

WORKERS OF ALL COUNTRIES, UNITE!

LENIN

COLLECTED WORKS

5



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ПОЛИТИЧЕСКОЙ ЛИТЕРАТУРЫ
МОСКВА

V. I. L E N I N

COLLECTED WORKS

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PREFACE

Volume Five contains Lenin's works written between May 1901 and February 1902. These include articles and notes published in *Iskra*: "Where To Begin", "Another Massacre", "A Valuable Admission", "The Lessons of the Crisis", "The Serf-Owners at Work", "Fighting the Famine-Stricken", "Party Affairs Abroad", "A Talk with Defenders of Economism", "Demonstrations Have Begun", "Political Agitation and 'The Class Point of View'", and others. In these articles Lenin deals with the most important events in Russian domestic affairs and throws light on the concrete tasks of building the Party and of the class struggle of the proletariat.

In the article "The Persecutors of the Zemstvo and the Hannibals of Liberalism", published in *Zarya* in December 1901, Lenin elaborates the tactics of the Marxist party of the proletariat in relation to the liberal bourgeoisie.

"The Agrarian Question and the 'Critics of Marx'" expounds and develops the Marxist theory of the agrarian question and is a critique of the Russian and international revisionists.

This volume also contains Lenin's *What Is To Be Done?* the theoretical premises of which laid the foundations of the ideology of the Bolshevik Party.

Seven of the works of Lenin to be found in this volume are included in the *Collected Works* for the first time. Of these, three are notes published in *Iskra*: "A Zemstvo Congress", "On a Letter from 'Southern Workers'", and "Reply to 'A Reader'". The other four documents are: "Speech Delivered on September 21 (October 4, new style)" [Lenin's

speech at the “Unity” Conference of the R.S.D.L.P. organisations abroad on September 21 (October 4), 1901], “The Journal *Svoboda*”, “On the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Revolutionary Activity of G. V. Plekhanov”, and “Anarchism and Socialism”. These four items appeared in print only after the October Revolution.

WHERE TO BEGIN¹

Written in May 1901
Published in *Iskra*,
No. 4, May 1901

Published according to
the *Iskra* text

In recent years the question of "what is to be done" has confronted Russian Social-Democrats with particular insistence. It is not a question of what path we must choose (as was the case in the late eighties and early nineties), but of what practical steps we must take upon the known path and how they shall be taken. It is a question of a system and plan of practical work. And it must be admitted that we have not yet solved this question of the character and the methods of struggle, fundamental for a party of practical activity, that it still gives rise to serious differences of opinion which reveal a deplorable ideological instability and vacillation. On the one hand, the "Economist" trend, far from being dead, is endeavouring to clip and narrow the work of political organisation and agitation. On the other, unprincipled eclecticism is again rearing its head, aping every new "trend", and is incapable of distinguishing immediate demands from the main tasks and permanent needs of the movement as a whole. This trend, as we know, has ensconced itself in *Rabocheye Dyelo*.² This journal's latest statement of "programme", a bombastic article under the bombastic title "A Historic Turn" ("*Listok*" *Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 6³), bears out with special emphasis the characterisation we have given. Only yesterday there was a flirtation with "Economism", a fury over the resolute condemnation of *Rabochaya Mysl*,⁴ and Plekhanov's presentation of the question of the struggle against autocracy was being toned down. But today Liebknecht's words are being quoted: "If the circumstances change within twenty-four hours, then tactics must be changed within twenty-four hours." There is talk of a "strong fighting organisation" for direct attack, for storming the autocracy; of "broad revolutionary political agitation among the masses" (how energetic we are now—both revolutionary and

political!); of “ceaseless calls for street protest,”; of “street demonstrations of a pronounced [*sic!*] political character”; and so on, and so forth.

We might perhaps declare ourselves happy at *Rabocheye Dyelo*’s quick grasp of the programme we put forward in the first issue of *Iskra*,⁵ calling for the formation of a strong well-organised party, whose aim is not only to win isolated concessions but to storm the fortress of the autocracy itself; but the lack of any set point of view in these individuals can only dampen our happiness.

Rabocheye Dyelo, of course, mentions Liebknecht’s name in vain. The tactics of agitation in relation to some special question, or the tactics with regard to some detail of party organisation may be changed in twenty-four hours; but only people devoid of all principle are capable of changing, in twenty-four hours, or, for that matter, in twenty-four months, their view on the necessity—in general, constantly, and absolutely—of an organisation of struggle and of political agitation among the masses. It is ridiculous to plead different circumstances and a change of periods: the building of a fighting organisation and the conduct of political agitation are essential under any “drab, peaceful” circumstances, in any period, no matter how marked by a “declining revolutionary spirit”; moreover, it is precisely in such periods and under such circumstances that work of this kind is particularly necessary, since it is too late to form the organisation in times of explosion and outbursts; the party must be in a state of readiness to launch activity at a moment’s notice. “Change the tactics within twenty-four hours”! But in order to change tactics it is first necessary to have tactics; without a strong organisation skilled in waging political struggle under all circumstances and at all times, there can be no question of that systematic plan of action, illumined by firm principles and steadfastly carried out, which alone is worthy of the name of tactics. Let us, indeed, consider the matter; we are now being told that the “historic moment” has presented our Party with a “completely new” question—the question of terror. Yesterday the “completely new” question was political organisation and agitation; today it is terror. Is it not strange to hear people who have so grossly forgotten their principles holding forth on a radical change in tactics?

Fortunately, *Rabocheye Dyelo* is in error. The question of terror is not a new question at all; it will suffice to recall briefly the established views of Russian Social-Democracy on the subject.

In principle we have never rejected, and cannot reject, terror. Terror is one of the forms of military action that may be perfectly suitable and even essential at a definite juncture in the battle, given a definite state of the troops and the existence of definite conditions. But the important point is that terror, at the present time, is by no means suggested as an operation for the army in the field, an operation closely connected with and integrated into the entire system of struggle, but as an independent form of occasional attack unrelated to any army. Without a central body and with the weakness of local revolutionary organisations, this, in fact, is all that terror can be. We, therefore, declare emphatically that under the present conditions such a means of struggle is inopportune and unsuitable; that it diverts the most active fighters from their real task, the task which is most important from the standpoint of the interests of the movement as a whole; and that it disorganises the forces, not of the government, but of the revolution. We need but recall the recent events. With our own eyes we saw that the mass of workers and "common people" of the towns pressed forward in struggle, while the revolutionaries lacked a staff of leaders and organisers. Under such conditions, is there not the danger that, as the most energetic revolutionaries go over to terror, the fighting contingents, in whom alone it is possible to place serious reliance, will be weakened? Is there not the danger of rupturing the contact between the revolutionary organisations and the disunited masses of the discontented, the protesting, and the disposed to struggle, who are weak precisely because they are disunited? Yet it is this contact that is the sole guarantee of our success. Far be it from us to deny the significance of heroic individual blows, but it is our duty to sound a vigorous warning against becoming infatuated with terror, against taking it to be the chief and basic means of struggle, as so many people strongly incline to do at present. Terror can never be a regular military operation; at best it can only serve as one of the methods employed in a decisive assault. But can we *issue the call* for such

a decisive assault at the present moment? *Rabocheye Dyelo* apparently thinks we can. At any rate, it exclaims: "Form assault columns!" But this, again, is more zeal than reason. The main body of our military forces consists of volunteers and insurgents. We possess only a few small units of regular troops, and these are not even mobilised; they are not connected with one another, nor have they been trained to form columns of any sort, let alone assault columns. In view of all this, it must be clear to anyone who is capable of appreciating the general conditions of our struggle and who is mindful of them at every "turn" in the historical course of events that at the present moment our slogan cannot be "To the assault", but has to be, "Lay siege to the enemy fortress". In other words, the immediate task of our Party is not to summon all available forces for the attack right now, but to call for the formation of a revolutionary organisation capable of uniting all forces and guiding the movement in actual practice and not in name alone, that is, an organisation ready at any time to support every protest and every outbreak and use it to build up and consolidate the fighting forces suitable for the decisive struggle.

