mass strikes, can simply be pushed aside and suppressed, rest upon an utterly baseless, schoolboy conception of the course of events. A revolutionary period in Germany would also so alter the character of the trade-union struggle and develop its potentialities to such an extent that the present guerrilla warfare of the trade unions would

be child's play in comparison. And on the other hand, from this elementary economic tempest of mass strikes, the political struggle would derive always new impetus and fresh strength. The reciprocal action of economic and political struggle, which is the mainspring of present-day strikes in Russia, and at the same time the regulating mechanism, so to speak, of the revolutionary action of the proletariat, would result also in Germany, and quite naturally, from the conditions themselves.

VI.

Cooperation of Organized and Unorganized Workers Necessary for Victory

In connection with this, the question of organization in relation to the problem of the mass strike in Germany assumes an essentially different aspect.

The attitude of many trade-union leaders towards this question is generally summed up in the assertion: "We are not yet strong enough to risk such a hazardous trial of strength as a mass strike." Now this position is so far untenable that it is an insoluble problem to determine the time, in a peaceful fashion by counting heads, when the proletariat is "strong enough" for any struggle. Thirty years ago the German trade unions had 50,000 members. That was obviously a number with which a mass strike on the above scale was not to be thought of. Fifteen years later the trade unions were four times as strong, and counted 237,000 members. If, however, the present trade-union leaders had been asked at the time if the organization of the proletariat was then sufficiently ripe for a mass strike, they would assuredly have replied that it was still far from it and that the number of those organized in trade unions would first have to be counted by millions.

Today the number of trade unionists already runs into the second million, but the views of the leaders are still exactly the same, and may very well be the same to the end. The tacit assumption is that the entire working class of Germany, down to the last man and the last woman, must be included in the organization before it "is strong enough" to risk a mass action, which then, according to the old formula, would probably be represented as "superfluous." This theory is nevertheless absolutely utopian, for the simple reason that it suffers from an internal contradiction that goes in a vicious circle. Before the workers can engage in any direct class struggle they must all be organized. The circumstances, the conditions, of capitalist development and of the bourgeois state make it impossible that, in the normal course of things, without stormy class struggles, certain sections and these the greatest, the most important, the lowest and the most oppressed by capital, and by the state—can be organized at all. We see even in Britain, which has had a whole century of indefatigable trade-union effort without any "disturbances"—except at the beginning in the period of the Chartist movement—without any "romantic revolutionary" errors or temptations, it has not been possible to do more than organize a minority of the better-paid sections of the proletariat.

On the other hand the trade unions, like all fighting organizations of the proletariat, cannot permanently maintain themselves in any other way than by struggle, and not struggles of the same kind as the war between the frogs and the mice in the stagnant waters of the bourgeois parliamentary period, but struggle in the troubled revolutionary periods of the mass strike. The rigid, mechanical-bureaucratic conception cannot conceive of the struggle save as the product of organization at a certain stage of its strength. On the contrary, the living, dialectical explanation makes the organization arise as a product of the struggle. We have already seen a grandiose example of this phenomenon in Russia, where a proletariat almost wholly unorganized created a comprehensive network of organizational appendages in a year and a half of stormy revolutionary struggle.

Another example of this kind is furnished by the history of the German unions. In the year 1878 the number of trade-union members amounted to 50,000. According to the theory of the present-day trade-union leaders this organization, as stated above, was not nearly "strong enough" to enter upon a violent political struggle. The German trade unions however, weak as they were at the time, did take up the struggle—namely the struggle against the antisocialist laws—and showed that they were "strong enough," not only to emerge from the struggle victorious, but to increase their strength fivefold: in 1891, after the repeal of the antisocialist laws, their membership was 277,659. It is true that the methods by which the trade unions conquered in the struggle against the antisocialist laws do not correspond to the ideal of a peaceful, beelike, uninterrupted process: they went first into the fight absolutely in ruins, to rise again on the next wave and to be born anew. But this is precisely the specific method of growth corresponding to the proletarian class organizations: to be tested in the struggle and to go forth from the struggle with increased strength.

On a closer examination of German conditions and of the condition of the different sections of the working class, it is clear that the coming period of stormy political mass struggles will not bring the dreaded, threatening downfall of the German trade unions, but on the contrary, will open up hitherto unsuspected prospects of the extension of their sphere of power—an extension that will proceed rapidly by leaps and bounds. But the question has still another aspect. The plan of undertaking mass strikes

as a serious political class action with organized workers only is absolutely hopeless. If the mass strike, or rather, mass strikes, and the mass struggle are to be successful they must become a real *people's movement*, that is, the widest sections of the proletariat must be drawn into the fight. Already in the parliamentary form the might of the proletarian class struggle rests not on the small organized group, but on the surrounding periphery of the revolutionary-minded proletariat. If the social democrats were to enter the electoral battle with their few hundred thousand organized members alone, they would condemn themselves to futility. And although it is the tendency of social democracy, wherever possible, to draw the whole great army of its voters into the party organization, its mass of voters after thirty years experience of social democracy is not increased through the growth of the party organization, but on the contrary, the new sections of the proletariat, won for the time being through the electoral struggle, are the fertile soil for the subsequent seed of organization. Here the organization does not supply the troops for the struggle, but the struggle, to an ever-growing degree, supplies recruits for the organization.

In a much greater degree does this obviously apply to direct political mass action than to the parliamentary struggle. If the social democrats, as the organized nucleus of the working class, are the most important vanguard of the entire body of the workers and if the political clarity, the strength and the unity of the labor movement flow from this organization, then it is not permissible to visualize the class movement of the proletariat as a movement of the organized minority. Every real, great class struggle must rest upon the support and cooperation of the widest masses, and a strategy of class struggle that does not reckon with this cooperation, that is based upon the idea of the finely stage-managed march out of the small, well-trained part of the proletriat, is foredoomed to be a miserable fiasco.

Mass strikes and political mass struggles cannot, therefore, possibly be carried through in Germany by the organized workers alone, nor can they be appraised by regular "direction" from the central committee of a party. In this case, again—exactly as in Russia—they depend not so much upon "discipline" and "training" and upon the most careful possible regulation beforehand of the questions of support and cost, as upon a real revolutionary, determined class action, which will be able to win and draw

into the struggle the widest circles of the unorganized workers, according to their mood and their conditions.

