

CLASSIC REPRINT SERIES

OUR DIFFERENCES



by
Georgi? Valentinovich Plekhanov

Forgotten Books

Georgi Plekhanov
Our Differences
(1885)

Originally published in early 1885. [1]

This version from G. Plekhanov, *Selected Philosophical works*, Vol.1, Moscow
n.d., pp.122-399.

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Transcribed by Omar Pie & Robert Cymbala.

Corrected & marked by Einde O'Callaghan for the **Marxists' Internet Archive**.

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Note

1. The book *Our Differences* was written by Plekhanov in the summer of 1884 and published at the beginning of 1885 in the third volume of the *Library of Modern Socialism*. It was the second big theoretical work of the Emancipation of Labour group, following *Socialism and the Political Struggle*. The significance of this work was rated very high by Engels in his letter of April 23, 1885, to Vera Zasulich. (Cf. *Correspondence of Marx and Engels with Russian Political Figures*, Russ. ed., 1951, pp.308-11.)

An interesting reaction to the publication of *Our Differences* was a letter of the Petersburg workers' group called Blagoyevtsi (after Blagoyev), one of the first Social-Democratic groups in Russia, to the Emancipation of Labour group. The letter dates to 1884 or 1885 and is kept in the Plekhanov Archives. In it the workers wrote:

“If this book does not induce people to adhere to the opinions of our group (though examples of this have already been observed), there can be no doubt that it provides a mass of material for the criticism of the Narodnaya Volya programme, and a recasting of that programme is positively necessary for the struggle. If possible, send us large numbers of this pamphlet ...”

Plekhanov himself attributed particular significance to this book as a most important stage in the ideological fight against Narodism. Ten years after its publication he made two attempts to publish under the same title, as a second part of this book, his new works directed, this time, against liberal Narodniks, Mikhailovsky, Vorontsov and others. But as both these works were published legally, Plekhanov, in order not to reveal their author, was obliged to give them other names, *The Development of the Monist View of History* and *Justification of Narodism in the Works of Mr. Vorontsov (V.V.)*. Later fighting the Epigoni of Narodism, the Socialist-Revolutionaries, Plekhanov again proposed to

give the same title to a book directed against them. But this book was never completed and was published in the form of several articles in *Iskra*, in 1903 under the title *Proletariat and Peasantry* (Cf. *Iskra* Nos.32-35 and 39.)

Like other early works of Plekhanov published in the eighties and nineties, *Our Differences* was not republished until 1905 and became a bibliographical rarity. In 1905 it was republished in Vol.I (the only one published) of the Geneva edition of his *Works*.

The text published in the present edition has been checked with the first edition and with the first volume of the Geneva edition of Plekhanov's *Works*.

Letter to P.L. Lavrov

(In Lieu of Preface)

Dear Pyotr Lavrovich,

You are dissatisfied with the Emancipation of Labour group. In No.2 of *Vestnik Narodnoi Voli* you devoted a whole article to its publications, and although the article was not a very long one, its two and a half pages were enough to express your disagreement with the group's programme and your dissatisfaction over its attitude to the "Narodnaya Volya party". [1*]

Having been long accustomed to respect your opinions and knowing, moreover, how attentively our revolutionary youth of all shades and trends listen to them, I take the liberty of saying a few words in defence of the group, towards which, it seems, you are not quite fair.

I consider myself all the more entitled to do so as in your article you speak mainly of my pamphlet *Socialism and the Political Struggle*. As it was that pamphlet which caused your reproaches, it is most fitting that its author should answer them.

You find that the pamphlet can be divided into two parts, "to each of which", in your opinion, "you must adopt a different attitude". One part, "namely, the second chapter, deserves the same attention as any serious work on socialism". The other, which constitutes a considerable portion of the pamphlet, you say, is devoted to a controversy on the past and present activity of the Narodnaya Volya party, whose