The lesson of the February and March events⁶ has been so impressive that no disagreement in principle with this conclusion is now likely to be encountered. What we need at the present moment, however, is not a solution of the problem in principle but a practical solution. We should not only be clear on the nature of the organisation that is needed and its precise purpose, but we must elaborate a definite *plan* for an organisation, so that its formation may be undertaken from all aspects. In view of the pressing importance of the question, we, on our part, take the liberty of submitting to the comrades a skeleton plan to be developed in greater detail in a pamphlet now in preparation for print.⁷

In our opinion, the starting-point of our activities, the first step towards creating the desired organisation, or, let us say, the main thread which, if followed, would enable us steadily to develop, deepen, and extend that organisation, should be the founding of an All-Russian political newspaper. A newspaper is what we most of all need; without it we cannot conduct that systematic, all-round propaganda and agitation, consistent in principle, which is the chief

and permanent task of Social-Democracy in general and, in particular, the pressing task of the moment, when interest in politics and in questions of socialism has been aroused among the broadest strata of the population. Never has the need been felt so acutely as today for reinforcing dispersed agitation in the form of individual action, local leaflets, pamphlets, etc., by means of generalised and systematic agitation that can only be conducted with the aid of the periodical press. It may be said without exaggeration that the frequency and regularity with which a newspaper is printed (and distributed) can serve as a precise criterion of how well this cardinal and most essential sector of our militant activities is built up. Furthermore, our newspaper must be All-Russian. If we fail, and as long as we fail, to combine our efforts to influence the people and the government by means of the printed word, it will be utopian to think of combining other means, more complex, more difficult, but also more decisive, for exerting influence. Our movement suffers in the first place, ideologically, as well as in practical and organisational respects, from its state of fragmentation, from the almost complete immersion of the overwhelming majority of Social-Democrats in local work, which narrows their outlook, the scope of their activities, and their skill in the maintenance of secrecy and their preparedness. It is precisely in this state of fragmentation that one must look for the deepest roots of the instability and the waverings noted above. The *first* step towards eliminating this shortcoming, towards transforming divers local movements into a single, All-Russian movement, must be the founding of an All-Russian newspaper. Lastly, what we need is definitely a *political* newspaper. Without a political organ, a political movement deserving that name is inconceivable in the Europe of today. Without such a newspaper we cannot possibly fulfil our task—that of concentrating all the elements of political discontent and protest, of vitalising thereby the revolutionary movement of the proletariat. We have taken the first step, we have aroused in the working class a passion for “economic”, factory exposures; we must now take the next step, that of arousing in every section of the population that is at all politically conscious a passion for *political* exposure. We must not be discouraged by the fact that the voice of

political exposure is today so feeble, timid, and infrequent. This is not because of a wholesale submission to police despotism, but because those who are able and ready to make exposures have no tribune from which to speak, no eager and encouraging audience, they do not see anywhere among the people that force to which it would be worth while directing their complaint against the "omnipotent" Russian Government. But today all this is rapidly changing. There is such a force—it is the revolutionary proletariat, which has demonstrated its readiness, not only to listen to and support the summons to political struggle, but boldly to engage in battle. We are now in a position to provide a tribune for the nationwide exposure of the tsarist government, and it is our duty to do this. That tribune must be a Social-Democratic newspaper. The Russian working class, as distinct from the other classes and strata of Russian society, displays a constant interest in political knowledge and manifests a constant and extensive demand (not only in periods of intensive unrest) for illegal literature. When such a mass demand is evident, when the training of experienced revolutionary leaders has already begun, and when the concentration of the working class makes it virtual master in the working-class districts of the big cities and in the factory settlements and communities, it is quite feasible for the proletariat to found a political newspaper. Through the proletariat the newspaper will reach the urban petty bourgeoisie, the rural handicraftsmen, and the peasants, thereby becoming a real people's political newspaper.

The role of a newspaper, however, is not limited solely to the dissemination of ideas, to political education, and to the enlistment of political allies. A newspaper is not only a collective propagandist and a collective agitator, it is also a collective organiser. In this last respect it may be likened to the scaffolding round a building under construction, which marks the contours of the structure and facilitates communication between the builders, enabling them to distribute the work and to view the common results achieved by their organised labour. With the aid of the newspaper, and through it, a permanent organisation will naturally take shape that will engage, not only in local activities, but in regular general work, and will train its members to fol-

low political events carefully, appraise their significance and their effect on the various strata of the population, and develop effective means for the revolutionary party to influence those events. The mere technical task of regularly supplying the newspaper with copy and of promoting regular distribution will necessitate a network of local agents of the united party, who will maintain constant contact with one another, know the general state of affairs, get accustomed to performing regularly their detailed functions in the All-Russian work, and test their strength in the organisation of various revolutionary actions. This network of agents* will form the skeleton of precisely the kind of organisation we need—one that is sufficiently large to embrace the whole country; sufficiently broad and many-sided to effect a strict and detailed division of labour; sufficiently well tempered to be able to conduct steadily *its own* work under any circumstances, at all “sudden turns”, and in face of all contingencies; sufficiently flexible to be able, on the one hand, to avoid an open battle against an overwhelming enemy, when the enemy has concentrated all his forces at one spot, and yet, on the other, to take advantage of his unwieldiness and to attack him when and where he least expects it. Today we are faced with the relatively easy task of supporting student demonstrations in the streets of big cities; tomorrow we may, perhaps, have the more difficult task of supporting, for example, the unemployed movement in some particular area, and the day after to be at our posts in order to play a revolutionary part in a peasant uprising. Today we must take advantage of the tense political situation arising out of the government’s campaign against the Zemstvo; tomorrow we may have to support popular indignation against some tsarist bashi-bazouk on the rampage and help, by means of boycott, indictment demonstrations, etc., to make things so hot for him as to

* It will be understood of course, that these agents could work successfully only in the closest contact with the local committees (groups, study circles) of our Party. In general, the entire plan we project can, of course, be implemented only with the most active support of the committees which have on repeated occasions attempted to unite the Party and which, we are sure, will achieve this unification—if not today, then tomorrow, if not in one way, then in another.

force him into open retreat. Such a degree of combat readiness can be developed only through the constant activity of regular troops. If we join forces to produce a common newspaper, this work will train and bring into the foreground, not only the most skilful propagandists, but the most capable organisers, the most talented political party leaders capable, at the right moment, of releasing the slogan for the decisive struggle and of taking the lead in that struggle.

In conclusion, a few words to avoid possible misunderstanding. We have spoken continuously of systematic, planned preparation, yet it is by no means our intention to imply that the autocracy can be overthrown only by a regular siege or by organised assault. Such a view would be absurd and doctrinaire. On the contrary, it is quite possible, and historically much more probable, that the autocracy will collapse under the impact of one of the spontaneous outbursts or unforeseen political complications which constantly threaten it from all sides. But no political party that wishes to avoid adventurous gambles can base its activities on the anticipation of such outbursts and complications. We must go our own way, and we must steadfastly carry on our regular work, and the less our reliance on the unexpected, the less the chance of our being caught unawares by any "historic turns".

ANOTHER MASSACRE

It seems that we are now passing through a period in which our working-class movement is once more about to engage with irresistible force in the sharp conflicts that terrify the government and the propertied classes and bring joy and encouragement to socialists. Yes, we rejoice in these conflicts and are encouraged by them, notwithstanding the tremendous number of victims claimed by military reprisals, because the working class is proving by its resistance that it is not reconciled to its position, that it refuses to remain in slavery or to submit meekly to violence and tyranny. Even with the most peaceful course of events, the present system always and inevitably exacts countless sacrifices from the working class. Thousands and tens of thousands of men and women, who toil all their lives to create wealth for others, perish from starvation and constant malnutrition, die prematurely from diseases caused by horrible working conditions, by wretched housing and overwork. He is a hundred times a hero who prefers to die fighting in open struggle against the defenders and protectors of this infamous system rather than die the lingering death of a crushed, broken-down, and submissive nag. We do not by any means want to imply that scuffling with the police is the best form of struggle. On the contrary, we have always told the workers that it is in their interests to carry on the struggle in a more calm and restrained manner, and to try to make use of all discontent for support to the organised struggle of the revolutionary party. But the principal source that sustains revolutionary Social-Democracy is the spirit of protest among the working class which, in view of the violence and oppression surrounding the workers, is bound to manifest itself from time to time in the form

of desperate outbursts. These outbursts arouse to conscious life the widest sections of the workers, oppressed by poverty and ignorance, and stimulate in them a noble hatred for the oppressors and enemies of liberty. That is why the news of massacres such as that which took place at the Obukhov Works on May 7, makes us exclaim: "The workers' revolt has been suppressed; long live the revolt of the workers!"

There was a time, and not very long ago at that, when workers' revolts were a rare exception, called forth only by some special circumstances. Now things have changed. A few years ago industry was flourishing, trade was brisk, and the demand for workers was great. Nevertheless, the workers organised a number of strikes to improve their working conditions; they realised that they must not let the moment slip by, that they must take advantage of the time when the employers were making particularly high profits and it would be easier to win concessions from them. The boom, however, has given way to a crisis. The manufacturers cannot sell their goods, profits have declined, bankruptcies have increased, factories are cutting production, and workers are being discharged and turned into the streets in masses without a crust of bread. The workers now have to fight desperately, not to improve their conditions, but to maintain the old standards and to reduce the losses the employers impose on them. And so the working-class movement develops in depth and extent: at first, struggle in exceptional and isolated cases; then, unceasing and stubborn battles during industrial prosperity and the trade boom; finally, similar unceasing and stubborn struggle in the period of crisis. We may now say that the working-class movement has become a permanent feature of our life and that it will grow whatever the conditions.

The change-over from boom to crisis will not only teach our workers that united struggle is a permanent necessity, it will also destroy the harmful illusions that began to take shape at the time of industrial prosperity. By means of strikes, the workers were able in some places to force concessions from the employers with comparative ease, and this "economic" struggle assumed an exaggerated significance; it was forgotten that trade unions and strikes can, at best, only win slightly better terms for the sale of labour-power as a commodity. Trade unions and strikes cannot help in

times of crisis when there is no demand for this "commodity", they cannot change the conditions which convert labour-power into a commodity and which doom the masses of working people to dire need and unemployment. To change these conditions, a revolutionary struggle against the whole existing social and political system is necessary; the industrial crisis will convince very many workers of the justice of this statement.