The overestimate and the false estimate of the role of organizations in the class struggle of the proletariat is generally reinforced by the underestimate of the unorganized proletarian mass and of their political maturity. In a revolutionary period, in the storm of great unsettling class struggles, the whole educational effect of the rapid capitalist development and of social democratic influences first shows itself upon the widest sections of the people, of which in peaceful times the tables of the organized, and even election statistics, give only a faint idea.

We have seen that, in Russia, in about two years a great general action of the proletariat can forthwith arise from the smallest partial conflict of the workers with the employers, from the most insignificant act of brutality of the government organs. Everyone, of course, sees and believes that, because in Russia "the revolution" is there. But what does that mean? It means that class feeling, the class instinct, is alive and very active in the Russian proletariat, so that immediately they regard every partial question of any small group of workers as a general question, as a class affair, and quick as lightning they react to its influence as a unity. While in Germany, France, Italy, and Holland the most violent trade-union conflicts call forth hardly any general action of the working class—and when they do, only the organized part of the workers moves—in Russia the smallest dispute raises a storm. That means nothing else, however, than that at present—paradoxical as it may sound—the class instinct of the youngest, least-trained, badly educated, and still worse-organized Russian proletariat is immeasurably stronger than that of the organized, trained, and enlightened working class of Germany or of any other West European country. And that is not to be reckoned a special virtue of the "young, unexhausted East" as compared with the "sluggish West," but is simply a result of direct revolutionary mass action.

In the case of the enlightened German worker the class consciousness implanted by the social democrats is *theoretical and latent*: in the period ruled by bourgeois parliamentarism it cannot, as a rule, actively participate in a direct mass action; it is the ideal sum of the four hundred parallel actions of the electoral sphere during the election struggle, of the many partial economic strikes and the like. In the revolution when the masses

themselves appear upon the political battlefield this class consciousness becomes *practical and active*. A year of revolution has therefore given the Russian proletariat that "training" that thirty years of parliamentary and trade-union struggle cannot artificially give to the German proletariat. Of course, this living, active class feeling of the proletariat will considerably diminish in intensity, or rather change into a concealed and latent condition, after the close of the period of revolution and the erection of a bourgeois-parliamentary constitutional state.

And just as surely, on the other hand, will the living revolutionary class feeling, capable of action, affect the widest and deepest layers of the proletariat in Germany in a period of strong political engagement, and that the more rapidly and more deeply, more energetically the educational work of social democracy is carried on among them. This educational work and the provocative and revolutionizing effect of the whole present policy of Germany will express itself in the circumstances that all those groups, which at present, in their apparent political stupidity, remain insensitive to all the organizing attempts of the social democrats and of the trade unions, will suddenly follow the flag of social democracy in a serious revolutionary period. Six months of a revolutionary period will complete the work of the training of these as yet unorganized masses that ten years of public demonstrations and distribution of leaflets would be unable to do. And when conditions in Germany have reached the critical stage for such a period, the sections that are today unorganized and backward will, in the struggle, prove themselves the most radical, the most impetuous element, and not one that will have to be dragged along. If it should come to mass strikes in Germany, it will almost certainly not be the best organized workers—and most certainly not the printers—who will develop the greatest capacity for action, but the worst organized or totally unorganized—the miners, the textile workers, and perhaps even the land workers.

In this way we arrive at the same conclusions in Germany in relation to the peculiar tasks of *direction* as it relates to the role of social democracy in mass strikes, as in our analysis of events in Russia. If we now leave the pedantic scheme of demonstrative mass strikes artificially brought about by order of parties and trade unions, and turn to the living picture of a *peoples' movement* arising with elementary energy from the culmination of class antagonisms and the political situation—a movement that passes,

politically as well as economically, into mass struggles and mass strikes—it becomes obvious that the task of social democracy does not consist of the technical preparation and direction of mass strikes, but, first and foremost, in the *political leadership* of the whole movement.

The social democrats are the most enlightened, most class-conscious vanguard of the proletariat. They cannot and dare not wait, in a fatalist fashion, with folded arms for the advent of the "revolutionary situation," to wait for that which, in every spontaneous peoples' movement, falls from the clouds. On the contrary, they must now, as always, hasten the development of things and endeavor to accelerate events. This they cannot do, however, by suddenly issuing the "slogan" for a mass strike at random at any odd moment, but first and foremost, by making clear to the widest layers of the proletariat the *inevitable advent* of this revolutionary period, the inner *social factors* making for it, and the *political consequences* of it. If the widest proletarian layer should be won for a political mass action of the social democrats, and if, vice versa, the social democrats should seize and maintain the real leadership of a mass movement—should they become, in a *political sense*, the rulers of the whole movement, then they must, with the utmost clearness, consistency and resoluteness, inform the German proletariat of their tactics and aims in the period of coming struggle.

VII.
The Role of the Mass Strike in the Revolution

We have seen that the mass strike in Russia does not represent an artificial product of premeditated tactics on the part of the social democrats, but a natural historical phenomenon on the basis of the present revolution. Now what are the factors that in Russia have brought forth this new phenomenal form of the revolution?

The Russian Revolution has for its next task the abolition of absolutism and the establishment of a modern bourgeois-parliamentary constitutional state. It is exactly the same in form as that which confronted Germany in the March [1848] Revolution, and France at the great French Revolution of the end of the eighteenth century. But the condition, the historical milieu, in which these formally analogous revolutions took place, are fundamentally different from those of present-day Russia. The most decisive difference is the circumstances that between those bourgeois revolutions of the West and the present bourgeois revolution in the East, the whole cycle of capitalist development has run its course. And this development had seized not only the West European countries, but also absolutist Russia. Large-scale industry with all its consequences—modern class divisions, sharp social contrasts, modern life in large cities, and the modern proletariat—has become in Russia the prevailing form, that is, in social development, the decisive form of production.