organ abroad your journal intends to be. Not only do you disagree with the opinions which I express in that part, but the very fact of a "controversy with Narodnaya Volya" seems to you to deserve severe censure. You think "it would not be particularly difficult to prove to Mr. Plekhanov that his attacks can be countered with quite weighty objections (all the more as, perhaps due to haste, his quotations are not exact)." You are convinced that my "own programme of action contains perhaps more serious shortcomings and unpractical things than I accuse the Narodnaya Volya party of." But to my immense regret you cannot spare the time to point out these shortcomings and unpractical things. "The organ of the Narodnaya Volya party," you say, "is devoted to the struggle against the political and social enemies of the Russian people"; that struggle is so complicated that it takes up "*all your time, all your work*". You have "neither the leisure nor the desire" to devote a part of your publication "to a controversy with groups of Russian revolutionary socialism which consider a controversy with Narodnaya Volya more timely for them than the struggle against the Russian Government and the other exploiters of the Russian people." Hoping that time itself will settle the questions at issue in your favour, you do not consider it useful "to stress" your "not particularly serious disagreement" with the Emancipators of Labour, as you choose to call us [1], "by direct blows at a group the majority of whose members may any day now be in the ranks of *Narodnaya Volya*." This transformation of "Emancipators of Labour" into members of Narodnaya Volya appears all the more probable to you as, to quote your own words, "Mr. Plekhanov himself, as he said in the preface to his pamphlet, has already undergone a sufficiently great evolution in his political and social convictions" and you "have reason to hope for new steps" on

my part “in the same direction”. Reaching that point in my “evolution” – a point which apparently seems to you the apogee of possible development of Russian socialism at present – you hope I may acknowledge still another aspect of the practical task of every group in the social army fighting the common enemy, namely, “that to disrupt the organisation of that army, even if one sees or assumes certain shortcomings in it, is permissible only either to the enemies of that army’s *cause* (among whom you do not include me), or to a group which by its own activity, its own strength and organisation, is capable of becoming a social army at a particular historical minute”. But such a role, in your opinion, “is a matter of a remote and perhaps somewhat doubtful future” for the “Emancipators of Labour” as such, i.e., for people who have not yet completed the cycle of their transformations and are now something like Narodnaya Volya larvae or pupae.

Such, dear Pyotr Lavrovich, is the almost word-for-word content of all that you said about my pamphlet. Perhaps I have wearied you with my abundance of quotations from your own article, but, on the one hand, I was afraid I would again receive the reproach that my “quotations are not exact”, and, besides, I did not consider it superfluous to recall your words in full to the reader, so as to make it easier for him to pronounce the final verdict in our case. You know that the reading public is the chief and supreme judge in all disputes which arise in the free “republic of speech”. It is, therefore, not surprising that each of the parties must take all steps to make the true character of the question under dispute clear to the public.

After setting forth your remarks on my pamphlet and your considerations on the tactics adopted by the Emancipation of Labour group towards the “Narodnaya Volya party”, I now go on, dear Pyotr Lavrovich, to explanations without which it is impossible to understand correctly the motives which prompted my comrades and me to act precisely in this way and no other.

Actually, I could say that all talk of such motives is completely unnecessary, and the reader may find it of very little interest. How so? Is not the question of the immediate tasks, the tactics and the scientific substantiation of all our revolutionaries’ activity the most important and most vital question in Russian life for us? Can it be regarded as already settled finally and without appeal? Is not every revolutionary writer obliged to promote its clarification by all means at his disposal and with all the attention he is capable of? Or can this clarification be considered useful only if it results in the conviction that although the Russian revolutionaries have not the pope’s infallibility, they have not made a single mistake in their practical work or a single error in their theoretical arguments, that “all is well” in both these respects? Or must those who do not share that pleasant confidence be condemned to silence, and may the purity of their intentions be suspected every time they take up their pen to call the revolutionaries’ attention to the way the revolutionary cause is being conducted, and how, as far as they can judge, it should be conducted? If Spinoza said as early as in the seventeenth century that in a free state everybody must be granted the right to think as he pleases and say what he thinks, may that right be placed in doubt at the end of the nineteenth century by members of a socialist party, if even of the most backward state in Europe? If the

Russian socialists recognise in principle the right of free speech and include the demand for it in their programmes, they cannot restrict its *enjoyment* to the group or “party” which claims hegemony in a particular period of the revolutionary movement. I think that now, when our legal literature is persecuted most ruthlessly, when in our fatherland “all that is living and honest is mown down” [2*] in the field of thought as in all others – I think that at such a time a revolutionary writer should rather be asked the reason for his *silence* than for the *fact of the publication* of one or other of his works. If you agree with this – and you can hardly fail to – you will also agree that one cannot condemn to hypocrisy a revolutionary writer who, as Herzen splendidly puts it, must sacrifice very, very much to “the human dignity of free speech”. And if that also is true, can he be censured if he says in plain terms and without any reservation what he thinks of any of the programmes of revolutionary activity? I am sure, dear Pyotr Lavrovich, that you will answer that question in the negative. For that I have one guarantee, among others, in your having signed the *Announcement of the Publication of Vestnik Narodnoi Voli*, page VIII of which tells us:

“Socialism, like every other vital historical idea, gives rise to numerous, though not particularly substantial, differences among its supporters, and many questions in it, both theoretical and practical, remain disputable. Owing to the greater intricacy, the greater difficulties and the greater recency of the development of Russian socialism, there is perhaps a still larger number of more or less considerable differences in the views of Russian socialists. But, we repeat, this just goes to show that the Russian socialist party is a living one which stimulates energetic thought and firm convictions among its supporters, a party which has not contented itself with dogmatic belief in formulae learned by rote.”