Let us return to the massacre of May 7. We give below available information on the May strikes and manifestations of unrest among the St. Petersburg workers.⁸ We shall also examine the police report of the massacre. Lately we have learned to understand the significance of government (and police) reports of strikes, demonstrations, and clashes with the troops; we have gathered sufficient material to judge the reliability of these reports—the smoke of police falsehoods may sometimes give a clue to the fire of popular indignation.

"On May 7," says the official report, "about two hundred workers employed in various departments of the Obukhov Steel Works in the village of Alexandrovskoye on the Schlüsselburg Highway stopped work after the dinner break, and in the course of their interview with Lieutenant Colonel Ivanov, assistant to the director of the works, put forward a number of groundless demands."

If the workers stopped work without giving two weeks' notice (assuming the stoppage was not due to lawless acts all too frequently committed by the employers), even according to Russian law (which of late has been systematically enlarged and sharpened against the workers), they have merely committed a common offence for which they are liable to prosecution in a magistrate's court. But the Russian Government is making itself more and more ridiculous by its severity. On the one hand, laws are passed designating new crimes (e.g., wilful refusal to work or participation in a mob that damages property or resists armed force), penalties for striking are increased, etc., while on the other, the physical and political possibility of applying these laws and imposing corresponding penalties is disappearing. It is physically impossible to prosecute thousands and tens of thousands of men for refusing to work, for striking, or for

"mobs". It is politically impossible to try each case of this sort, for no matter how the judges are selected and no matter how publicity is emasculated, there still remains at least the shadow of a trial, naturally a "trial" of the government and not of the workers. Thus, criminal laws passed for the definite purpose of facilitating the government's *political* struggle against the proletariat (and at the same time of concealing the political character of the struggle by "state" arguments about "public order", etc.) are steadily forced into the background by *direct* political struggle and open street clashes. "Justice" throws off the mask of majesty and impartiality, and takes to flight, leaving the field to the police, the gendarmes, and the Cossacks, who are greeted with stones.

Let us take the government's reference to the "demands" of the workers. From a legal standpoint stoppage of work is a misdemeanour, irrespective of the workers' demands. But the government has lost its chance of basing itself on the law it recently issued, and it tries to justify its reprisals carried out with "the means at its disposal" by declaring the workers' demands to be without basis. Who were the judges in this affair? Lieutenant-Colonel Ivanov, assistant to the director of the works, the very authority against whom the workers were complaining! It is not surprising, therefore, that the workers reply to such explanations by the powers that be with a hail of stones.

And so, when the workers poured into the street and held up horse trams a real battle began. Apparently the workers fought with all their might, for, although armed only with stones, they managed *twice* to beat off the attacks by police, gendarmes, mounted guards, and the armed factory guard.* It is true, if police reports are to be believed, "several shots" were fired from the crowd, but no one was injured by them. Stones, however, fell "*like hail*", and the workers not only

* Note this! The government communication states that "the armed factory guard" "were already standing by in the factory yard", whereas the gendarmes, mounted guards, and the city police were called out later. Since when, and why, was an *armed* guard maintained *in readiness* in the factory yard? Since the First of May? Did they expect a workers' demonstration? That we do not know; but it is clear that the government is deliberately concealing facts that would explain the mounting discontent and indignation of the workers.

put up a stubborn resistance, they displayed resourcefulness and ability in adapting themselves immediately to the situation and in selecting the best form of struggle. They occupied the neighbouring courtyards and *from over the fences* poured a hail of stones on the tsar's bashi-bazouks, so that even *after* three volleys had been fired, killing one man (only one?) and wounding eight (?) (one of whom died the following day), even after this, although the crowd had fled, the fight still continued and some companies of the Omsk Infantry Regiment had to be called out to "clear the workers out of the neighbouring courtyards".

The government emerged victorious, but such victories will bring nearer its ultimate defeat. Every clash with the people will increase the number of indignant workers who are ready to fight, and will bring into the foreground more experienced, better armed, and bolder leaders. We have already discussed the plan of action these leaders should follow. We have repeatedly pointed to the imperative necessity for a sound revolutionary organisation. But in connection with the events of May 7, we must not lose sight of the following:

Much has been said recently about the impossibility and the hopelessness of street fighting against modern troops. Particularly insistent on this have been the wise "Critics" who have dragged out the old lumber of bourgeois science in the guise of new, impartial, scientific conclusions, and have distorted Engels' words that refer, with reservations, only to a temporary tactic of the German Social-Democrats.⁹ But we see from the example of even this one clash how absurd these arguments are. Street fighting is possible; it is not the position of the fighters, but the position of the government that is hopeless if it has to deal with larger numbers than those employed in a single factory. In the May 7 fighting the workers had nothing but stones, and, of course, the mere prohibition of the city mayor will not prevent them from securing other weapons next time. The workers were unprepared and numbered only three and a half thousand; nevertheless, they repelled the attack of several hundred mounted guards, gendarmes, city police, and infantry. Did the police find it easy to storm the *one* house, No. 63, Schlüsselburg Highway?¹⁰ Ask yourselves—will it be easy to

“*clear the workers*” out of whole blocks, not merely out of one or two courtyards, in the St. Petersburg working-class districts? When the time of decisive battle comes, will it not be necessary to “*clear*” the houses and courtyards of the capital, not only of workers, but of all who have not forgotten the infamous massacre of March 4,¹¹ who have not become reconciled to the police government, but are only terrified by it and not yet confident of their own strength?

Comrades! Do your best to collect the names of those killed and wounded on May 7. Let all workers in the capital honour their memory and prepare for a new and decisive struggle against the police government for the people’s liberty!

Iskra, No. 5, June 1901

Published according to
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THE PERSECUTORS OF THE ZEMSTVO AND THE HANNIBALS OF LIBERALISM¹²

Written in June 1901

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Facsimile of the cover of the magazine *Zarya*, No. 2-3, 1901, which published the following of Lenin's writings: "The Persecutors of the Zemstvo and the Hannibals of Liberalism", the first four chapters of "The Agrarian Question and the 'Critics of Marx'" (under the heading "The 'Critics' on the Agrarian Question"), and "Review of Home Affairs"

It has been said of the Russian peasant that he is poorest of all in the consciousness of his poverty; of the ordinary Russian subject, it may be said that, while he is poor in civil rights, he is poorest of all in the consciousness of his lack of rights. Just as the peasant has grown accustomed to his wretched poverty, to living his life without pondering over the causes of his wretchedness, or the possibility of removing it, so the plain Russian subject has become accustomed to the omnipotence of the government, to living on without a thought as to whether the government can retain its arbitrary power any longer and whether, side by side with it, there are not forces undermining the outmoded political system. A particularly good "antidote" to this political apathy and somnolence is usually contained in the "secret documents"* which reveal that, not only desperate cutthroats and confirmed enemies of the government, but also members of the government itself, including ministers, and even the tsar, realise the tottering state of the autocracy and seek ways and means to improve their position, which they consider totally unsatisfactory. One such document is the Memorandum drawn up by Witte, who, having quarrelled with the Minister of the Interior, Goremykin, over the question of introducing Zemstvo institutions in the outlying regions, decided to display his perspicacity and his loyalty to the autocracy by drawing up an indictment against the Zemstvo.**

* I refer, of course, only to that "antidote"—by no means the sole or even the most "powerful" one—which is represented by the press.

** *The Autocracy and the Zemstvo*. A Confidential Memorandum by the Minister of Finance, S. Y. Witte, with a preface and annotations by R. N. S. Published by *Zarya*,¹³ Stuttgart, Verlag von J. H. W. Dietz Nachf., 1901, pp. xlv and 212.

The charge is levelled against the Zemstvo that it is incompatible with autocracy, that by its very nature it is constitutional, that its existence inevitably gives rise to friction and conflict between the representatives of the public and the government. The indictment is drawn up on the basis of vast (relatively) and fairly well prepared material, and since it is an indictment concerning a political affair (a rather peculiar one at that), we may be sure that it will be read with no less interest and will prove no less useful, than were the indictments in political trials once published in our newspapers.

I

Let us endeavour to determine whether the assertion that our Zemstvo is constitutional is borne out by the facts, and if so, to what extent, and in what precise sense.

In this matter, the epoch in which the Zemstvo was introduced is of particular importance. The fall of serfdom was a historical event of such magnitude that it inevitably made a rent in the police veil concealing class antagonisms. The most solidified and best educated class, and the one most accustomed to political power—the nobility—displayed a very definite desire to restrict the power of the autocracy by means of representative institutions. The reference to this fact in Witte's Memorandum is extremely instructive. He says: "Declarations concerning the necessity of 'representation for the nobility' and concerning 'the right of the Russian nation to elect its representatives to advise the supreme authority' were made at assemblies of nobles as far back as 1859-60." "Even the word 'constitution' was uttered."* "Several Gubernia** Committees

* Dragomanov, "Zemstvo Liberalism in Russia", p. 4. Witte very often fails to mention that he has quoted from Dragomanov (cf., for example, pp. 36-37 of the Memorandum and pp. 55-56 of the above-mentioned article), although he refers to him in some other passages.