The remarkable, contradictory, historical situation results from this that the bourgeois revolution, in accordance with its formal tasks will, in the first place, be carried out by a modern class-conscious proletariat, and in an international milieu whose distinguishing characteristic is the ruin of bourgeois democracy. It is not the bourgeoisie that is now the leading revolutionary element, as in the earlier revolutions of the West, while the proletarian masses, disorganized among the petty bourgeoisie, furnish material for the army of the bourgeoisie, but on the contrary, it is the class-conscious proletariat that is the active and driving element, while the big bourgeois sections are partly directly counterrevolutionary, partly weakly liberal, and only the rural petty bourgeoisie and the urban petty bourgeois intelligentsia are definitively oppositional and even revolutionary minded.

The Russian proletariat, however, who are destined to play the leading part in the bourgeois revolution, enter the fight free from all illusions of bourgeois democracy, with a strongly developed consciousness of their

own specific class interests, and at a time when the antagonism between capital and labor has reached its height. This contradictory situation finds expression in the fact that in this formally bourgeois revolution, the antagonism of bourgeois society to absolutism is governed by the antagonism of the proletariat to bourgeois society, that the struggle of the proletariat is directed simultaneously and with equal energy against both absolutism and capitalist exploitation, and that the program of the revolutionary struggle concentrates with equal emphasis on political freedom, the winning of the eight-hour day, and a human standard of material existence for the proletariat. This twofold character of the Russian Revolution is expressed in that close union of the economic with the political struggle and in their mutual interaction, which we have seen is a feature of the Russian events and which finds its appropriate expression in the mass strike.

In the earlier bourgeois revolutions where, on the one hand, the political training and the leadership of the revolutionary masses were undertaken by the bourgeois parties, and where, on the other hand, it was merely a question of overthrowing the old government, the brief battle at the barricades was the appropriate form of the revolutionary struggle. Today, when the working classes are being enlightened in the course of the revolutionary struggle, when they must marshal their forces and lead themselves, and when the revolution is directed as much against the old state power as against capitalist exploitation, the mass strike appears as the natural means of recruiting the widest proletarian layers for the struggle, as well as being at the same time a means of undermining and overthrowing the old state power and of stemming capitalist exploitation. The urban industrial proletariat is now the soul of the revolution in Russia. But in order to carry through a direct political struggle as a mass, the proletariat must first be assembled as a mass, and for this purpose they must come out of the factory and workshop, mine and foundry, must overcome the levigation and the decay to which they are condemned under the daily yoke of capitalism.

The mass strike is the first natural, impulsive form of every great revolutionary struggle of the proletariat and the more highly developed the antagonism is between capital and labor, the more effective and decisive must mass strikes become. The chief form of previous bourgeois revolutions, the fight at the barricades, the open conflict with the armed power

of the state, is in the revolution today only the culminating point, only a moment on the process of the proletarian mass struggle. And therewith in the new form of the revolution there is reached that civilizing and mitigating of the class struggle that was prophesied by the opportunists of German social democracy—the Bernsteins, Davids,[14] etc. It is true that these men saw the desired civilizing and mitigating of the class struggle in the light of petty bourgeois democratic illusions—they believed that the class struggle would shrink to an exclusively parliamentary contest and that street fighting would simply be done away with. History has found the solution in a deeper and finer fashion: in the advent of revolutionary mass strikes, which, of course, in no way replaces brutal street fights or renders them unnecessary, but which reduces them to a moment in the long period of political struggle, and which at the same time unites with the revolutionary period an enormous cultural work in the most exact sense of the words—the material and intellectual elevation of the whole working class through the "civilizing" of the barbaric forms of capitalist exploitation.

The mass strike is thus shown to be not a specifically Russian product, springing from absolutism, but a universal form of the proletarian class struggle resulting from the present stage of capitalist development and class relations. From this standpoint the three bourgeois revolutions—the great French Revolution, the German Revolution of March, and the present Russian Revolution—form a continuous chain of development in which the fortunes and the end of the capitalist century are to be seen. In the great French Revolution the still wholly underdeveloped internal contradictions of bourgeois society gave scope for a long period of violent struggles, in which all the antagonisms that first germinated and ripened in the heat of the revolution raged unhindered and unrestrained in a spirit of reckless radicalism. A century later the revolution of the German bourgeoisie, which broke out midway in the development of capitalism, was already hampered on both sides by the antagonism of interests and the equilibrium of strength between capital and labor, and was smothered in a bourgeois-feudal compromise, and shortened to a brief, miserable episode ending in words.

[14] Eduard David (1863-1930) was a right-wing, pro-war German social democrat.

Another half century, and the present Russian Revolution stands at a point of the historical path that is already over the summit, that is on the other side of the culminating point of capitalist society, at which the bourgeois revolution cannot again be smothered by the antagonism between bourgeoisie and proletariat, but, will, on the contrary, expand into a new lengthy period of violent social struggles, at which the balancing of the account with absolutism appears a trifle in comparison with the many new accounts that the revolution itself opens up. The present revolution realizes in the particular affairs of absolutist Russia the general results of international capitalist development, and appears not so much as the last successor of the old bourgeois revolutions as the forerunner of the new series of proletarian revolutions of the West. The most backward country of all, just because it has been so unpardonably late with its bourgeois revolution, shows ways and methods of further class struggle to the proletariat of Germany and the most advanced capitalist countries.

Accordingly it appears, when looked at in this way, to be entirely wrong to regard the Russian Revolution as a fine play, as something specifically "Russian," and at best to admire the heroism of the fighting men, that is, the last accessories of the struggle. It is much more important that the German workers should learn to look upon the Russian Revolution *as their own affair*, not merely as a matter of international solidarity with the Russian proletariat, but first and foremost, as a *chapter of their own social and political history*. Those trade-union leaders and parliamentarians who regard the German proletariat as "too weak" and German conditions "as not ripe enough" for revolutionary mass struggles have obviously not the least idea that the measure of the degree of ripeness of class relations in Germany and of the power of the proletariat does not lie in the statistics of German trade unionism or in election figures—but in the events of the Russian Revolution. Exactly as the ripeness of French class antagonisms under the July monarchy and the June battle of Paris was reflected in the German March Revolution, in its course and its fiasco, so today the ripeness of German class antagonisms is reflected in the events and in the power of the Russian Revolution. And while the bureaucrats of the German labor movement rummage in their office drawers for information as to their strength and maturity, they do not see that what they seek is lying before their eyes in a great historical revolution, because, historically con-

sidered, the Russian Revolution is a reflex of the power and the maturity of the International, and therefore, in the first place, of the German labor movement.

