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**HOW LENIN
WROTE
FOR THE MASSES**

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THREE ARTICLES

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Compiled by B. Riley.

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PREFACE

The purpose of this, the first of a series of documents, is to sum up and prepare the ground for the coming into being of a new vanguard Communist Party which will firmly adhere to the ideological principles of Marxism-Leninism.

The betrayal of the vanguard principle by the now revisionist (former communist) parties in many parts of the world does not mean that the vanguard principle is bankrupt. On the contrary the main factor that led to the degeneration of the former communist parties was the failure to adopt the mass-line method of work and the failure to adhere to Marxist-Leninist principles.

It is the distortions of these ideological principles that, in my opinion, has caused the high degree of confusion and opportunism at present prevailing in the movement that goes under the heading of Marxist-Leninist. At the moment, only lip-service is being paid to Marxism-Leninism, a not unnatural state of affairs in imperialist Britain. Imperialism and opportunism have always been closely related.

Marxism-Leninism is the only ideology that can lead the working and oppressed people in the final overthrow of the capitalist/imperialist system and the construction of the socialist society. Any distortion or revision of Marxism-Leninism is doomed to failure. One of the main (if not the most important) distortions has been caused by the confusion between building a mass-line (or mass-work — from the masses to the masses as some people call it) and the formation of a new vanguard of the workers, progressive intellectuals and student youth. You cannot have a mass-line without a vanguard; all you would get is an isolated line.

Because of the void caused by the present dis-organisation and confusion, a group of neo-revisionist opportunists from the revisionist (former Communist) Party of "Great" Britain seized the initiative and, without

any theoretical work on the ideological level or summing up of their previous experience whatsoever, set themselves up as the new vanguard. (In actual fact they are another rearguard!). These people call themselves the Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist), CPB (M-L). They are out-and-out opportunists of the first order and will inevitably come to no good.*

In the present state of confusion and opportunism the most important and foremost document on Party building that should be studied (and acted upon) is Lenin's **WHAT IS TO BE DONE?** (Of particular importance at the moment —because it has been so neglected— is section ID, *Engels On the Importance of The Theoretical Struggle*).

Also very important in regard to raising the question of party building to the ideological level are the report and two articles by Mao Tsetung on the rectification movement that took place within the Communist Party of China. The **essence** of the report and two articles are directly applicable to Britain. These are *Reform Our Study* (Vol. III of selected works, pp. 17-27); *Rectify the Party's Style of Work* (ibid, pp. 35-53); and *Oppose Stereotyped Party Writing* (ibid, pp. 53-69).

B. RILEY, 1974

* For a good account of the opportunism of the so-called CPB (M-L) read *Economism or Revolution* by the Communist Unity Association (M-L), obtainable from New Era Books, 203 Seven Sisters Road, London N.4.

FOREWORD

The article by Krupskaya is a slightly abridged version taken from the appendix of a 1942 *Workers' Library* edition of *Memoirs of Lenin*. (There have been superficial, minor alterations to the text to make it more readable and applicable to today's conditions.) This appendix has been omitted from the present bourgeois-financed *Panther History* edition.

The article by Mao was written in 1942 as one of the basic works on the rectification movement that took place within the Communist Party of China. The rectification movement summed up, on the ideological plane, past differences in the Party over the Party line and analysed the petty-bourgeois ideology and style which, masquerading as Marxism-Leninism, was prevalent in the Party and which chiefly manifested itself in subjectivist and sectarian tendencies, its form of expression being stereotyped Party writing. Mao called for a Party-wide movement of Marxist-Leninist education to rectify style of work in accordance with the ideological principles of Marxism-Leninism. (It is this that is also very badly needed in Britain.) His call very quickly led to a great debate between proletarian and petty-bourgeois ideology inside and outside the Party. This consolidated the position of proletarian ideology, enabled the broad ranks of cadres to take a great step forward ideologically and the Party to achieve unprecedented unity. The extracts that I've selected are the ones that, in my opinion, are most applicable to the Marxist-Leninist movement in Britain at the present time.