** *Gubernia*, *uyezd*, *volost*—Russian administrative-territorial units. The largest of these was the gubernia, which had its subdivisions in uyezds, which in turn were subdivided into volosts. This system of districting continued under the Soviet power until the introduction of the new system of administrative-territorial division of the country in 1929-30.—*Tr.*

for the Peasant Question and individual members of committees called before the drafting commissions urged the necessity of drawing the public into participation in the administration. 'Deputies are openly striving for a constitution,' wrote Nikitenko in his diary in 1859."

"When, after the promulgation of the Regulations of February 19, 1861,¹⁴ the hopes entertained in the autocracy were far from realised, and, moreover, when the 'redder' elements in the administration (like N. Milyutin) were alienated from the implementation of the Regulations, the movement in favour of 'representation' became more nearly unanimous. It found expression in resolutions moved in many assemblies of nobles in 1862, and in petitions drawn up by the assemblies in Novgorod, Tula, Smolensk, Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Tver. The most remarkable of these was the Moscow petition, which pleaded for local self-government, public trials, obligatory redemption of peasant lands, publication of budgets, freedom of the press, and the convening in Moscow of a National Duma representing all classes for the purpose of drawing up a complete system of reforms. Sharpest were the decisions adopted and the petition drawn up by the nobility of Tver on February 2, urging the necessity of introducing a number of civil and economic reforms (e.g., equality of rights for all social-estates, obligatory redemption of peasant lands) and 'the convocation of elected representatives of the whole Russian nation as the only means for satisfactorily settling the questions raised, but not settled, in the Regulations of February 19'.*

"Despite the administrative and judicial penalties inflicted on the initiators of the Tver petition**—continues Dragomanov—(not for

* Dragomanov, op. cit., p. 5. Cited in an abridged form in the Memorandum, p. 64, with a reference, not to Dragomanov, but to *Kolokol*, No. 126 and to *Revue des deux Mondes*, June 15, 1862.¹⁵

** Incidentally, one of the initiators of this petition, Nikolai Alexandrovich Bakunin, a younger brother of the famed M. A. Bakunin, passed away recently (April 19, this year, i.e., 1901) at his estate in Tver Gubernia. Nikolai Alexandrovich signed the petition of 1862, together with his younger brother Alexei and other mediators. This petition, relates the author of an item on N. A. Bakunin, published in one of our newspapers, called down punishment upon its signatories. After a year's confinement in the Fortress of Peter and Paul the signatories were released, but Nikolai Alexandrovich and his brother Alexei were not pardoned (they had not signed the petition for pardon) and as a consequence, were prohibited from holding public office. After that, N. A. Bakunin never made a public appearance, nor could he speak publicly again.... In this manner our government retaliated against the lawful actions of the landed nobility at the time of "the great reforms"! And this was in 1862, prior to the Polish rebellion, at a time when even Katkov¹⁶ proposed the convocation of a Zemsky Sobor. [*Zemsky Sobor* (National Assembly) and

the petition directly, but for the sharp motivation attached to the collective resignation of the civil mediators¹⁷), declarations in the same spirit were made at various assemblies of nobles in 1862 and early in 1863, at which projects for local self-government were also drawn up.

"At this time, a constitutional movement was in progress also among the *raznochintsi*,¹⁸ finding expression there in more or less revolutionary secret societies and proclamations: *Velikoruss* (between August and November 1861, officers like Obruchev and others took part in its publication), *Zemskaya Duma* (1862), *Zemlya i Volya* (1862-63).... *Velikoruss* published a draft petition which, as many said, was to have been submitted to the tsar during the Thousand Years of Russia celebrations in August 1862." The draft petition stated *inter alia*: "May it please Your Majesty to convene in one of the capitals of our Russian fatherland, in Moscow or in St. Petersburg, the representatives of the Russian nation in order that they may draw up a constitution for Russia...."*

If we recall also the proclamation *To Young Russia*,¹⁹ the numerous arrests and the Draconic punishments inflicted upon the "political" criminals (Obruchev, Mikhailov, and others), culminating in the frame-up of Chernyshevsky²⁰ and his being sentenced illegally to penal servitude, we shall have a complete picture of the social situation that gave rise to the Zemstvo reform. Witte states only *half* the truth in his Memorandum when he says that "the idea underlying the establishment of Zemstvo institutions was undoubtedly a political one", that governing circles "undoubtedly took into consideration" the liberal and constitutionalist aspirations of the people. The hidebound official view on social phenomena, which the author of the Memorandum reveals throughout, is here demonstrated by his ignoring the *revolutionary* movement and by his concealing the Draconic measures of repression with which the government *protected* itself against the onset of the revolutionary "party". True, from our modern viewpoint, it seems strange to speak of a revolutionary "party" and of its onset at the beginning of the sixties. Forty years of historical experience have made us more exacting with regard to what may be called revolutionary movements and revolutionary onsets. But it must not be forgotten that at that time, after thirty years of the rule

National Duma were current in Russian literature of the sixties of the past century as terms denoting national representative assembly.—Tr.]

* Cf. V. Burtsev, *One Hundred Years*, p. 39.

of Nicholas I, no one could have foreseen the course of events, no one could have estimated the government's real strength of resistance or the real strength of the people's indignation. Even the most cautious and sober politician could not but acknowledge the possibility of a revolutionary outbreak and the serious danger of a peasant revolt—in the obtaining conditions of the revival of the democratic movement in Europe; the ferment in Poland; the discontent in Finland; the demands for political reforms made by the entire press and by all the nobility; the widespread distribution of *Kolokol* throughout Russia; the powerful appeals of Chernyshevsky, who was able, by means even of censored articles, to educate genuine *revolutionaries*; the appearance of proclamations; the ferment among the peasants, who were “very often”* *compelled* by armed force and bloodshed to accept the Regulations that

* L. Panteleyev, “Reminiscences of the Sixties”, in the collection of essays, *At the Glorious Past* (p. 315).²¹ This minor piece contains a number of very interesting facts on the revolutionary unrest in 1861-62 and on the police reaction.... “Early in 1862 the social atmosphere was extremely tense; the slightest incident could have given a strong impetus to the course of events in either direction. The impetus was given by the great conflagrations that occurred in St. Petersburg in May of that year.” These fires first broke out on May 16 and raged with particular fierceness on May 22 and 23—on the latter date there were five conflagrations. On May 28, the Apraksin Place [a market-place in St. Petersburg named after its owner, Count Apraksin.—*Tr.*] caught fire and a wide area surrounding it was laid waste. The populace attributed these fires to the students, and the rumours were taken up by the newspapers. The manifesto *To Young Russia*, proclaiming a bloody war against the whole existing system and justifying every means to this end, was taken to confirm the rumours of incendiarism. “After May 28, something in the nature of martial law was proclaimed in St. Petersburg.” A special committee was established with powers to take *extraordinary* measures for the protection of the capital. The city was divided into three zones, each under the control of a military governor. A field court martial was set up to try those accused of incendiarism. *Sovremennik*²² and *Russkoye Slovo*²³ were suspended for eight months; *Dyen*,²⁴ published by Aksakov, was suppressed. Stringent temporary press regulations (sanctioned on May 12, *i.e.*, before the fires broke out; consequently, “the progress of events” was towards reaction and was unrelated to the fires, the opinion of Mr. Panteleyev notwithstanding) and regulations for the surveillance of printing locations were resorted to. Numerous political arrests were made (Chernyshevsky and N. Serno-Solov'yevich, Rymarenko, and others); Sunday schools and public reading-rooms were closed; permits for public lectures in St. Petersburg

stripped them of everything; the refusal of whole groups of civil mediators from among the nobility to apply *such* Regulations, and, finally, the student disorders. Under such circumstances, the autocratic government, which held it to be its lofty mission to protect, at all costs, the omnipotence and irresponsibility of the court camarilla and the army of official leeches, on the one hand, and to support the worst representatives of the exploiting classes, on the other—such a government *had no other recourse* than ruthlessly to exterminate individuals, the conscious and indomitable enemies of tyranny and exploitation (i.e., “the ringleaders” of “the revolutionary party”), terrify the masses of discontented people, and bribe them with small concessions. This meant penal servitude for those who preferred to remain silent rather than pour forth stupid or hypocritical phrases about the “great emancipation”; reforms (*innocuous for the autocracy and the exploiting classes*) for those who waxed enthusiastic over the liberalism of the government and the era of progress.

We do not wish to suggest that these calculated reactionary police tactics were clearly conceived and systematically pursued by all, or even by a few, of the members of the ruling clique. Some of them, on account of their narrow-mindedness, may not have pondered on the significance of these tactics as a whole and may have been childishly enthusiastic about “liberalism”, failing to observe its police mantling. In general, however, there is no doubt that the collective experience and collective reasoning of the rulers compelled them to pursue these tactics unswervingly. Not in vain did most of the grandees and notables undergo a prolonged training in bureaucratic and police methods in the service

became more difficult to obtain; and the second department of the Literary Fund²⁵ and even the Chess Club²⁶ were closed down.