It would therefore be a too pitiable and grotesquely insignificant result of the Russian Revolution if the German proletariat should merely draw from it the lesson—as is desired by Comrades Frohme, Elm, and others—of using the extreme form of the struggle, the mass strike, and so weaken themselves as to be merely a reserve force in the event of the withdrawal of the parliamentary vote, and therefore a passive means of parliamentary defensive. When the parliamentary vote is taken from us there we will not resist. That is a self-evident decision. But for this it is not necessary to adopt the heroic pose of a Danton as was done, for example, by Comrade Elm in Jena, because the defense of the modest measure of parliamentary right already possessed is less a Heaven-storming innovation, for which the frightful hecatombs of the Russian Revolution were first necessary as a means of encouragement, than the simplest and first duty of every opposition party. But the mere defensive can never exhaust the policy of the proletariat in a period of revolution. And if it is, on the one hand, difficult to predict with any degree of certainty whether the destruction of universal suffrage would cause a situation in Germany that would call forth an immediate mass strike action, so on the other hand, it is absolutely certain that when we in Germany enter upon the period of stormy mass actions, it will be impossible for the social democrats to base their tactics upon a mere parliamentary defensive.

To fix beforehand the cause and the moment from and in which the mass strikes in Germany will break out is not in the power of social democracy, because it is not in its power to bring about historical situations by resolutions at party congresses. But what it can and must do is to make clear the political tendencies, once they appear, and to formulate them as resolute and consistent tactics. Man cannot keep historical events in check while making recipes for them, but he can see in advance their apparent calculable consequences and arrange his mode of action accordingly.

The first threatening political danger with which the German proletariat have concerned themselves for a number of years is a coup d'état of the reaction that will wrest from the wide masses of the people of the most important political right—universal suffrage. In spite of the immense

importance of this possible event, it is, as we have already said, impossible to assert with certainty that an open popular movement would immediately break out after the coup d'état, because today innumerable circumstances and factors have to be taken into account. But when we consider the present extreme acuteness of conditions in Germany, and on the other hand, the manifold international reactions of the Russian Revolution and of the future rejuvenated Russia, it is clear that the collapse of German politics that would ensue from the repeal of universal suffrage could not alone call a halt to the struggle for this right. This coup d'état would rather draw after it, in a longer or shorter period and with elementary power, a great general political reckoning of the insurgent and awakened mass of the people—a reckoning with bread usury, with artificially caused dearness of meat, with expenditure on a boundless militarism and "navalism," with the corruption of colonial policy, with the national disgrace of the Königsberg trial, with the cessation of social reform, with the discharging of railway workers, the postal officials, and the land workers, with the tricking and mocking of the miners, with the judgment of Lobtau and the whole system of class justice, with the brutal lockout system—in short, with the whole thirty-year-old oppression of the combined dominion of Junkerdom and large trustified capital.

But once the ball is set rolling, social democracy, whether it wills it or not, can never again bring it to a standstill. The opponents of the mass strike are in the habit of denying that the lessons and examples of the Russian Revolution can be a criterion for Germany because, in the first place, in Russia the great step must first be taken from an Oriental despotism to a modern bourgeois legal order. The formal distance between the old and the new political order is said to be a sufficient explanation of the vehemence and the violence of the revolution in Russia. In Germany we have long had the most necessary forms and guarantees of a constitutional state, from which it follows that such an elementary raging of social antagonisms is impossible here.

Those who speculate thus forget that in Germany, when it comes to the outbreak of open political struggles, even the historically determined goal will be quite different from that in Russia today. Precisely because the bourgeois legal order in Germany has existed for a long time, because therefore it has had time to completely exhaust itself and to draw to an

end, because bourgeois democracy and liberalism have had time to die out—because of this there can no longer be any talk of a *bourgeois* revolution in Germany. And therefore in a period of open political popular struggles in Germany, the last historically necessary goal can only be the *dictatorship of the proletariat*. The distance, however, of this task from the present conditions of Germany is still greater than that of the bourgeois legal order from Oriental despotism, and therefore, the task cannot be completed at one stroke, but must similarly be accomplished during a long period of gigantic social struggles.

But is there not a gross contradiction in the picture we have drawn? On the one hand it means that in an eventual future period of political mass action the most backward layers of the German proletariat—the land workers, the railwaymen, and the postal slaves—will first of all win the right of combination, and that the worst excrescences of exploitation must first be removed, and on the other hand, the political task of this period is said to be the conquest of power by the proletariat! On the one hand, economic, trade-union struggles for the most immediate interests, for the material elevation of the working class; on the other hand, the ultimate goal of social democracy! Certainly these are great contradictions, but they are not contradictions due to our reasoning, but contradictions due to capitalist development. It does not proceed in a beautiful straight line but in a lightning-like zig-zag. Just as the various capitalist countries represent the most varied stages of development, so within each country the different layers of the same working class are represented. But history does not wait patiently till the backward countries and the most advanced layers have joined together so that the whole mass can move symmetrically forward like a compact column. It brings the best prepared parts to explosion as soon as conditions there are ripe for it, and then in the storm of the revolutionary period, lost ground is recovered, unequal things are equalized, and the whole pace of social progress changed at one stroke to the double-quick.

Just as in the Russian Revolution all the grades of development and all the interests of the different layers of workers are united in the social democratic program of the revolution, and the innumerable partial struggles united in the great common class action of the proletariat, so will it also be in Germany when the conditions are ripe for it. And the task of

social democracy will then be to regulate its tactics, not by the most backward phases of development but by the most advanced.

VIII.
Need for United Action of Trade Unions and Social Democracy

The most important desideratum that is to be hoped for from the German working class in the period of great struggles that will come sooner or later is, after complete resoluteness and consistency of tactics, the utmost capacity for action, and therefore the utmost possible unity of the leading social democratic part of the proletarian masses. Meanwhile the first weak attempts at the preparation of great mass actions have discovered a serious drawback in this connection: the total separation and independence of the two organizations of the labor movement—the social democracy and the trade unions.