To stress the importance of why we should learn from Lenin (and Mao) how to write for the masses, the following extract is quoted from the body of the book (*Memoirs of Lenin*):

"Lenin was interested in the minutest detail describing the conditions and life of the workers. Taking the features separately he endeavoured to grasp the life of the workers as a whole—he tried to find what one could seize

upon in order better to approach the worker with revolutionary propaganda. Most of the intellectuals of those days (and today—B.R.) badly understood the workers. For a long time a manuscript translation of Engel's booklet *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* was passed round the circles. Lenin read with the workers from Marx's *Capital* and explained it to them. The second half of the studies were devoted to the workers' questions about their work and Labour conditions. He showed them how their life was linked up with the entire structure of society, and told them in what manner the existing order could be transformed. The combination of theory with practice was the particular feature of Lenin's work in the circles. Gradually other members of our circle began to use this approach.

"Lenin never forgot the other forms of work. In 1895 he wrote the pamphlet *The Law on Fines*. In this pamphlet he gave a brilliant example of how to approach the middle-grade workers of that time, and, on the basis of their needs, lead them step by step to the question of the necessity for political struggle. Many intellectuals thought this pamphlet long and dry, but the workers read it willingly, for it was clear to them and near to them. Lenin used to study the factory laws carefully. He reckoned that by explaining these laws it was particularly easy to enlighten the workers as to the connection between their position and the state." *Panther History* edition, pp. 21 & 22.)

OPPOSE STEROTYPED PARTY WRITING (extracts)-MAO TSETUNG

..... Whatever we do must be done according to actual circumstances, and it is the same when writing articles and making speeches. What we oppose is long-winded and empty stereotyped writing, but we do not mean that everything must necessarily be short in order to be good. True, we need short articles in war time, but above all we need articles that have substance. Articles devoid of substance are the least justifiable and the most objectionable.....

The second indictment against stereotyped Party writing is that it strikes a pose in order to intimidate people. Some stereotyped Party writing is not only long and empty, but also pretentious with the deliberate intention of intimidating people; it carries the worst kind of poison. Writing long-winded and empty articles may be set down to immaturity, but striking a pose to overawe people is not merely immature but downright knavish. Lu Hsun once said in criticism of such people, "Hurling insults and threats is certainly not fighting." What is scientific never fears criticism, for science is truth and fears no refutation. But those who write subjectivist and sectarian articles and speeches in the form of Party stereotypes fear refutation, are very cowardly, and therefore rely on pretentiousness to overawe others, believing that they can thereby silence people and "win the day". Such pretentiousness cannot reflect truth but is an obstacle to truth. Truth does not strike a pose to overawe people but talks and acts honestly and sincerely.....

For the proletariat the sharpest and more effective weapon is a serious and militant scientific attitude.....

The third indictment against stereotyped Party writing is that it shoots at random, without considering the audience..... Communists who really want to do propaganda must consider their audience and bear in mind those

who will read their articles and slogans or listen to their speeches and their talk; otherwise they are in effect resolving not to be read or listened to by anyone. Many people often take it for granted that what they write and say can be easily understood by everyone, when it is not so at all..... It simply will not do for our propaganda workers to rattle on without investigating, studying and analysing their audience.

The fourth indictment against stereotyped Party writing is its drab language..... But we are revolutionaries working for the masses, and if we do not learn the language of the masses, we cannot work well. At present many of our comrades doing propaganda work make no study of language. Their propaganda is very dull, and few people care to read their articles or listen to their talk. Why do we need to study language and, what is more, spend much effort on it? Because the mastery of language is not easy and requires painstaking effort. First, let us learn language from the masses. The people's vocabulary is rich, vigorous, vivid and expressive of real life. It is because many of us have not mastered language that our articles and speeches contain few vigorous, vivid and effective expressions and resemble not a hale and healthy person, but an emaciated *piehsan*, a mere bag of bones..... Those who are badly infected by stereotyped Party writing do not take pains to study what is useful in the language of the people....., so the masses do not welcome their dry and dull propaganda.....

It is a formalist method, classifying things according to their external features instead of their internal relationships. If one takes a conglomeration of concepts that are not internally related and arranges them into an article, speech or report simply according to the external features of things, then one is juggling with concepts and may also lead others to indulge in the same sort of game, with the result that they do not use their brains to think over problems and probe into the essence of things, but are satisfied merely to list phenomena in ABCD order..... If an article or speech is important and meant to give guidance, it ought to pose a particular problem, then analyse it and then make a synthesis pointing to the nature of a problem and providing the method for solving it; in all this, formalist methods are useless. Since infantile, crude, philistine and lazy-minded methods are prevalent in our Party (and most certainly in the Marxist-Leninist movement now—B.R.), we must expose them; only thus

can everyone learn to use the Marxist method to observe, pose, analyse and solve problems; only thus can we do our work well and only thus can our revolutionary cause triumph.....