The Committee of Inquiry failed to establish any connection between the fires and politics. One of its members, Stolbovsky, told Mr. Panteleyev that in the Committee “he succeeded in exposing the principal false witnesses who, it seems, were the cat’s-paw of police agents” (325-26). Thus, there are weighty grounds for believing that the rumours about *student incendiarism were circulated by the police*. The despicable exploitation of the ignorance of the people for the purpose of slandering revolutionaries and protesters was, therefore, in full swing at the height of the “epoch of great reforms”.

of Nicholas I, and were, so to speak, case-hardened by fire and water. They remembered how sovereigns had at one time flirted with liberalism, and at another acted as the executioners of the Radishchevs²⁷ and "let loose" the Arakcheyevs²⁸ at their loyal subjects; they remembered December 14, 1820,²⁹ and they played the role of gendarme of Europe the Russian Government had played in 1848-49.³⁰ The historical experience of autocracy not only compelled the government to pursue tactics of intimidation and corruption, but also compelled many independent liberals to recommend these tactics to the government. In proof of this, we shall quote the opinions of Koshelev and Kavelin. In his pamphlet, *Constitution, Autocracy, and the National Duma* (Leipzig, 1862), A. Koshelev expresses *opposition* to a constitution, advocates the convening of a National Advisory Duma, and anticipates the following objection:

"To convene a National Duma means to lead Russia towards revolution, i.e., to repeat, in Russia, the *États généraux*,³¹ which were subsequently transformed into the Convention and which came to an end with the events of 1792, the proscriptions, the guillotine, the *noyades*,* etc." "No, gentlemen," replied Koshelev, "it will not be the convocation of a National Duma that will prepare the ground for revolution, as you understand it. Revolution will come much more surely and rapidly as a result of the hesitant and contradictory actions of the government, one step forward—one step backward, edicts and laws impossible of execution, the restraints placed upon thought and speech; as a result of the police (open, and what is worse, secret) surveillance over the actions of the social-estates and of private persons, the petty persecution of certain individuals, the plunder of the Treasury, the squandering of public funds and the lavish granting of rewards, the incapacity of statesmen and their alienation from Russia, etc., etc. A country just awakening from centuries of oppression can be more surely driven to revolution (again as you understand it) by military executions, solitary confinement, and banishment; for rankling wounds are incomparably more sensitive and painful than fresh wounds. But have no fear, the revolution, which, as you suppose, was brought about in France by journalists and other writers, will not break out in Russia. Let us also hope that no society of desperate hotheads, who choose assassination as a means of attaining their ends, will be formed in Russia (although it is more difficult to vouch for that). What is more probable and dangerous is that, influenced by the split and unobserved by the rural, urban, and secret police, an alliance will be established between the peasants and the petty-bourgeois townspeople,

* Mass executions, by drowning.—Ed.

which will be joined by young and old, writers and adherents of *Velikoruss*, *Young Russia*, etc. Such an all-destructive alliance, advocating equality, not before, but despite, the law (What matchless liberalism! We, of course, are in favour of equality, but not of equality *despite* the law—the law which destroys equality!), not the popular, historical village commune, but its morbid progeny, and not the rule of reason, which certain office-holders fear so much, but the rule of brute force, which these office-holders so readily employ—such an alliance, I say, is far more probable in Russia and may be far more powerful than the moderate, well-meaning, and independent opposition to the government which our bureaucrats abhor so much and which they try so hard to restrict and suppress. Do not imagine that the party or the inner, secret, and anonymous press is small and weak, do not imagine that you have plucked it out root and branch. No! By preventing the youth from completing their education, by treating youthful pranks as if they were political crimes, by petty persecution and police surveillance you have increased the strength of that party tenfold, and have multiplied it and spread it throughout the Empire. What will our statesmen resort to in the face of an outbreak resulting from such an alliance? Armed force? But will that be absolutely reliable?" (pp. 49-51).

Do not the pompous phrases of this tirade obviously suggest the tactics: destroy the "hotheads" and the adherents of the "alliance between the peasants and the petty-bourgeois townspeople"; satisfy and disunite the "well-meaning and moderate opposition" through concessions? But the government proved to be cleverer and more agile than the Koshelevs imagined; it conceded much less than a National "Advisory" Duma.

And the following from a private letter written by K. D. Kavelin to Herzen,³² dated August 6, 1862: "... The news from Russia is not so bad, in my opinion. It was not Nicholas Solovyevich that was arrested, but Alexander. The arrests do not surprise me and, I confess, do not seem to me outrageous. A revolutionary party considers every means to overthrow the government justified, while the government defends itself by every means at its disposal. Arrests and banishment under the reign of the despicable Nicholas were quite another thing. People then died for their ideas, their convictions, their faith, and their utterances. I would like to see you in the government's boots and see what you would do against a party that is secretly and openly working against you. I like Chernyshevsky very, very much, but never in my life have I seen such a *brouillon* [an irascible, unso-

ciable bully, a sower of discord],* such a tactless and cocksure fellow! To perish in vain, for absolutely no reason at all! There cannot be the least doubt now that the conflagrations have a connection with the leaflets.”** What an example of servile-professorial profundity! It is the revolutionaries who are to blame for everything; it is they who are conceited enough to hiss at phrase-mongering liberals, they who are so impudent as to work secretly and openly against the government and so tactless as to get themselves incarcerated in the Fortress of Peter and Paul. He, too, the liberal professor, would punish people like these “with all the means at his disposal”, were he in power.

II

Thus, the Zemstvo reform was one of the concessions forced from the autocratic government by public ferment and revolutionary pressure. We have dealt with the character of this pressure in detail in order to supplement and correct the picture outlined in the Memorandum by its bureaucratic author, who obscured the struggle that had given rise to this concession. Nevertheless, the half-hearted and pusillanimous character of this concession is quite clearly described in the Memorandum:

“At first, when the Zemstvo reform was just being undertaken, it was no doubt intended as a first step toward the introduction of representative institutions***, but later, when Count Lanskoi and N. A. Milyutin were replaced by Count Valuyev, there was an obvious desire, as even the ex-Minister of the Interior admits, to act in a spirit of ‘conciliation’, ‘softly and evasively’. ‘The government has no clear

* Interpolations in square brackets (within passages quoted by Lenin) have been introduced by Lenin, unless otherwise indicated.—*Tr.*

** We quote from the German translation of Dragomanov’s edition of the correspondence of K. D. Kavelin and I. S. Turgenev with A. I. Herzen: *Bibliothek russischer Denkwürdigkeiten*, herausgegeben von Th. Schiemann, Stuttgart, 1894, Bd. 4, S. 65-66.

*** There is “no doubt” that the author of the Memorandum, in employing the language of Leroy-Beaulieu, commits the usual bureaucratic exaggeration. There is “no doubt” that neither Lanskoi nor Milyutin had anything very definite in mind, and it is ridiculous to regard the evasive phrases of Milyutin (“in principle in favour of the Constitution, but regards its introduction as premature”) as a “first step”.

idea of its aims,' he said at the time. In short, an attempt was made—unfortunately made so often by statesmen and always with bad results for everyone—to act evasively between two opposite opinions, to satisfy liberal aspirations and preserve the existing system."

The pharisaical word "unfortunately" is highly amusing. A minister of the police government describes as casual the tactics which the government *could not but pursue* and did pursue in adopting the factory inspection laws, as well as the law on the reduction of the working day (June 2, 1897), and which it is now (1901) pursuing in General Vannovsky's flirtation with the "public".³³

"On the one hand, it was stated in the explanatory Memorandum attached to the regulations governing Zemstvo institutions that the purpose of the proposed law was to develop as completely and as consistently as possible the principle of local self-government, and that 'the Zemstvo administration is merely a special organ of one and the same state authority'.... *Severnaya Pochta*, then the organ of the Ministry of the Interior, hinted broadly that the institutions to be established were to serve as schools for representative bodies.

"On the other hand, ... the Zemstvo institutions are described in the explanatory Memorandum as private and as public institutions, subject to the general laws in the same way as individual societies and private persons are subject....

"Both the provisions in the Regulations of 1864 and, in particular, all the subsequent measures adopted by the Ministry of the Interior in relation to the Zemstvo institutions clearly indicate that the 'independence' of the Zemstvo institutions was seen as a great danger, and that the government was afraid to permit the proper development of these institutions, being *fully aware of what that would lead to*. [Our italics throughout.] ... There is no doubt that those who had to carry out the Zemstvo reform did so *merely as a concession to public opinion*, in order as the explanatory Memorandum stated, 'to limit the *unrealisable expectations and radical aspirations* which have been aroused *among the various social-estates* in connection with the establishment of the Zemstvo institutions'; at the same time, these people fully understood it [the reform?] *and strove to prevent the proper development of the Zemstvo*, to give it a private character, restrict its powers, etc. While pacifying the liberals with the promise that the first step would not be the last and declaring, or, to be more precise, echoing the adherents of the liberal trend, that it was necessary to grant the Zemstvo institutions real and independent powers, Count Valuyev, *in the very act of drafting the Regulations of 1864, strove in every way to restrict the powers of those institutions and place them under strict administrative guardianship*....