It is clear on a closer consideration of the mass strikes in Russia as well as of the conditions in Germany itself that any great mass action, if it is not confined to a mere one-day demonstration but is intended to be a real fighting action, cannot possibly be thought of as a so-called political mass strike. In such an action in Germany the trade unions would be implicated as much as the social democrats. Not because the trade-union leaders imagine that the social democrats, in view of their smaller organization, would have no other resources than the cooperation of one and a quarter million trade unionists and without them would be unable to do anything, but because of a much more deep-lying motive: because every direct mass action of the period of open class struggles would be at the same time both political and economic. If in Germany, from any cause and at any time, it should come to great political struggles, to mass strikes, then at that time an era of violent trade-union struggles would begin in Germany, and events would not stop to inquire whether the trade-union leaders had given their consent to the movement or not. Whether they stand aside or endeavor to resist the movement, the result of their attitude will only be that the trade-union leaders, like the party leaders in the analogous case, will simply be swept aside by the rush of events, and the economic and the political struggles of the masses will be fought out without them.

As a matter of fact, the separation of the political and the economic struggle and the independence of each is nothing but an artificial product of the parliamentarian period, even if historically determined. On the one hand in the peaceful, "normal" course of bourgeois society, the economic struggle is split into a multitude of individual struggles in every undertaking and dissolved in every branch of production. On the other hand the political struggle is not directed by the masses themselves in a direct action,

but in correspondence with the form of the bourgeois state, in a representative fashion, by the presence of legislative representation. As soon as a period of revolutionary struggles commences, that is, as soon as the masses appear upon the scene of conflict, the breaking up, the economic struggle, as well as the indirect parliamentary form of the political struggle, ceases; in a revolutionary mass action the political and economic struggle are one, and the artificial boundary between trade union and social democracy as two separate, wholly independent forms of the labor movement, is simply swept away. But what finds concrete expression in the revolutionary mass movement finds expression also in the parliamentary period as an actual state of affairs. There are not two different class struggles of the working class, an economic and a political one, but only *one* class struggle, which aims at one and the same time at the limitation of capitalist exploitation within bourgeois society, and at the abolition of exploitation together with bourgeois society itself.

When these two sides of the class struggle are separated from one another for technical reasons in the parliamentary period, they do not form two parallel, concurrent actions, but merely two phases, two stages of the struggle for emancipation of the working class. The trade-union struggle embraces the immediate interests, and the social democratic struggle the future interests, of the labor movement. The communists, says the *Communist Manifesto*, represent, as opposed to various group interests, national or local, as a whole of the proletariat, and in the various stages of development of the class struggle the interests of the whole movement—that is, the ultimate goal—the liberation of the proletariat. The trade unions represent only the group interests and only one stage of development of the labor movement. Social democracy represents the working class and the cause of its liberation as a whole. The relation of the trade unions to social democracy is therefore a part of the whole, and when, among the trade-union leaders, the theory of "equal authority" of trade unions and social democracy finds so much favor, it rests upon a fundamental misconception of the essence of trade unionism itself and of its role in the general struggle for freedom of the working class.

This theory of the parallel action of social democracy and the trade unions and of their "equal authority" is nevertheless not altogether without foundation, but has its historical roots. It rests upon the illusion of

the peaceful, "normal" period of bourgeois society, in which the political struggle of social democracy appears to be consumed in the parliamentary struggle. The parliamentary struggle, however, the counterpart of the trade-union struggle, is equally with it, a fight conducted exclusively on the basis of the bourgeois social order.It is by its very nature political reform work, as that of the trade unions is economic reform work. It represents political work for the present, as trade unions represent economic work for the present. It is, like them, merely a phase, a stage of development in the complete process of the proletarian class struggle whose ultimate goal is as far beyond the parliamentary struggle as it is beyond the trade-union struggle. The parliamentary struggle is, in relation to social democratic policy, also a part of the whole, exactly as trade-union work is. Social democracy today comprises the parliamentary and the trade-union struggle in one class struggle aiming at the abolition of the bourgeois social order.

The theory of the "equal authority" of trade unions and social democracy is likewise not a mere theoretical misunderstanding, not a mere case of confusion but an expression of the well-known tendency of that opportunist wing of social democracy that reduces the political struggle of the working class to the parliamentary contest and desires to change social democracy from a revolutionary proletarian party into a petit-bourgeois reform one.[15] If social democracy should accept the theory of the "equal

[15] As the existence of such a tendency within German social democracy is generally denied, one must be grateful for the candor with which the opportunist trend has recently formulated its real aims and wishes. At a party meeting in Mayence [Mainz] on September 10, 1909, the following resolution, proposed by Dr. David, was carried:

"Whereas the Social Democratic Party interprets the term "revolution" not in the sense of violent overthrow, but in the peaceful sense of development, that is, the gradual realization of a new economic principle, the public party meeting at Mayence repudiates every kind of revolutionary romance.

"The meeting sees in the conquest of political power nothing but the winning over of the majority of the people to the ideas and demands of the social democracy; a conquest that cannot be achieved by means of violence, but only by the revolutionizing of the mind by means of intellectual propaganda and practical reform work in all spheres of political, economic, and social life.

"In the conviction that social democracy flourishes far better when it employs legal means than when it relies on illegal means and revolution, the meeting repudiates "*direct mass action*" as a tactical principle, and holds fast to the principle of "parliamentary reform action," that is, it desires that the party in the future as in the past, shall earnestly endeavor *to achieve its aims by legislation and gradual organizational development*.

authority" of the trade unions, it would thereby accept, indirectly and tacitly, that transformation which has long been striven for by the representatives of the opportunist tendency.

In Germany, however, there is such a shifting of relations within the labor movement as is impossible in any other country. The theoretical conception, according to which the trade unions are merely a part of social democracy, finds its classic expression in Germany in fact, in actual practice, and that in three directions. First, the German trade unions are a direct product of social democracy; it was social democracy that created the beginnings of the present trade-union movement in Germany and that enabled it to attain such great dimensions, and it is social democracy that supplies it to this day with its leaders and the most active promoters of its organization.