I do not understand how an editor who signed that announcement can be dissatisfied at the writings of a group whose differences with Narodnaya Volya he considers “not particularly substantial” (*Vestnik Narodnoi Voli* No.2, section II, page 65, line 10 from bottom); I cannot imagine that the journal which published that announcement can be hostile to people who “have not contented themselves with dogmatic belief in formulae learned by rote.” For one cannot entertain the thought that the lines I have quoted were written merely to explain to the reader why “the programme put forward by *Vestnik Narodnoi Voli* embraces views which are to a certain extent not identical with one another” (*Announcement of the Publication of Vestnik Narodnoi Voli*, p.VII). Nor can one presume that after setting itself such a “definite programme” *Vestnik* will see a vital significance in the “more or less considerable differences between the Russian socialists” only if they “do not go beyond the limits” of that programme, which “embraces views which are to a certain extent not identical with one another.” That would mean being tolerant only to members of one’s own church, admitting with Shchedrin’s characters that opposition is harmless only if it does no harm. Such liberalism, such tolerance, would not be of great comfort to Russian “nonconformist” [3*] socialists, of whom there are apparently no few now since you speak yourself in your article of “groups which consider a controversy with Narodnaya Volya more timely”, etc. From these words it is obvious that there are at least two such groups and that *Vestnik*, “which intends to be the organ of unification of all the Russian socialist-revolutionaries”, is still far from having attained its aim. I think that such a failure should have widened, not narrowed the limits of the inherent tolerance of its editorial board.

You advise me not “to disrupt the organisation” of our revolutionary army. But allow me first of all to inquire what “social army” you are talking about. If by that metaphor you mean the organisation of the “Narodnaya Volya party”, I never thought my pamphlet would have such destructive influence on it, and I am convinced that the first member of Narodnaya Volya that you ask will put you at ease on that score. But if by “disrupting the organisation of the social army” you mean winning to our group people who for some reason or other are outside the “Narodnaya Volya party”, the “organisation of the social army” only stands to gain by that, for in it there will appear a new group, composed, so to speak, of new recruits. Besides, since when has discussion of the path followed by this or that army and the expression of the assurance that there is another path which will lead more surely and quickly to victory been considered as “disruption of the organisation of that army”? I think such a confusion of concepts is possible only among the barbarous hordes of the Asiatic despotic states, but certainly not among the armies of modern civilised states. For who is not aware that criticism of the tactics adopted by this or that army can harm only the military reputation of that army’s generals, who are perhaps not disinclined to “lay the finger of silence” on indiscreet mouths. But what has that to do with the “organisation of the army”, and who, indeed, are its leaders? You know that such leaders can be either elected by the rank and file or appointed from above. Let us agree for a minute that the Executive Committee plays the role of leader to our revolutionary army. The question is: are even those who did not take part in its election obliged to submit to it, or, if it was appointed from above, who had the power, and what power, to appoint it?

You include the Emancipation of Labour group among the “groups of Russian revolutionary socialism which consider a controversy with *Narodnaya Volya* more timely for them than the struggle against the Russian Government and the other exploiters of the Russian people.” Allow me to ask you whether you think that the peculiarities of the Russian people and the “present historical moment” also include the circumstance that the struggle “against its exploiters” can be waged without the dissemination of the ideas which express the meaning and the tendency of that struggle. Is it for me, a former “rebel” [4*], to prove to you, a former editor of the journal *Vperyod*, that the growth of the revolutionary movement is inconceivable without the dissemination of the most progressive, the soundest, in a word, the most revolutionary ideas and concepts among the appropriate section of society? Are you one whose attention must be drawn to the circumstance that socialism – “as expressed” in the works of Marx and Engels – is the most powerful spiritual weapon in the struggle against all possible exploiters of the people? The dissemination of what the writers just named taught is precisely the purpose of my comrades, as is clearly stated in the announcement of the publication of the *Library of Modern Socialism*. There can be no doubt that the socialism of Marx’s school differs in many respects from “Russian socialism as expressed” in our revolutionary movement as a whole and in the “*Narodnaya Volya* party” in particular, for “Russian socialism” still wears a long Bakuninist pigtail down its back. It is also quite natural and understandable that Russian Marxists are therefore not infrequently obliged to adopt a negative attitude towards certain “formulae learned by rote”, but it by no means follows from this that they prefer the struggle against the revolutionaries to the struggle against the