"Bereft of a single guiding idea, representing a compromise between two opposite trends, the Zemstvo institutions, in the form in which they were established by the Regulations of 1864, proved in practice

to be out of accord with the fundamental idea of local self-government on which they were based, as well as with the administrative system into which they were mechanically inserted and which, moreover, had neither been reformed nor adapted to the new conditions of life. The Regulations of 1864 sought to reconcile the irreconcilable and in that way to satisfy both the advocates and opponents of Zemstvo self-government. *The former were offered superficialities and hopes for the future, while in order to satisfy the latter the powers of the Zemstvo institutions were given an extremely elastic definition.*"

What pointed words our ministers sometimes accidentally let drop when they desire to put a spoke in the wheel of one of their colleagues and to display their profundity, and how useful it would be for every one of our self-complacent Russians and all admirers of the "great" reforms to hang on their walls in golden frames the wise police maxims: "Pacify the liberals with the promise that the first step will not be the last", "offer" them "superficialities and hopes for the future"! It would be particularly useful at the present time to refer to these precepts when reading in articles or other items in newspapers about General Vannovsky's "heartfelt solicitude".

Thus, from the very beginning, the Zemstvo was doomed to serve as a fifth wheel to the wagon of Russian state administration, a wheel *tolerated* by the bureaucracy only insofar as it would not disturb its absolute authority, while the role of the representatives of the population was restricted to the simple technical fulfilment of the functions outlined by this very bureaucracy. The Zemstvos had no executive organs of their own, they had to act through the police, they had no contact with one another, and they were immediately placed under the control of the administration. Having made such a harmless concession, the government, on the very day after the establishment of the Zemstvos, began systematically to impose restrictions upon them; the almighty bureaucratic clique *could not* reconcile itself to the elected representation of the social-estates and began to persecute it in every possible way. A very interesting part of the Memorandum is the summary of facts on this persecution, notwithstanding its obvious incompleteness.

We have seen how pusillanimous and irrational was the attitude of the liberals towards the revolutionary movement at the beginning of the sixties. Instead of supporting the

“alliance of the petty-bourgeois townspeople and the peasants with the adherents of *Velikoruss*”, they feared this “alliance” and held it up as a bogey with which to scare the government. Instead of rising to the defence of the leaders of the democratic movement, persecuted by the government, they pharisaically washed their hands of them and justified the action of the government. This treacherous policy of grandiloquence and shameful flabbiness met with poetic justice. Having dealt with those who proved themselves capable, not merely of jabbering about liberty, but of *fighting* for it, the government felt sufficiently strong to squeeze the liberals out of even the minor and inferior positions which they had occupied “with the permission of the authorities”. So long as the “alliance of the petty-bourgeois townspeople and the peasants” with the revolutionaries represented a serious menace, the Ministry of the Interior itself mumbled words about a “school of representative institutions”, but when the “tactless and cock-sure” hecklers and hotheads had been removed, the “scholars” were treated with an iron hand. Then a tragicomical epic began. The Zemstvo appealed for an extension of its rights, but was *deprived* of one right after another and given “fatherly” homilies in answer to its petitions. But let the historical dates, even those presented in the Memorandum, speak for themselves.

On October 12, 1866, the Ministry of the Interior issued a circular subordinating the Zemstvo employees completely to government institutions. On November 21 a law was passed restricting the right of the Zemstvo in taxing commercial and industrial establishments. The St. Petersburg Zemstvo Assembly, in 1867, sharply criticised this law, and (on the proposal of Count A. P. Shuvalov) adopted a decision to petition the government to arrange for the questions touched upon by this law to be discussed by “the combined forces and with the simultaneous efforts of the central administration and the Zemstvo”. The government’s answer to this petition was to close down the St. Petersburg Zemstvo institutions and to resort to reprisals: the chairman of the St. Petersburg Zemstvo Board, Kruse, was banished to Orenburg; Count Shuvalov—to Paris; and Senator Luboshchinsky was ordered to resign. *Severnaya Pochta*, organ of the Ministry of the Interior, published an article in which “these

stern measures of punishment were explained by the fact that the Zemstvo Assemblies, too, from the very opening of their sessions, had acted contrary to the law [to what law? and why were the law-breakers not brought *to trial*, when only shortly before a speedy, just, and merciful court procedure had been introduced?]; that instead of supporting the Zemstvo Assemblies of other gubernias, utilising for that purpose the rights which His Majesty has graciously granted them for exercising proper care over the local economic interests of the Zemstvo in their charge [i.e., instead of being humbly submissive and following the "intentions" of the officialdom], they strove continuously, by falsely explaining the case and misinterpreting the laws, *to rouse sentiments of mistrust and lack of respect for the government*". After such an admonition, it is not surprising that "the other Zemstvos failed to support the St. Petersburg Zemstvo, although the law of November 21, 1866, had everywhere given rise to deep-going discontent, so that at meetings many people declared it to be tantamount to destroying the Zemstvos".

On December 16, 1866, the Senate issued a "clarification" granting the governors of the gubernias the right to refuse endorsement to any person elected by a Zemstvo Assembly whom the respective governor deemed politically unreliable. On May 4, 1867, there followed another Senate interpretation to the effect that communication of Zemstvo proposals to other gubernias was contrary to law, since Zemstvo institutions must concern themselves only with local affairs. On June 13 the Council of State issued a ruling, with Imperial sanction, prohibiting publication of decisions, minutes, reports of discussions, etc., of the meetings of Zemstvo, urban, and social-estate assemblies without the consent of the gubernia authorities. Further, that law extended the powers of chairmen of Zemstvo Assemblies; it granted them the right to close meetings at their discretion and imposed upon them the obligation, *under threat of punishment*, to close any meeting at which questions not in consonance with the law were presented for discussion. The public greeted this measure with hostility, regarding it as a serious restriction of Zemstvo activity. "Every one knows," Nikitenko entered in his diary, "that the Zemstvos are tied hand and foot by the new regulations which give the chairmen of

Assemblies and the governors of gubernias almost unlimited powers over them." The circular of October 8, 1868 makes it obligatory to obtain the consent of the governor for the publication even of the reports of the Zemstvo Boards and restricts inter-communication between Zemstvos. In 1869 the office of inspector of elementary schools was established for the purpose of taking the effective management of elementary education out of the hands of the Zemstvos. A regulation issued by the Committee of Ministers on September 19, 1869, which received Imperial sanction, declares that "neither in their composition nor in their fundamental principles are Zemstvo institutions governmental authorities". The law of July 4 and the circular of October 22, 1870 confirm and increase the subordination of Zemstvo employees to the governors of the gubernias. In 1871 instructions were issued to the inspectors of elementary schools empowering them to dismiss teachers who were deemed politically unreliable and to suspend all decisions of the school councils and submit them to the school guardians for their sanction. On December 25, 1873, Alexander II, in a rescript addressed to the Minister of Education, expressed the fear that *unless proper guardianship and control are exercised over them*, the elementary schools may be converted "*into an instrument for the moral corruption of the people, some attempts at which have already been disclosed*," and he ordered the marshals of the nobility, by their close co-operation, to preserve the moral influence of the schools. In 1874 a new regulation concerning the elementary schools was issued, which placed the management of the schools entirely in the hands of the head masters. The Zemstvo "protested"—if a petition pleading that the law be revised and that the representatives of the Zemstvo take part in this revision (the petition of the Kazan Zemstvo in 1874) can, without irony, be described as a protest. Of course, the petition was rejected. Etc., etc.

III

Such was the first course of lessons given to Russian citizens in the "school of representative institutions" opened by the Ministry of the Interior. Fortunately, in addition to the political scholars who, in connection with the constitu-

tional declarations of the sixties, wrote that "it is time to give up all nonsense and get down to business, and business is now in the Zemstvo institutions and nowhere else",* there were in Russia also "hotheads", who were not satisfied with such "tact" and went with revolutionary propaganda among the people. Although they adhered to a theory which in essence was not revolutionary, their propaganda roused a spirit of discontent and protest among broad strata of the educated youth. Despite their utopian theory, which rejected political struggle, the movement led to a desperate grapple between the government and a handful of heroes, to a struggle for political freedom. Thanks to this struggle, and to it alone, the situation again changed; the government was once more compelled to make concessions, and the liberals once again revealed their political immaturity, their inability to support the fighters and bring real pressure to bear upon the government. The constitutional aspirations of the Zemstvo became very marked, but these proved to be but a feeble "impulse", despite the fact that Zemstvo liberalism in itself had made decided political progress. Particularly noteworthy was its attempt to establish an illegal party and to set up its own political organ. In his Memorandum, Witte summarises some of these illegal writings (of Cannan, Dragomanov, Tikhomirov), in order to demonstrate the "slippery path" (p. 98) upon which the Zemstvo had entered. In the late seventies, several congresses of Zemstvo liberals were held. The liberals decided "to take measures to bring about at least a temporary cessation of the destructive activities of the extreme revolutionary party, for they were convinced that nothing could be achieved by peaceful means if the terrorists continued to irritate and alarm the government by threats and acts of violence" (p. 99). Thus, instead of making an effort to extend the struggle, to secure considerable public support for individual revolutionaries, to organise some sort of public pressure (in the form of demonstrations, of refusal by the Zemstvo to carry out compulsory expenditures, etc.), the liberals again appealed for "tact"—"not to irritate"