Second, the German trade unions are a product of social democracy also in the sense that social democratic teaching is the soul of trade-union practice, as the trade unions owe their superiority over all bourgeois and denominational trade unions to the idea of the class struggle; their practical success, their power, is a result of the circumstance that their practice is illuminated by the theory of scientific socialism, and they are thereby raised above the level of a narrow-minded socialism. The strength of the "practical policy" of the German trade unions lies in their insight into the deeper social and economic connections of the capitalist system, but they owe this insight entirely to the theory of scientific socialism upon which their practice is based. Viewed in this way, any attempt to emancipate the trade unions from the social democratic theory in favor of some other

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"The indispensable condition for this reformist method of struggle is that *the possibility of participation of the dispossessed masses of the people in the legislation* of the empire and of the individual states shall not be lessened but *increased to the fullest possible extent*. For this reason, the meeting declares it to be an incontestable right of the working class to withhold its labor for a longer or shorter period to ward off attacks on its legal rights and to gain further rights, when all other means fail.

"But as the political mass strike can only be victoriously carried through when kept within *strictly legal limits* and when the strikers give no reasonable excuse to the authorities to resort to armed force, the meeting perceives the only necessary and real preparation for the exercise of this method of struggle in the further extension of the political, trade-union, and cooperative organizations. Because only in this way can the conditions be created among the wide masses of the people that can guarantee the successful prosecution of a mass strike: conscious discipline and adequate economic support."—Rosa Luxemburg.

"trade-union theory" opposed to social democracy is, from the standpoint of the trade unions themselves and of their future, nothing but an attempt to commit suicide. The separation of trade-union practice from the theory of scientific socialism would mean to the German trade unions the immediate loss of all their superiority over all kinds of bourgeois trade unions, and their fall from their present height to the level of unsteady groping and mere dull empiricism.

Thirdly and finally, the trade unions are, although their leaders have gradually lost sight of the fact, even as regards their numerical strength, a direct product of the social democratic movement and the social democratic agitation. It is true that in many districts trade-union agitation precedes social democratic agitation, and that everywhere trade-union work prepares the way for party work. From the point of view of effect, party and trade unions assist each other to the fullest extent. But when the picture of the class struggle in Germany is looked at as a whole and its more deep-seated associations, the proportions are considerably altered. Many trade-union leaders are in the habit of looking down triumphantly from the proud height of their membership of one and a quarter million on the miserable organized members of the Social Democratic Party, not yet half a million strong, and of recalling the time, ten or twelve years ago, when those in the ranks of social democracy were pessimistic as to the prospects of trade-union development.

They do see that between these two things—the large number of organized trade unionists and the small number of organized social democrats—*there exists in a certain degree a direct causal connection*. Thousands and thousands of workers do not join the party organizations precisely because they join the trade unions. According to the theory, all the workers must be doubly organized, must attend two kinds of meetings, pay double contributions, read two kinds of workers' papers, etc. But for this it is necessary to have a higher standard of intelligence and of that idealism, which, from a pure feeling of duty to the labor movement, is prepared for the daily sacrifice of time and money, and finally, a higher standard of that passionate interest in the actual life of the party that can only be engendered by membership of the party organization. All this is true of the most enlightened and intelligent minority of social democratic workers in the large towns, where party life is full and attractive and where the workers'

standard of living is high. Among the wider sections of the working masses in the large towns, however, as well as in the provinces, in the smaller and the smallest towns where political life is not an independent thing but a mere reflex of the course of events in the capital, where consequently, party life is poor and monotonous, and where, finally, the economic standard of life of the workers is, for the most part, miserable, it is very difficult to secure the double form of organization.

For the social democratically minded worker from the masses the question will be solved by his joining his trade union. The immediate interests of his economic struggle that are conditioned by the nature of the struggle itself cannot be advanced in any other way than by membership in a trade-union organization. The contribution that he pays, often amid considerable sacrifice of his standard of living, brings him immediate, visible results. His social democratic inclinations, however, enable him to participate in various kinds of work without belonging to a special party organization; by voting at parliamentary elections, by attendance at social democratic public meetings, by following the reports of social democratic speeches in representatives bodies, and by reading the party press. Compare in this connection the number of social democratic electors or the number of subscribers to *Vorwärts* with the number of organized party members in Berlin!

And what is most decisive, the social democratically minded average worker who, as a simple man, can have no understanding of the intricate and fine so-called two-soul theory,[16] feels that he is, even in the trade union, *social democratically organized*. Although the central committees of the unions have no official party label, the workman from the masses in every city and town sees at the head of his trade union as the most active leaders, those colleagues whom he knows also as comrades and social democrats in public life, now as Reichstag, Landtag, or local representatives, now as trusted men of the social democracy, members of election committees, party editors and secretaries, or merely as speakers and agitators. Further, he hears expressed in the agitational work of his trade union much the same ideas, pleasing and intelligible to him, of capitalist exploitation,

[16] An allusion to a line from Goethe's *Faust*: "Two souls, alas! reside within my breast." In Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust*, 1808, trans. Bayard Taylor, 1870-1871, The Riverside Press Cambridge, 1912, p. 45.

class relations, etc., as those that have come to him from social democratic agitation. Indeed, the most and best loved of the speakers at trade-union meetings are those same social democrats.

Thus everything combines to give the average class-conscious worker the feeling that he, in being organized in his trade union, is also a member of his labor party and is social democratically organized, *and therein lies the peculiar recruiting strength of the German trade unions*. Not because of the appearance of neutrality, but because of the social democratic reality of their being, have the central unions been enabled to attain their present strength. This is simply through the coexistence of the various unions—Catholic, Hirsch-Dunker,[17] etc.—founded by bourgeois parties by which it was sought to establish the necessity for that political "neutrality." When the German worker who has full freedom of choice to attach himself to a Christian, Catholic, Evangelical, or Free-thinking trade union, chooses none of these but the "free trade union" instead, or leaves one of the former to join the latter, he does so only because he considers that the central unions are the avowed organizations of the modern class struggle, or, what is the same thing in Germany, that they are social-democratic trade unions.