government. In *Vestnik Narodnoi Voli* a certain Mr. Tarasov exerts himself to refute one of the fundamental propositions of Marx's historical theory. [2] His article is given the first place, the foremost corner, so to speak, in No.2 of *Vestnik*. [6*] Does this mean that Mr. Tarasov regards a controversy with Marx as "more timely than the struggle against the Russian Government and the other exploiters of the Russian people"? Or does a controversy which is appropriate and "timely" coming from the pen of Dühringists, Bakuninists and Blanquists become an insult to the grandeur of the Russian revolution as soon as Marxists raise their voice? Is such an attitude on the part of an author who has so often declared his agreement with Marx's theories fair, nay more, is it explainable?

I am well aware that it is by no means easy to settle the question of our revolutionary party's tasks from the point of view of Marx's theories. The fundamental principles of these theories are, in fact, only the "major term" in the syllogism, so that people who equally recognise the correctness and the great scientific significance of this first term may either agree or disagree as to the conclusion, according to the way in which they understand the "minor" term, which is this or that assessment of the present Russian situation. That is why I am not at all surprised at your disagreement with our programme, although I think that if you were still a Marxist you would not be capable of "proving" to me that "my" programme contains "more serious shortcomings and unpractical things" than I "accuse the Narodnaya Volya party of." But no disagreements in assessing the present Russian situation will explain to me and my comrades the unfair attitude that you adopted towards us in your article.

I appeal to the reader's impartiality. On the desk before the editor of *Vestnik Narodnoi Voli* lie two pamphlets published by the Emancipation of Labour group. One of them is a translation of a work by Engels which the honourable editor calls "the most remarkable work of socialist literature in recent years".

The second, in the words of the same editor, deserves, as far as one part of it is concerned, "the same attention as any serious work on socialism". The second part contains "a controversy on the past and present activity of Narodnaya Volya", a controversy aimed at proving to that party that "having dealt the death-blow to all the traditions of orthodox Narodism by its practical activity and having done so much for the development of the revolutionary movement in Russia, the Narodnaya Volya party cannot find a justification for itself – nor should it seek one – outside modern scientific socialism". [3] And that *part of a part* of the Emancipation of Labour group publications proves, in the opinion of our editor, that the group sets itself almost exclusively the task of "polemising with Narodnaya Volya" and is ready, for that purpose, to give up the struggle against the government! Even the least impartial reader will agree that such an inference from the part to the whole is not justified by the character of the other parts of that whole.

I do not deny that "one part" of my pamphlet is controversial, or to be more exact, critical. But the fact that a controversy with Narodnaya Volya was not the exclusive aim even of the part incriminated is obvious if only from what you, Pyotr Lavrovich, have overlooked, namely, that my criticism was not confined to the Narodnaya Volya period in the Russian revolutionary movement. I also criticised other

stages in it. And if, indeed, from the fact of my printed and, moreover, *motivated* expression of disagreement with one revolutionary programme or another it follows that a controversy against that programme is the main aim of my writing, the accusation brought against me should, in the interest of truth, have been considerably extended. It should have been said that the principal aim of my writing was to polemise with the anarchists, the Bakuninists, the Narodniks of the old trend, the members of Narodnaya Volya and, finally, the “Marxists” who do not understand the significance of the political struggle for the emancipation of the proletariat. Moreover, it should also have been taken into account that “the other part of Mr. Plekhanov’s pamphlet is devoted to the exposition and proof of the philosophical and historical side of the teaching of Marx and Engels”. Then it would have been clear that I was guilty of spreading the revolutionary views that I share and of polemising with those which seem to me erroneous. But there is more to it than that. A careful examination of all the circumstances of the case would have revealed that my crime had been committed “with pre-considered intent”, since as far back as in the *Announcement of the Publication of the Library of Modern Socialism* P. Axelrod and I expressly stated that the purpose of those editions boiled down to:

1. The spreading of the ideas of scientific socialism by translating into Russian the most important works of the school of Marx and Engels and original works intended for readers with various degrees of education.
2. The criticism of the teachings prevalent among our revolutionaries and the elaboration of the most important questions in Russian social life from the standpoint of scientific socialism and the interests of the working population of Russia.