It is sheer irresponsibility to pick up the pen and force ourselves to write without investigation or study.....

Articles are the reflection of objective reality, which is intricate and complex and must be studied over and over again before it can be properly reflected; to be slipshod in this respect is to be ignorant of the rudiments of writing.

HOW LENIN WROTE FOR THE MASSES - N. KRUPSHAYA

“There is nothing I would like so much, there is nothing that I have hoped for so much as an opportunity to write for the workers”, wrote Lenin from his exile in Siberia to P.B. Axelrod abroad (July 16, 1897).

But Lenin had written for the workers already, prior to 1897. In 1895 he wrote a pamphlet entitled *The Law on Fines* (Vol. 2 of collected works of Lenin, Moscow 1960, pp. 29-73).

In 1895 the group of St. Petersburg Social-Democrats (2) afterwards known as League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class, which included Lenin, had as an object the publication of a working-class review, *Rabocheye Dyelo* (*Workers' Cause*). Lenin wrote an article for that review entitled *What Our Ministers Are Thinking* (*ibid*, pp. 87-93).

Written with chemicals inside a book, Lenin sent out of prison two proclamations for workers: *The Workers' Festival — The First of May* and *To the Tsarist Government* (*ibid*, pp. 122-129).

Axelrod and Plekhanov (3) pronounced very favourably on Lenin's pamphlet *Explanation of The Law on Fines*.

Young workers desirous of learning to write so as to be understood by the broad masses, should attentively study these works of Lenin.

If we look at the pamphlet *Explanation of The Law on Fines*, we shall see that it is written in very simple language, but at the same time it is far different from the superficial, agitational material which is still issued in such abundance even in these days (and now—B.R.). The pamphlet contains no agitational phrases or appeals at all. But the choice of theme is very characteristic. This subject was one which greatly exercised the minds of the

workers in those days—one they were intimate with. The pamphlet starts off from facts **well-known** to the worker and is based throughout on facts carefully selected from a **multitude** of sources and **clearly** set out. It is not the words in the pamphlet, but the facts, that talk and convince. These facts are so telling and so convincing that the workers upon acquaintance with them draw their own conclusions. The plan of the pamphlet also shows it has been **carefully thought out**. This is how it was planned:

- (a) what are fines?
- (b) how were fines formerly inflicted and what caused the new law on fines?
- (c) on what pretexts can the factory owners inflict fines?
- (d) how big can fines be?
- (e) what is the procedure for inflicting fines?
- (f) where should the fine money go, according to the law?
- (g) is the law on fines applicable to all workers?
- (h) conclusion.

The concluding section briefly formulates the deductions that the worker himself will already have made from the facts cited in the preceding sections and merely helps him to generalise and finally to formulate conclusions which are simple but of great importance for the workers' movement.

In the short article *What our Ministers are Thinking*, Lenin maintains the same approach to the reader as in his *Explanation of The Law on Fines*. He takes the letter of the Minister for the Interior to the High Procurator of the Holy Synod, examines in detail its meaning, and brings the workers to the conclusion: "Workers, you see how deadly afraid our ministers are of knowledge coming to the working people. Show everyone that no force can deprive the workers of their consciousness. **Without knowledge the workers are defenceless; with knowledge they are a force.**"

The manifesto *The Workers' Festival — The First of May*, written from prison, also relates to the year 1896. It dealt with the international working-class festival and the international struggle of the workers; but it started with the

actual position and the struggle of the workers in the big centres. The manifesto outlined the prospects of this struggle and made a direct appeal for strikes. The manifesto appeared on May 1, 1896, and in June there were already 30,000 textile workers on strike in St. Petersburg. The second manifesto, *To the Tsarist Government*, summed up the results of the strike and called for a further, more intense struggle. It ended with the words: "The strikes of 1895 and 1896 have not been in vain. They were of tremendous service to the Russian workers. They showed them the proper way to fight for their interests. **They taught them to understand the political position and the political needs of the working class.**"

In the autumn of 1897, Lenin worked on his second pamphlet for workers, written on the same theme as the first. This was *The New Factory Law*. In 1899 he wrote the pamphlets *On Industrial Courts* and *On Strikes* (Vol. 4 of collected works of Lenin, pp. 310-320, reprinted as an example).