In a word the appearance of "neutrality," which exists in the minds of many trade-union leaders, does not exist for the mass of organized trade unionists. And that is the good fortune of the trade-union movement. If the appearance of "neutrality," that alienation and separation of the trade unions from social democracy, really and truly becomes a reality in the eyes of the proletarian masses, then the trade unions would immediately lose all their advantages over competing bourgeois unions, and therewith their recruiting power, their living fire. This is conclusively proved by facts that are generally known. The appearance of party-political "neutrality" of the trade unions could, as a means of attraction, render inestimable service in a country in which social democracy itself has no credit among the masses, in which the odium attaching a workers' organization injures it in the eyes of the masses rather than advantages it—where, in a word, the trade unions must first of all recruit their troops from a wholly unenlightened, bourgeois-minded mass.

[17] This was the only legal union during the time of the antisocialist laws. It opposed strikes and functioned as a working-class self-help organization.

The best example of such a country was, throughout the whole of the last century and is to a certain extent today, Great Britain. In Germany, however, party relations are altogether different. In a country in which social democracy is the most powerful political party, in which its recruiting power is represented by an army of over three million proletarians, it is ridiculous to speak of the deterrent effect of social democracy and of the necessity for a fighting organization of the workers to ensure political neutrality. The mere comparison of the figures of social democratic voters with the figures of the trade-union organizations in Germany is sufficient to prove to the most simple-minded that the trade unions in Germany do not, as in England, draw their troops from the unenlightened bourgeois-minded mass, but from the mass of proletarians already aroused by the social democracy and won by it to the idea of the class struggle. Many trade-union leaders indignantly reject the idea—a requisite of the "theory of neutrality"—and regard the trade unions as a recruiting school for social democracy. This apparently insulting, but in reality, highly flattering presumption is in Germany reduced to mere fancy by the circumstance that the positions are reversed; it is the social democracy that is the recruiting school for the trade unions.

Moreover, if the organizational work of the trade unions is for the most part of a very difficult and troublesome kind, it is—with the exception of a few cases and some districts—not merely because on the whole, the soil has not been prepared by the social democratic plow, but also because the trade-union seed itself, and the sower as well, must also be "red," social democratic, before the harvest can prosper. But when we compare in this way the figures of trade-union strength, not with those of the social democratic organizations, but—which is the only correct way—with those of the mass of social democratic voters, we come to a conclusion that differs considerably from the current view of the matter. The fact then comes to light that the "free trade unions" actually represent today but a minority of the class-conscious workers of Germany, that even with their one and a quarter million organized members they have not yet been able to draw into their ranks one-half of those already aroused by social democracy.

The most important conclusion to be drawn from the facts cited above is that the *complete unity* of the trade-union and the social democratic movements, which is absolutely necessary for the coming mass struggles in

Germany, *is actually here*, and that it is incorporated in the wide mass that forms the basis at once of social democracy and trade unionism, and in whole consciousness both parts of the movement are mingled in a mental unity. The alleged antagonism between social democracy and trade unions shrinks to an antagonism between social democracy and a certain part of the trade-union officials, which is, however, at the same time an antagonism within the trade unions between this part of the trade-union leaders and the proletarian mass organized in trade unions.

The rapid growth of the trade-union movement in Germany in the course of the last fifteen years, especially in the period of great economic prosperity from 1895 to 1900, has brought with it a great independence of the trade unions, a specializing of their methods of struggle—and finally the introduction of a regular trade-union officialdom. All these phenomena are quite understandable and natural historical products of the growth of the trade unions in this fifteen-year period, and of the economic prosperity and political calm of Germany. They are, although inseparable from certain drawbacks, without doubt a historically necessary evil. But the dialectics of development also brings with it the circumstance that these necessary means of promoting trade-union growth become, on the contrary, obstacles to its further development at a certain stage of organization and at a certain degree of ripeness of conditions.

The specialization of professional activity as trade-union leaders, as well as the naturally restricted horizon that is bound up with disconnected economic struggles in a peaceful period, leads only too easily among trade-union officials to bureaucratism and a certain narrowness of outlook. Both, however, express themselves in a whole series of tendencies that may be fateful in the highest degree for the future of the trade-union movement. There is first of all the overvaluation of the organization, which from a means has gradually been changed into an end in itself, a precious thing, to which the interests of the struggles should be subordinated. From this also comes that openly admitted need for peace, which shrinks from great risks and presumed dangers to the stability of the trade unions, and further, the overvaluation of the trade-union method of struggle itself, its prospects, and its successes.

The trade-union leaders, constantly absorbed in the economic guerrilla war whose plausible task it is to make the workers place the highest

value on the smallest economic achievement, every increase in wages and shortening of the working day, gradually lose the power of seeing the larger connections and of taking a survey of the whole position. Only in this way can one explain why many trade-union leaders refer with the greatest satisfaction to the achievements of the last fifteen years, instead of, on the contrary, emphasizing the other side of the medal; the simultaneous and immense reduction of the proletarian standard of life by land usury, by the whole tax and customs policy, by landlord rapacity, which has increased house rents to such an exorbitant extent—in short, by all the objective tendencies of bourgeois policy that have largely neutralized the advantages of the fifteen years of trade-union struggle. From the *whole* social democratic truth, which, while emphasizing the importance of the present work and its absolute necessity, attaches the chief importance to the criticism and the limits to this work, the *half* trade-union truth is taken that emphasizes only the positive side of the daily struggle.

And finally, from the concealment of the objective limits drawn by the bourgeois social order to the trade-union struggle, there arises a hostility to every theoretical criticism that refers to these limits in connection with the ultimate aims of the labor movement. Fulsome flattery and boundless optimism are considered to be the duty of every "friend of the trade-union movement." But as the social democratic standpoint consists precisely in fighting against uncritical trade-union optimism, as in fighting against uncritical parliamentary optimism, a front is at last made against the social democratic theory: men grope for a "new trade-union theory," that is, a theory that would open an illimitable vista of economic progress to the trade-union struggle within the capitalist system, in opposition to the social democratic doctrine. Such a theory has indeed existed for some time—the theory of Professor Sombart, which , was promulgated with the express intention of driving a wedge between the trade unions and the social democracy in Germany, and of enticing the trade unions over to the bourgeois position.