That is the true character of the “deed” that provoked your dissatisfaction. To make even a single reproach to the man who committed it one must first prove that there is now no need for criticism of the programmes and teachings prevalent among us revolutionaries, or that criticism must be transformed, as Belinsky once said – naturally in another connection – into “a modest servant of authority, a flattering repeater of worn-out commonplaces”. But I have already said that there is hardly a writer who would undertake to support such an unheard-of proposition, and you, dear Pyotr Lavrovich, will certainly on no account assert that it is time for our revolutionary party to “content itself with dogmatic belief in formulae learned by rote”. If that is so, then

Wozu der Laerm?

However, many people, although they cannot bring themselves to deny completely the significance of criticism in our revolutionary literature, apparently think that not every person or individual group of persons has the right to criticise the teachings and tactics of an “active party”. Since my pamphlet was published I have frequently had the occasion to hear remarks in that vein. “Party of action”, “the traditions of Narodnaya Volya”, “heroic struggle” – such have been the phrases used to disguise fear of the slightest reference to “formulae learned by rote” of our revolutionary catechism. My right to express disagreement with the “Narodnaya Volya party”, or rather with its writings, has been contested with utter disregard of who is right – the publicists of our “party of action” or I. As I listened to these attacks on my pamphlet I could not help recalling the argument of the “Bachelor of Salamanca”, Don Inigo-i-

Medroso-Comodios-i-Papalamiendo [7*], in the famous *controversé des mais*.

“*Mais, monsieur, malgré toutes les belles choses que vous venez de me dire,*” this dialectician said, “*vous m’avouerez que votre église anglicane, si respectable, n’existait pas avant dom Luther et avant dom Eccolampade; vous êtes tout nouveaux: donc vous n’êtes pas de la maison!*” And I wonder whether the arguments furnished by the great satirist to his bitterest enemies can be used seriously by Russian revolutionaries and whether the caricature of the Catholic “bachelor” is to become the perfect image of Russian revolutionary dialecticians. You will agree, dear Pyotr Lavrovich, that there is nothing sadder than such a prospect and that no anxiety for the integrity of the “organisation” means anything at all in comparison with fear of the possibility of such terrible intellectual degeneration!

It is in the interests of Narodnaya Volya to counteract as resolutely as possible the degeneration of our revolutionary literature into revolutionary scholasticism. And yet, your article, my dear Pyotr Lavrovich, is more likely to maintain than to weaken the zeal of our revolutionary “bachelors”. The conviction expressed by you that “to disrupt the organisation” of the revolutionary army “is permissible only either to the enemies of that army’s *cause* ... or to a group which by its own activity, its own strength and organisation, is capable of becoming a social army at a particular historical minute”, your pointing out that, as regards our group, “this role is a matter of a remote and perhaps somewhat doubtful future” – all this can give grounds for the conclusion that, in your opinion, although our group “may have its own view at its age” [8*], it must carefully conceal it every time it

contradicts the opinion of the editors of one or other of the “Narodnaya Volya party” periodicals. Of course it would be wrong to draw such a conclusion from what you wrote, but one must not forget that people do not always judge by the rules of strict logic.

The very principle you express in the lines just quoted can give rise to many unfortunate misunderstandings. Those lines can be a completely “untimely” *avis* for nonconformist readers, whom they can lead on to approximately the following thoughts. *It is permissible* for a group capable of becoming “a social army at a particular historical minute” to “disrupt the organisation” of our revolutionary army. All the more it is “permissible” for the latter, as a tried and tested force, “to disrupt the organisation” of “nonconformist” groups whose hegemony it considers a matter of a remote and “perhaps somewhat doubtful” future. But which revolutionary group do the editors of *Vestnik Narodnoi Voli* consider to be a “social army”? Probably the “Narodnaya Volya party”. That means – but the conclusion is clear, and it is an extremely sad conclusion for groups which have hitherto taken for granted, as we have, that the outlooks of others may be criticised but that the organisations of others must not be “disrupted” and that it is better to advance “alongside of them, *supporting and supplementing one another.*” [4]

Our group’s future seems doubtful to you. I am prepared to doubt of it myself as far as our group itself, not the outlooks which it represents, is concerned. [5]

The fact of the matter is as follows.