* A letter written by Kavelin to relatives in 1865, in which he refers to the petition of the Moscow nobility for "the convocation of a general assembly of representatives of the land of Russia to discuss needs common to the whole state".

the government!—to employ the “peaceful means” that had so brilliantly proved their futility in the sixties!*

Of course, the revolutionaries refused to agree to any cessation or suspension of fighting actions. The Zemstvo supporters then formed the League of Oppositional Elements, which was later transformed into the Zemstvo Union and Self-Government Society, or Zemstvo Union. The programme of the Zemstvo Union contained the following demands: (1) freedom of speech and the press, (2) inviolability of the person, and (3) the convocation of a Constituent Assembly. An attempt to publish illegal pamphlets in Galicia failed (the Austrian police seized the manuscripts and the persons who intended to print them), and in August 1881 *Volnoye Slovo*,³⁴ edited in Geneva by Dragomanov (ex-professor of Kiev University), became the official organ of the Zemstvo Union. “In the final analysis,” wrote Dragomanov in 1888, “the attempt to publish *Volnoye Slovo* as a Zemstvo organ cannot be regarded as successful, if only for the reason that Zemstvo material did not begin to reach the editorial office regularly until late in 1882 and publication ceased in May 1883” (op. cit., p. 40). The failure of the liberal organ was a natural effect of the weakness of the liberal movement. On November 20, 1878, Alexander II delivered a speech at a meeting of representatives of the social-estates in Moscow, in which he expressed the hope that “he would obtain their co-operation in checking the erring younger generation which was pursuing the fatal path whither suspect persons were striving to lead it.” Later, an appeal for public co-operation appeared in *Pravitelstvenny Vestnik*³⁵ (No. 186, 1878). In reply, five Zemstvo Assemblies (Kharkov, Poltava, Chernigov, Samara, and Tver) issued declarations urging the need to convene a National Assembly. “We may believe also,” says Witte in his Memorandum, after summarising in detail the contents

* Dragomanov said in all justice: “As a matter of fact, liberalism in Russia cannot employ absolutely ‘peaceful means’, because every declaration in favour of changing the higher administration is prohibited by law. The Zemstvo liberals should have stepped resolutely over the bounds of this prohibition, and in this way at least have demonstrated their strength to both the government and the terrorists. As the Zemstvo liberals did not demonstrate this strength, they lived to see the day when the government revealed its intention to destroy the already truncated Zemstvo institutions” (ibid., pp. 41-42).

of these petitions, of which only three appeared in the press in full, "that the Zemstvo declarations on the convocation of a National Assembly would have been far more numerous, had not the Ministry of the Interior taken timely steps to prevent such declarations; the marshals of the nobility, as chairmen of gubernia Zemstvo Assemblies, received circular letters instructing them to prevent even the reading of such petitions at meetings of the assemblies. In some places, arrests were made and councillors banished. In Chernigov the meeting hall was invaded and forcibly cleared by gendarmes" (p. 104).

The liberal magazines and newspapers supported the movement. A petition signed by "twenty-five prominent Moscow citizens" addressed to Loris-Melikov asked for the convocation of an independent assembly of representatives of the Zemstvos which should be given the right to participate in the government of the nation. In appointing Loris-Melikov Minister of the Interior, the government was *apparently* making a concession. But only *apparently*; for not only were no decisive steps taken, there were not even any declarations that might be called positive and incapable of misinterpretation. Loris-Melikov called together the editors of St. Petersburg periodicals and explained to them "the programme": to learn the wishes, needs, etc., of the population, to enable the Zemstvos, etc., to enjoy their legal rights (the liberal programme guarantees the Zemstvos those "rights" of which the law systematically deprives them!), etc. The author of the Memorandum states:

"Through the medium of these interlocutors the Minister's programme was circulated throughout Russia—for which purpose they had been called together. In point of fact, the programme did not promise anything definite. One could read into it anything one desired, i.e., everything or nothing. A leaflet secretly distributed at the time was right in its way [only in "its" way, not absolutely in "every" way!] when it stated that the programme simultaneously wagged a 'fox tail' and gnashed 'wolf's fangs'. This attack on the programme and its author is the more understandable, because, in communicating the programme to the representatives of the press, the Count strongly urged them 'not to confuse and not to excite the public mind needlessly with their

visionary illusions'." But the liberal Zemstvo supporters refused to listen to the *truth* contained in the secret leaflet and accepted the wagging of the "fox tail" as a "new policy" worthy of confidence. "The Zemstvos believed and sympathised with the government," says the Memorandum, quoting an illegally published pamphlet, *The Opinions of the Zemstvo Assemblies on the Present State of Russia*, "and they seemed afraid of running too far ahead and of pestering the government with excessive requests." A characteristic admission on the part of the Zemstvo adherents, who enjoyed freedom of expression! The Zemstvo Union at its congress in 1880 had only just decided "to strive to secure central popular representation, of which an absolute condition would be a single chamber and universal suffrage", when this decision to *strive to secure* was carried out by the tactic of refraining from "*running too far ahead*" and "*believing and sympathising with*" ambiguous declarations that bind no one to anything! With unpardonable naïveté, the Zemstvo adherents imagined that presenting petitions meant "striving to secure"—and petitions "poured in from the Zemstvos in abundance". On January 28, 1881, Loris-Melikov submitted a most humble Memorial to the tsar proposing the establishment of a commission of Zemstvo representatives with advisory powers only, for the purpose of drafting the laws His Majesty would be pleased to indicate. The Special Council set up by Alexander II approved of this measure; the findings of the Council of February 17, 1881, were confirmed by the Tsar, who also approved the text of the government announcement submitted by Loris-Melikov.

"Undoubtedly," writes Witte, "the establishment of such a purely advisory commission did not yet establish a constitution," but, he continues, it can hardly be denied that it represented a step forward (following the reforms of the sixties) towards a constitution and towards nothing else. The author then repeats a statement contained in the foreign press to the effect that upon reading Loris-Melikov's Memorial, Alexander II exclaimed: "Why, this is the *États généraux*.... What is proposed to us is neither more nor less than the Assembly of Notables of Louis XVI."³⁶

We would observe, on our part, that under certain circumstances the application of Loris-Melikov's proposal

might have been a step towards a constitution, but it might also not have been; everything depended on which prevailed—the pressure of the revolutionary party and the liberal public, or the counter-pressure of the very powerful, compact party of persisting supporters of the autocracy that were unscrupulous in the methods they employed. If, however, we speak, not of what might have happened, but of what actually did happen, then we must admit the indubitable fact that the government was *wavering*. Some members of the government were in favour of strenuously resisting the liberals, while others were in favour of making concessions. But—and this is particularly important—even the latter wavered, having no very definite programme and never rising above the level of scheming bureaucrats.

In his Memorandum, Witte writes:

“Count Loris-Melikov appeared to be afraid to look the affair straight in the face and to define his programme with precision; he continued the evasive policy—in another direction, it is true—that had been adopted by Count Valuyev towards the Zemstvo institutions.

“As even the legal press rightly pointed out at the time, the programme announced by Loris-Melikov was distinguished by its extreme vagueness. This vagueness is observed in all the Count’s subsequent actions and pronouncements. On the one hand, he declared that the autocracy was ‘separated from the people’, that ‘he looks to public support as the principal force...’, and that he regarded the proposed reform ‘not as something final, but merely as a first step’, etc. On the other hand, the Count declared at the same time to the press representatives that ‘the hopes aroused among the people are nothing but a visionary illusion...’, and in his most humble Memorial to the Tsar, he stated categorically that a National Assembly would be ‘a dangerous experiment of reverting to the past...’, that the measure he proposed would not in any way restrict the powers of the autocracy, since it had nothing in common with Western constitutional forms. Generally speaking, as L. Tikhomirov has fitly remarked, the Memorial itself is distinguished by its wonderfully confused wording” (p. 117).