Working on these pamphlets helped Lenin to learn still better to write and talk in such a way that his speeches and articles would be particularly **intimate and comprehensible** to the mass of the workers.

From whom did Lenin learn to speak and write in such a popular style? **He learnt most from the workers themselves**. He talked with them for hours, listening carefully to their casual remarks, and to the questions they put. He adjusted his observation to their level of knowledge, so that he could find out just what they did not understand on any given question, and why. Workers tell of these interviews in their reminiscences of Lenin.

But while working hard to assure that he conveyed his ideas to the workers in the clearest and best possible form, Lenin at the same time protested against all vulgarisation, all attempts to narrow down the question for the workers, to simplify its substance.

In Lenin's speeches and articles the workers always saw that he was **"talking seriously"** as one worker put it.

In June, 1905 Lenin returned to the question referred to in *What Is To Be Done?* and wrote: "In the political activity of a Social-Democratic party there always is, and will be, a certain element of tutoring: it is necessary to train the entire class of employed workers in their role as fighters for the emancipation of the whole of humanity

from all oppression. It is necessary continually to teach ever new strata of this class. We must be capable of approaching the rawest, undeveloped members of this class—those least touched by our science and by the science of life—in such a way as to get closer to them. We must be able, with restraint and patience, to educate them up to Social-Democratic consciousness. In doing so we must not turn our teaching into a dry dogma, we must instruct not by books alone, but also by participating in the day-to-day life-struggle of these very same raw, these very same underdeveloped strata of the population (but not in a spontaneous, haphazard fashion—B.R.). In this everyday activity there is, we repeat, an element of tutoring. A Social-Democrat who forgot such activity would cease to be a Social-Democrat. That is true. But in these days some of us often forget that a Social-Democrat who reduces political tasks to those of a teacher alone—though for a different reason—ceases to be a Social-Democrat. Whoever should think to make such ‘tutorship’ a special slogan—to oppose it to ‘politics’, to build upon such an opposition a special tendency, appealing to the masses in the name of this slogan against Social-Democrat ‘politics’—whoever did this would immediately sink to the depths of demogogy.”

In July, 1905 Lenin wrote *Three Constitutions or Three Systems of State Organisation* which compares an autocratic monarchy, a constitutional monarchy and a democratic republic both as regards their form, their content, and their aims. This leaflet is a model example of an easy-to-understand and popular style but at the same time is an example of how to treat a question earnestly, how to “talk seriously”.

At times of sharp and sudden turns in the situation, Lenin considered it a special obligation to write and speak in a popular manner. At the April Conference of 1917, Lenin said: “Many of us, myself included, have had occasion to address the people, particularly the soldiers, and it seems to me that even when everything is explained to them, from the point of view of class interests, there is still one thing in our position that they cannot fully grasp..... The masses are in a maze of misapprehension, there is an absolute lack of understanding as to our stand, that is why we must be particularly clear.....” In the same speech Lenin said: “When we address the masses, we must provide **concrete** answers to all questions. There should be clarity of political meaning.”

What are the conclusions to be drawn from all this? Lenin attached great importance to the capacity to speak and write in a popular style. This is necessary in order **to make Communism accessible and comprehensible** to the masses, as their own cause. Popular speeches and popular literature should have a concrete object, one which urges to definite action. The political idea developed in a popular speech should be concise and clear in its meaning. No vulgarisation, over-simplification or departure from objectivity is permissible. The exposition should be planned in an easy-to-understand manner, should help the listeners or readers themselves to draw the conclusions, and only sum up and formulate these conclusions.

Statements should be based not on abstract arguments, but on facts closely concerning the listeners or readers. These facts should be gradually explained, link by link, in connection with the most important questions of class struggle.

At the present moment popular literature makes it essential that the masses should understand the situation as clearly as possible, that they understand how to link up the current facts of day-to-day life with the fundamental questions of the fight for Socialism (the need for revolution—B.R.). We have absurdly little of such literature. It is necessary to produce it. Both from Lenin and from the masses we must learn to write in a popular style, must set ourselves to the collective work of improving this kind of writing, and must test in practice the success of our results.