In close connection with these theoretical tendencies is a revolution in the relations of leaders and rank and file. In place of the direction by colleagues through local committees with their admitted inadequacy, there appears the businesslike direction of the trade-union officials. The initiative and the power of making decisions thereby devolve upon trade-

union specialists, so to speak, and the more passive virtue of discipline upon the mass of members. This dark side of officialdom also assuredly conceals considerable dangers for the party, as from the latest innovation, the institution of local party secretaries; it can quite easily result—if the social democratic mass is not careful—that these secretariats may remain mere organs for carrying out decisions and not be regarded in any way the appointed bearers of the initiative and of the direction of local party life. But by the nature of the case, by the character of the political struggle, there are narrow bounds drawn to bureaucratism in social democracy as in trade-union life.

But here the technical specializing of wage struggles as, for example, the conclusion of intricate tariff agreements and the like, frequently means that the mass of organized workers are prohibited from taking a "survey of the whole industrial life," and their incapacity for taking decisions is thereby established. A consequence of this conception is the argument with which every theoretical criticism of the prospects and possibilities of trade-union practice is tabooed and which alleges that it represents a danger to the pious trade-union sentiment of the masses. From this the point of view has been developed that it is only by blind, childlike faith in the efficacy of the trade-union struggle that the working masses can be won and held for the organization. In contradistinction to social democracy, which bases its influence on the unity of the masses amid the contradictions of the existing order and in the complicated character of its development—and on the critical attitude of the masses to all factors and stages of their own class struggle—the influence and the power of the trade unions are founded upon the upside-down theory of the incapacity of the masses for criticism and decision. "The faith of the people must be maintained"—that is the fundamental principle, acting upon which many trade-union officials stamp as attempts on the life of this movement all criticisms of the objective inadequacy of trade unionism.

And finally, a result of all this specialization and this bureaucratism among trade-union officials is the great independence and the "neutrality" of the trade unions in relation to social democracy. The extreme independence of the trade-union organization is a natural result of its growth, as a relation that has grown out of the technical division of work between the political and the trade-union forms of struggle. The "neutrality" of the

German trade unions, on its part, arose as a product of the reactionary trade-union legislation of the Prusso-German police state. With time, both aspects of their nature have altered. From the condition of political "neutrality" of the trade unions imposed by the police, a theory of their voluntary neutrality has been evolved as a necessity founded upon the alleged nature of the trade-union struggle itself. And the technical independence of the trade unions, which should rest upon the division of work in the unified social democratic class struggle, the separation of the trade unions from social democracy, from its views and its leadership, has been changed into the so-called equal authority of trade unions and social democracy.

The appearance of separation and equality of trade unions and social democracy is, however, incorporated chiefly in the trade-union officials and strengthened through the managing apparatus of the trade unions. Outwardly, by the coexistence of a complete staff of trade-union officials, of a wholly independent central committee, of numerous professional press, and finally of a trade-union congress, the illusion is created of an exact parallel with the managing apparatus of the social democracy, the party executive, the party press, and the party conference. This illusion of equality between social democracy and the trade union had led to, among other things, the monstrous spectacle that, in part, quite analogous agendas are discussed at social democratic conferences and trade-union congresses, and that on the same questions different, and even diametrically opposite, decisions are taken. From the natural division of work between the party conference, which represents the general interests and tasks of the labor movement, and the trade-union congress (which deals with the much narrower sphere of social questions and interests), the artificial division has been made of a pretended trade-union and a social democratic outlook in relation to the same general questions and interests of the labor movement.

Thus the peculiar position has arisen that this same trade-union movement, which below, in the wide proletarian masses, is absolutely one with social democracy, parts abruptly from it above, in the superstructure of management, and sets itself up as an independent great power. The German labor movement therefore assumes the peculiar form of a double pyramid whose base and body consist of one solid mass but whose apices are wide apart.

It is clear from this presentation of the case in what way alone in a natural and successful manner that compact unity of the German labor movement can be attained, which, in view of the coming political class struggles and of the peculiar interests of the further development of the trade unions, is indispensably necessary. Nothing could be more perverse or more hopeless than to desire to attain the unity desired by means of sporadic and periodical negotiations on individual questions affecting the labor movement between the Social Democratic Party leadership and the trade-union central committees. It is just the highest circles of both forms of the labor movement, which as we have seen, incorporate their separation and self-sufficiency, that are themselves, therefore, the promoters of the illusion of the "equal authority" and of the parallel existence of social democracy and trade unionism.

To desire the unity of these through the union of the party executive and the general commission is to desire to build a bridge at the very spot where the distance is greatest and the crossing most difficult. Not above, among the heads of the leading directing organizations and in their federative alliance, but below, among the organized proletarian masses, lies the guarantee of the real unity of the labor movement. In the consciousness of the million trade unionists, the party and the trade unions are actually *one*, they represent in different forms the *social democratic* struggle for the emancipation of the proletariat. And the necessity automatically arises therefrom of removing any causes of friction that have arisen between the social democracy and a part of the trade unions, of adapting their mutual relation to the consciousness of the proletarian masses—that is, of *rejoining the trade unions to social democracy*. The synthesis of the real development that led from the original incorporation of the trade unions to their separation from social democracy will thereby be expressed, and the way will be prepared for the coming period of great proletarian mass struggles during the period of vigorous growth of both trade unions and social democracy, and their reunion, in the interests of both, will become a necessity.

It is not, of course, a question of the merging of the trade-union organization in the party, but of the restoration of the unity of social democracy and the trade unions, which corresponds to the actual relation between the labor movement as a whole and its partial trade-union expression. Such a revolution will inevitably call forth a vigorous opposi-

tion from a part of the trade-union leadership. But it is high time for the working masses of social democracy to learn how to express their capacity for decision and action, and therewith to demonstrate their ripeness for that time of great struggles and great tasks in which they, the masses, will be the actual chorus and the directing bodies will merely act the "speaking parts," that is, will only be the interpreters of the will of the masses.

The trade-union movement is not that which is reflected in the quite understandable *but irrational* illusion of a minority of the trade-union leaders, but that which lives in the consciousness of the mass of proletarians who have been won for the class struggle. In this consciousness the trade-union movement is part of social democracy. "But let her dare to seem the thing she is."[18]

[18] This quotation is from the 1800 play *Maria Stuart* by the German author Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805), trans. Edward Brooks, David McKay Publisher, Philadelphia, 1898, p. 46. Bernstein used the line as a section header in Chapter Three of his book *Evolutionary Socialism*.

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