In his attitude towards the freedom *fighters* Loris-Melikov, that notorious hero of the “dictatorship of the heart”,³⁷ displayed “a cruelty unparalleled, before or since, in ordering the execution of a seventeen year-old youth for a printed leaflet found in his possession. Loris-Melikov did not forget the most remote parts of Siberia, and he did everything to worsen the conditions of the exiles suffering for their propaganda” (V. Zasulich in *Sotsial-*

Demokrat,³⁸ No. 1, p. 84). In view of the government's wavering, only a force capable of earnest struggle could have secured a constitution; but such a force was lacking—the revolutionaries had exhausted themselves by their effort of March 1³⁹; there was neither a broad movement nor a strong organisation of the working class, and the liberal public on this occasion again proved to be so politically immature that even after the assassination of Alexander II it restricted itself to the mere presentation of petitions. The *Zemstvos*, the municipalities, and the liberal press (*Poryadok*, *Strana*, *Golos**), all presented petitions. Particularly loyal, artful, and nebulous were the petitions of the liberal authors of memoranda, such as the Marquis of Velepolski, Professor Chicherin, and Professor Gradovsky. Witte's Memorandum reproduces their content from a pamphlet published in London,** *The Constitution of Count Loris-Melikov* (Free Russian Press Fund, London, 1893). Those authors invented ingenious devices for bringing the monarch to cross the Rubicon without his being aware of it". It stands to reason that all these cautious petitions and artful devices proved utterly useless without a revolutionary force, and the autocratic party triumphed—triumphed despite the fact that on March 8, 1881, a majority of the Council of Ministers (seven against five) had voted *in favour* of Loris-Melikov's proposal. (So the pamphlet has it; but Witte, who assiduously cites its authors, for some reason or other declares in his Memorandum: "It is not authentically known what happened at this meeting of March 8 and what it resulted in; it would be rash to rely upon the rumours that have reached the foreign press," p. 124). On April 29, 1881, the Manifesto on the reaffirmation and preservation of autocracy, described by Katkov as "manna from heaven", was promulgated.

* *Poryadok* (Order); *Strana* (The Country); *Golos* (The Voice).—*Ed.*

** As we have seen, the author of the Memorandum most carefully copies from illegal pamphlets and admits that "the underground press and the literary works published abroad quite correctly judged the position on this question from their point of view" (p. 91). The only thing original produced by this learned Russian "political-scientist" is a certain amount of raw material; he has had to borrow all the fundamental points of view regarding political questions in Russia from underground literature.

For the second time since the emancipation of the peasants the revolutionary tide was swept back, and following it and as a consequence of it, the liberal movement for a second time gave way to *reaction*, over which Russian progressive society, of course, raised bitter lamentations. We are past masters of the art of lamentation; we lament the tactlessness and self-assurance of revolutionaries in harassing the government; we lament the government's indecisiveness when, finding that it is not confronted by a real force, it makes pseudo-concessions and takes back with one hand what it has given with the other; we lament "the age without ideas and ideals", when the government, having settled scores with revolutionaries whom the people failed to support, hastens to make up for lost time and fortifies itself for a fresh onslaught.

IV

The epoch of the "dictatorship of the heart", as Loris-Melikov's ministry has been described, proved to our liberals that even the "constitutionalism" of one of the ministers, even of the Prime Minister, with the government wavering and the Council of Ministers approving "the first step towards reform" by a majority, still guarantees precisely nothing, if there is no serious social force capable of compelling the government to surrender. It is interesting to note also that the government of Alexander III did not show its fangs immediately upon the promulgation of the Manifesto reaffirming the autocracy, but found it necessary for a time to fool the "public". In employing the term "fool" the public, we do not suggest that the government adopted the Machiavelian scheme of some minister, notable, or other. It cannot be over-emphasised that the system of pseudo-concessions and of seemingly important steps "to meet" public opinion has become an integral part of the policy of every modern government, including the Russian, for the Russian Government has for many generations recognised the necessity of reckoning with public opinion in one way or another, and in the course of many generations has trained statesmen in the shrewd art of domestic diplomacy. Such a diplomat was Count Ignatyev, whose appointment to the Ministry of the Interior in place of Loris-Melikov was intended to cover the

government's retreat towards out and out reaction. More than once Ignatyev proved himself a demagogue and deceiver of the worst type, so much so that Witte reveals in his Memorandum not a little "police complacency" when he describes the period of his office as an "unsuccessful attempt to create a country with local self-government and with an autocratic tsar at its head". True, this is precisely the "formula" advanced at the time by I. S. Aksakov; it was utilised by the government for its manoeuvres and was assailed by Katkov, who proved conclusively that there is a necessary connection between local self-government and a constitution. But it would be short-sighted to attempt to *explain* the well-known tactics of the police government (tactics deriving from its very nature) by the prevalence of this or that political view at the given moment.

Ignatyev issued a circular, in which he promised that the government would "take urgent measures to introduce proper methods to secure, with the maximum of success, the active participation of local public figures in the execution of His Majesty's designs". The Zemstvos responded to this "call" by petitions pleading for the convocation of an assembly "of the elected representatives of the people" (from the memorandum of a member of the Cherepovets Zemstvo; the governor did not even permit the opinion of a member of the Kirillov Zemstvo to be published). The government instructed the governors to "take no further action" with regard to these petitions; "at the same time, measures were apparently taken to prevent other assemblies from submitting similar petitions". The notorious attempt was made to call a conference of "qualified people" hand-picked by the ministers (for the purpose of discussing questions of reducing land redemption payments,⁴⁰ regulating migration, reforming local government, etc.). "The work of the committees of experts evoked no sympathy among the public and, *notwithstanding all the precautionary measures*, even aroused a direct protest from the Zemstvos. Twelve Zemstvo Assemblies petitioned that Zemstvo representatives be invited to participate in legislative activity, not only on special occasions and by appointment from the government, but permanently and by election from the Zemstvos." An attempt by the Samara Zemstvo to adopt a similar motion was pre-

vented by the chairman, "after which the Assembly broke up in protest" (Dragomanov, op. cit., p. 29; Memorandum, p. 131). That Count Ignatyev *duped* the Zemstvos is apparent from the following fact: "Mr. Ustimovich, Marshal of the Poltava Nobility and author of the draft Constitutional Petition of 1879, openly declared in the Gubernia Assembly of Nobles that he had received *positive assurances* [sic!] from Count Ignatyev that the government would call upon the representatives of the country to take part in legislative activity" (Dragomanov, *ibid.*).

These frauds of Ignatyev crowned the work of covering up the government's transition to a decisively new policy, and not without good reason did D. A. Tolstoi, who on May 30, 1882, was appointed Minister of the Interior, earn the nickname "Minister of Struggle". Petitions from the Zemstvos even for the convening of some sort of private conferences were unceremoniously rejected. There was even a case of a government commission replacing a Zemstvo Board and banishing its members, on a complaint lodged by a governor against "the systematic opposition" of the Zemstvo (of Cherepovets). D. A. Tolstoi, a faithful disciple and follower of Katkov, went further and decided to "reform" the Zemstvo institutions. The idea underlying the reform (which, as we have seen, was confirmed by history) was that "the opposition to the government has strongly entrenched itself in the Zemstvos" (p. 139 of the Memorandum, dealing with the original plan for Zemstvo reform). D. A. Tolstoi planned to replace the Zemstvo Boards with bureaus subordinated to the governor and to make all decisions of the Zemstvo Assemblies subject to the governor's sanction. This would have been a truly "radical" reform; but it is extremely interesting to note that even this disciple of Katkov, this "Minister of Struggle", in the words of the Memorandum, "did not abandon the usual policy of the Ministry of the Interior towards the Zemstvo institutions. In the draft of his project, Tolstoi did not openly express his idea, actually to abolish the Zemstvos; on the pretext of correctly developing the principle of local self-government, he sought to preserve their external form, but, at the same time, deprive them of all internal substance". This cunning policy of "the fox tail" was still further supplemented and developed in the

Council of State, with the result that the Zemstvo Regulations of 1890 "proved to be another half-measure in the history of Zemstvo institutions. They did not abolish the Zemstvos, but rendered them featureless and colourless; they did not destroy their character as being representative of all social-estates, but they gave them a social-estate tinge; ... they did not convert the Zemstvo institutions into regular organs of the state, ... but increased the power of the governors over them ... and increased the governor's power of veto". "The Regulations of July 12, 1890, were, in keeping with their author's design, a step in the direction of abolishing the Zemstvo institutions, not a radical reform of Zemstvo local self-government."

The Memorandum goes on to state that this new "half-measure" did not remove the opposition to the government (it was, of course, impossible to remove the opposition to a reactionary government by intensifying that reaction), but merely drove *certain* of its manifestations below the surface. The opposition manifested itself, first, in the fact that certain anti-Zemstvo laws—if one may so term them—met with resistance and were not carried out *de facto*; it manifested itself, again, in constitutional (or, at all events, constitution-flavoured) petitions. Thus, the law of June 10, 1893, which tied up the Zemstvo medical service in a tangle of detailed regulations, met with the first-mentioned type of opposition. "The Zemstvo institutions put up a strenuous resistance to the Ministry of the Interior, which had to make a retreat. The Ministry was compelled to suspend the introduction of new regulations, already drafted, to reserve them for a complete collection of the laws, and to draft a fresh proposal on altogether different principles [i.e., principles more acceptable to the Zemstvos]." The Assessment of Real Estate Act of June 8, 1893, which similarly introduced the principle of regulation and restricted the rights of the Zemstvos in the assessment of rates, likewise gave rise to dissatisfaction, and in many cases "is not being applied in practice". The medical and statistical institutions established by the Zemstvos, which have brought considerable benefit to the population (as compared with the bureaucracy, of course), proved themselves of sufficient strength to paralyse the regulations drawn up in the chancelleries of St. Petersburg.