ON STRIKES - LENIN (reprinted as an example)

In recent years, workers' strikes have become extremely frequent in Russia. There is no longer a single industrial gubernia in which there have not occurred several strikes. And in the big cities strikes never cease. It is understandable, therefore, that class-conscious workers and socialists should more and more frequently concern themselves with the question of the significance of strikes, of methods of conducting them, and of the tasks of socialists (read communists—B.R.) participating in them.

We wish to attempt to outline some of our ideas on these questions. In our first article we plan to deal generally with the significance of strikes in the working-class movement; in the second we shall deal with anti-strike laws in Russia; and in the third, with the way strikes were and are conducted in Russia and with the attitude that class-conscious workers should adopt to them.

In the first place we must seek an explanation for the outbreak and spread of strikes. Everyone who calls to mind strikes from personal experience, from reports of others, or from the newspapers will see immediately that strikes break out and spread wherever big factories arise and grow in number. It would scarcely be possible to find a single one among the bigger factories employing hundreds (at times even thousands) of workers in which strikes have not occurred. When there were only a few big factories in Russia there were few strikes; but ever since big factories have been multiplying rapidly in both the old industrial districts and in new towns and villages, strikes have become more frequent.

Why is it that large-scale factory production always leads to strikes? It is because capitalism must necessarily lead to a struggle of the workers against the employers, and when production is on a large scale the struggle of necessity takes on the form of strikes.

Let us explain this.

Capitalism is the name given to that social system under which the land, factories, implements, etc., belong to a small number of landed proprietors and capitalists, while the mass of the people possesses no property, or very little property, and is compelled to hire itself out as workers. The landowners and factory owners hire workers and make them produce wares of this or that kind which they sell on the market. The factory owners, furthermore, pay the workers only such a wage as provides a bare subsistence for them and their families, while everything the worker produces over and above this amount goes into the factory owner's pocket, as his profit. Under capitalist economy, therefore, the people in their mass are the hired workers of others, they do not work for themselves but work for employers for wages. It is understandable that the employers always try to reduce wages; the less they give the workers, the greater their profit. The workers try to get the highest possible wage in order to provide their families with sufficient and wholesome food, to live in good homes, and to dress as other people do and not like beggars. A constant struggle is, therefore, going on between employers and workers over wages; the employer is free to hire whatever worker he thinks fit and, therefore, seeks the cheapest. The worker is free to hire himself out to an employer of his choice, so that he seeks the dearest, the one that will pay him the most. Whether the worker works in the country or in town, whether he hires himself out to a landlord, a rich peasant, a contractor, or a factory owner, he always bargains with the employer, fights with him over the wages.

But is it possible for a single worker to wage a struggle by himself? The number of working people is increasing: peasants are being ruined and flee from the countryside to the town or the factory. The landlords and factory owners are introducing machines that rob the workers of their jobs. In the cities there are increasing numbers of unemployed and in the villages there are more and more beggars; those who are hungry drive wages down lower and lower. It becomes impossible for the worker to fight against the employer by himself. If the worker demands good wages or tries not to consent to a wage cut, the employer tells him to get out, that there are plenty of hungry people at the gates who would be glad to work for low wages.

When the people are ruined to such an extent that

there is always a large number of unemployed in the towns and villages, when the factory owners amass huge fortunes and the small proprietors are squeezed out by the millionaires, the individual worker becomes *absolutely powerless* in face of the capitalist. It then becomes possible for the capitalist to crush the worker completely, to drive him to his death at slave labour and, indeed, not him alone, but his wife and children with him. If we take, for instance, those occupations in which the workers have not yet been able to win the protection of the law and in which they cannot offer resistance to the capitalists, we see an inordinately long working day, sometimes as long as 17-19 hours; we see children of 5 or 6 years of age overstraining themselves at work; we see a generation of permanently hungry workers who are gradually dying from starvation. Example: the workers who toil in their own homes for capitalists; besides, any worker can bring to mind a host of other examples! Even under slavery or serfdom there was never any oppression of the working people as terrible as that under capitalism when the workers cannot put up a resistance or cannot win the protection of laws that restrict the arbitrary actions of the employers.

And so, in order to stave off their reduction to such extremities, the workers begin a desperate struggle. As they see that each of them, individually, is completely powerless and that the oppression of capital threatens to crush him, the workers begin to revolt jointly against their employers. Workers' strikes begin. At first the workers often fail to realise what they are trying to achieve, lacking consciousness of the *wherefore* of their action; they simply smash the machines and destroy the factories. They merely want to display their wrath to the factory owners; they are trying out their joint strength in order to get out of an unbearable situation, without yet understanding why their position is so hopeless and what they should strive for.

In all countries the wrath of the workers first took the form of isolated revolts—the police and factory owners in Russia call them “mutinies.” In all countries these isolated revolts gave rise to more or less peaceful strikes, on the one hand, and to the all-sided struggle of the working class for its emancipation, on the other.

What significance have strikes (or stoppages) for the struggle of the working class? To answer this question, we must first have a fuller view of strikes. The wages of a

worker are determined, as we have seen, by an agreement between the employer and the worker, and if, under these circumstances, the individual worker is completely powerless, it is obvious that workers must fight jointly for their demands, they are compelled to organise strikes either to prevent the employers from reducing wages or to obtain higher wages. It is a fact that in every country with a capitalist system there are strikes of workers. Everywhere, in all the European countries and in America, the workers feel themselves powerless when they are disunited; they can only offer resistance to the employers jointly, either by striking or threatening to strike. As capitalism develops, as big factories are more rapidly opened, as the petty capitalists are more and more ousted by the big capitalists, the more urgent becomes the need for the joint resistance of the workers, because unemployment increases, competition sharpens between the capitalists who strive to produce their wares at the cheapest (to do which they have to pay the workers as little as possible), and the fluctuations of industry become more accentuated and crises* more acute. When industry prospers, the factory owners make big profits but do not think of sharing them with the workers; but when a crisis breaks out, the factory owners try to push the losses on to the workers. The necessity for strikes in capitalist society has been recognised to such an extent by everybody in the European countries that the law in those countries does not forbid the organisation of strikes; only in Russia barbarous laws against strikes still remain in force (we shall speak on another occasion of these laws and their application).

However, strikes, which arise out of the very nature of capitalist society, signify the beginning of the working-class struggle against that system of society. When the rich capitalists are confronted by individual, propertyless workers, this signifies the utter enslavement of the workers. But when those propertyless workers unite, the situation changes. There is no wealth that can be of benefit to the

* We shall deal elsewhere in greater detail with crises in industry and their significance to the workers. Here we shall merely note that during recent years in Russia industrial affairs have been going well, industry has been “prospering,” but that now (at the end of 1899) there are already clear signs that this “prosperity” will end in a crisis: difficulties in marketing goods, bankruptcies of factory owners, the ruin of petty proprietors, and terrible calamities for the workers (unemployment, reduced wages, etc.).

capitalists if they cannot find workers willing to apply their labour-power to the instruments and material belonging to the capitalists and produce new wealth. As long as workers have to deal with capitalists on an individual basis they remain veritable slaves who must work continuously to profit another in order to obtain a crust of bread, who must for ever remain docile and inarticulate hired servants. But when the workers state their demands jointly and refuse to submit to the money-bags, they cease to be slaves, they become human beings, they begin to demand that their labour should not only serve to enrich a handful of idlers, but should also enable those who work to live like human beings. The slaves begin to put forward the demand to become masters, not to work and live as the landlords and capitalists want them to, but as the working people themselves want to. Strikes, therefore, always instil fear into the capitalists, because they begin to undermine their supremacy. "All wheels stand still, if your mighty arm wills it," a German workers' song says of the working class. And so it is in reality: the factories, the landlords' land, the machines, the railways, etc., etc., are all like wheels in a giant machine—the machine that extracts various products, processes them, and delivers them to their destination. The whole of this machine is set in motion by the worker who tills the soil, extracts ores, makes commodities in the factories, builds houses, workshops, and railways. When the workers refuse to work, the entire machine threatens to stop. Every strike reminds the capitalists that it is the workers and not they who are the real masters—the workers who are more and more loudly proclaiming their rights. Every strike reminds the workers that their position is not hopeless, that they are not alone. See what a tremendous effect strikes have both on the strikers themselves and on the workers at neighbouring or nearby factories or at factories in the same industry. In normal, peaceful times the worker does his job without a murmur, does not contradict the employer, and does not discuss his condition. In times of strikes he states his demands in a loud voice, he reminds the employers of all their abuses, he claims his rights, he does not think of himself and his wages alone, he thinks of all his workmates who have downed tools together with him and who stand up for the workers' cause, fearing no privations. Every strike means many privations for the working people, terrible privations that can be compared only to the calamities of war—hungry families, loss of wages,

often arrests, banishment from the towns where they have their homes and their employment. Despite all these sufferings, the workers despise those who desert their fellow workers and make deals with the employers. Despite all these sufferings, brought on by strikes, the workers of neighbouring factories gain renewed courage when they see that their comrades have engaged themselves in struggle. "People who endure so much to bend one single bourgeois will be able to break the power of the whole bourgeoisie, said one great teacher of socialism, Engels, speaking of the strikes of the English workers. It is often enough for one factory to strike, for strikes to begin immediately in a large number of factories. What a great moral influence strikes have, how they affect workers who see that their comrades have ceased to be slaves and, if only for the time being, have become people on an equal footing with the rich! Every strike brings thoughts of socialism very forcibly to the worker's mind, thoughts of the struggle of the entire working class for emancipation from the oppression of capital. It has often happened that before a big strike the workers of a certain factory or a certain branch of industry or of a certain town knew hardly anything and scarcely ever thought about socialism; but after the strike, study circles and associations become much more widespread among them and more and more workers become socialists.

A strike teaches workers to understand what the strength of the employers and what the strength of the workers consists in; it teaches them not to think of their own employer alone and not of their own immediate workmates alone but of all the employers, the whole class of capitalists and the whole class of workers. When a factory owner who has amassed millions from the toil of several generations of workers refuses to grant a modest increase in wages or even tries to reduce wages to a still lower level and, if the workers offer resistance, throws thousands of hungry families out into the street, it becomes quite clear to the workers that the capitalist class as a whole is the enemy of the whole working class and that the workers can depend only on themselves and their united action. It often happens that a factory owner does his best to deceive the workers, to pose as a benefactor, and conceal his exploitation of the workers by some petty sops or lying promises. A strike always demolishes this deception at one blow by showing the workers that their "benefactor" is a wolf in sheep's clothing.

A strike, moreover, opens the eyes of the workers to the nature, not only of the capitalists, but of the government and the laws as well. Just as the factory owners try to pose as benefactors of the workers, the government officials and their lackeys try to assure the workers that the tsar and the tsarist government are equally solicitous of both the factory owners and the workers, as justice requires. The worker does not know the laws, he has no contact with government officials, especially with those in the higher posts, and, as a consequence, often believes all this. Then comes a strike. The public prosecutor, the factory inspector, the police, and frequently troops, appear at the factory. The workers learn that they have violated the law: the employers are permitted by law to assemble and openly discuss ways of reducing workers' wages, but workers are declared criminals if they come to a joint agreement! Workers are driven out of their homes; the police close the shops from which the workers might obtain food on credit, an effort is made to incite the soldiers against the workers even when the workers conduct themselves quietly and peacefully. Soldiers are even ordered to fire on the workers and when they kill unarmed workers by shooting the fleeing crowd in the back, the tsar himself sends the troops an expression of his gratitude (in this way the tsar thanked the troops who had killed striking workers in Yaroslavl in 1895). It becomes clear to every worker that the tsarist government is his worst enemy, since it defends the capitalists and binds the workers hand and foot. The workers begin to understand that laws are made in the interests of the rich alone; that government officials protect those interests; that the working people are gagged and not allowed to make known their needs; that the working class must win for itself the right to strike, the right to publish workers' newspapers, the right to participate in a national assembly that enacts laws and supervises their fulfilment. The government itself knows full well that strikes open the eyes of the workers and for this reason it has such a fear of strikes and does everything to stop them as quickly as possible. One German Minister of the Interior, one who was notorious for the persistent persecution of socialists and class-conscious workers, not without reason, stated before the people's representatives: "Behind every strike lurks the hydra [monster] of revolution." Every strike strengthens and develops in the workers the understanding that the government is their enemy and that the working class must prepare itself to struggle against the

government for the people's rights.

Strikes, therefore, teach the workers to unite; they show them that they can struggle against the capitalists only when they are united; strikes teach the workers to think of the struggle of the whole working class against the whole class of factory owners and against the arbitrary, police government. This is the reason that socialists call strikes "a school of war," a school in which the workers learn to make war on their enemies for the liberation of the whole people, of all who labour, from the yoke of government officials and from the yoke of capital.

"A school of war" is, however, not war itself. When strikes are widespread among the workers, some of the workers (including some socialists) begin to believe that the working class can confine itself to strikes, strike funds, or strike associations alone; that by strikes alone the working class can achieve a considerable improvement in its conditions or even its emancipation. When they see what power there is in a united working class and even in small strikes, some think that the working class has only to organise a general strike throughout the whole country for the workers to get everything they want from the capitalists and the government. (Like some trotskyites —B.R.). This idea was also expressed by the workers of other countries when the working-class movement was in its early stages and the workers were still very inexperienced. *It is a mistaken idea.* Strikes are *one* of the ways in which the working class struggles for its emancipation, but they are not the only way; and if the workers do not turn their attention to other means of conducting the struggle, they will slow down the growth and the successes of the working class (which has happened). It is true that funds are needed to maintain the workers during strikes, if strikes are to be successful. Such workers' funds (usually funds of workers in separate branches of industry, separate trades or workshops) are maintained in all countries; but here in Russia this is especially difficult, because the police keep track of them, seize the money, and arrest the workers. The workers, of course, are able to hide from the police; naturally, the organisation of such funds is valuable, and we do not want to advise workers against setting them up. But it must not be supposed that workers' funds, when prohibited by law, will attract large numbers of contributors, and so long as the membership in such organisations is small, workers' funds will not

prove of great use. Furthermore, even in those countries where workers' unions exist openly and have huge funds at their disposal, the working class can still not confine itself to strikes as a means of struggle. All that is necessary is a hitch in the affairs of industry (a crisis, such as the one that is approaching in Russia today) and the factory owners will even deliberately cause strikes, because it is to their advantage to cease work for a time and to deplete the workers' funds. The workers, therefore, cannot, under any circumstances, confine themselves to strike actions and strike associations. **Secondly, strikes can only be successful where workers are sufficiently class-conscious**, where they are able to select at opportune moment for striking, where they know how to put forward their demands, and where they have connections with socialists (read communists—B.R.) and are able to produce leaflets and pamphlets through them. There are still very few such workers in Russia, and every effort must be exerted to increase their number in order to make the working-class cause known to the masses of workers and to acquaint them with socialism and the working-class struggle. This is a task that the socialists (read communists—B.R.) and class-conscious workers must undertake jointly by organising a socialist working-class party (read: Marxist-Leninist Party—B.R.) for this purpose. Thirdly, strikes, as we have seen, show the workers that the government is their enemy and that a struggle against the government must be carried on. Actually, it is strikes that have gradually taught the working class of all countries to struggle against the governments for workers' rights and for the rights of the people as a whole. As we have said, only a socialist workers' party can carry on this struggle by spreading among the workers a true conception of the government and of the working-class cause. On another occasion we shall discuss specifically how strikes are conducted in Russia and how class-conscious workers should avail themselves of them. Here we must point out that strikes are, as we said above, "a school of war" and not the war itself, that strikes are only one means of struggle, only one aspect of the working-class movement. From individual strikes the workers can and must go over, as indeed they are actually doing in all countries, to a struggle of the entire working class for the emancipation of all who labour. When all class-conscious workers become socialists, (read communists—B.R.) i.e., when they strive for this emancipation, when they unite throughout the whole country in order to spread socialism among the

workers, in order to teach the workers all the means of struggle against their enemies, when they build up a socialist workers' party (read Marxist-Leninist Party—B.R.) that struggles for the emancipation of the people as a whole from government oppression and for the emancipation of all working people from the yoke of capital—only then will the working class become an integral part of that great movement of the workers of all countries that unites all workers and raises the red banner inscribed with the words: "Workers of all countries, unite!"

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Notes :

1). A main failing with literature produced by the various organisations is to keep telling the workers what they already know instead of supplying the knowledge and facts that will enable them to see the overall picture of whatever it is that is being discussed. This is something that Lenin mentions in *WHAT IS TO BE DONE?*

However, for this to be done satisfactorily, there is a need to make a transition from the present amateurish disorganised state of affairs to a more efficient, organised and professional approach. Only in this way will comrades be able to conduct the necessary investigation and research and be able to formulate the necessary conclusions which will arouse and raise the level of consciousness of the workers. When writing for workers it should never be forgotten that although workers are the gunpowder, knowledge and education is the spark.

2). For "Social-democrat" read "Communist".

3). Plekhanov subsequently adopted an anti-Leninist, Menshevik position.

All emphasis is mine throughout—B.R.

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