It is no secret to anybody that our revolutionary movement is now going through a critical period. Narodnaya Volya's terrorist tactics set our party quite a number of highly important and vital problems. But unfortunately these problems are still unsolved. The stock of Bakuninist and Proudhonist theories that were in use among us proved insufficient even for the correct *posing* of those questions. The stick that was previously bent over in one direction has now been bent back in the other. The former completely unjustified rejection of "politics" has now given place to a no more justified confidence in the omnipotence of conspiratorial "political scheming". The Petersburg Narodnaya Volya programme was Bakuninism turned upside-down with its Slavophile contrasting of Russia to the West, its idealisation of the primitive forms of national life and its faith in the social wonder-working of our intelligentsia's revolutionary organisations. The theoretical principles from which the programme departs have remained unchanged, the practical conclusions alone being diametrically opposed to the former ones. Renouncing political abstention, Bakuninism has described an arc of 180 degrees and has been revived as a Russian variety of Blanquism basing its revolutionary hopes on Russia's economic backwardness.

This Blanquism is now attempting to create its own particular theory and has recently been fairly fully expressed in Mr. Tikhomirov's article *What Can We Expect from the Revolution?* [10*] In that article he makes use of the whole arsenal of the Russian Blanquists to defend his own programme. One cannot deny Mr. Tikhomirov's ability to use the weapon: he skilfully marshals the facts in his favour, carefully avoids any contradictory phenomena and appeals,

not without success, to the reader's feelings when he has no hope of influencing his logic. His weapon has been renovated, cleaned and sharpened. But if you examine it more attentively you will see that it is nothing but the old-fashioned sword of Bakuninism and Tkachovism [11*] embellished with a new trade-mark, that of V.V. [12*], an expert in reactionary theories in Petersburg. Below I shall give a few extracts from P.N. Tkachov's *Open Letter to Frederick Engels*, and you will see for yourself, dear Pyotr Lavrovich, that your comrade is only repeating what was said ten years ago by the editor of *Nabat* and what drew a sharp answer from Engels in a pamphlet not unknown to you, *Soziales aus Russland*. Have ten years of the movement taught our writers nothing better? Does the "Narodnaya Volya party" refuse to understand the historical significance of its own sacrifices, the political importance of its genuinely heroic struggle against absolutism? Not being in Russia, neither you nor I can say anything definite about the state of mind now prevalent among the members of Narodnaya Volya. But as far as can be judged from what is going on outside the Narodnaya Volya organisation, we can be certain that the revolutionary movement is not destined to be revived under the banner of Tkachovism. Our revolutionary youth is irresolute and hesitant, it has lost faith in the old forms of action, and the number of new programmes and theories which now appear among it proves that not a single one of them is able to embrace all the real interests and all the vital tasks of our movement. Scepticism is coming into its own. Narodnaya Volya is losing its former fascination. The period of more than three years that has elapsed since the event of March 1 [13*] has been characterised by a fall of revolutionary energy in Russia. This sad fact cannot be disputed. But it seems to me that a

great many people offer too superficial an explanation of it. They say that our movement has weakened under the impact of persecution by the government. I have too much faith in the “timeliness” of the Russian revolution to be satisfied with such a hackneyed explanation. I think that the Russian revolution has an enormous, invincible potential energy, and that reaction is raising its head only because we are unable to transform that energy from potential into kinetic. Russia’s social tasks today cannot find a satisfactory solution in the traditional conspiratorial programme of Blanquism. Little by little that hackneyed programme will become the Procrustean bed of the Russian revolution. One by one all the methods of action, all the elements of the movement which have been its strength and the conditions of its influence, will be sacrificed to its spectral and fantastic aims. The terrorist struggle, agitation among the people and in society and the rousing and development of popular initiative are all only of secondary importance for the Blanquist. His attention is centred first and foremost on conspiracy aimed at seizing power. He does not bother about the development of the social forces or the establishment of institutions calculated to make a return to the old regime impossible. All he endeavours to do is to combine the already existing forces of society. He has no regard for history, does not try to understand its laws or to direct his revolutionary activity in accordance with them; he simply substitutes his own conspiratorial skill for history. [6] And as the growth of the revolutionary forces in Russia is far from being complete, as those forces are still in the process *des Werdens*, this violent arresting of their development is bound to have very harmful consequences and to make reaction more secure instead of promoting the cause of progress. In this case, one of two things may

happen. Either the future of the Russian revolution will be placed at stake in a plot which has less chances of success than any other – the “*social-revolutionary*” plot – or a new force will emerge out of the womb of oppositional and revolutionary Russia, a force which will push the “Narodnaya Volya party” into the background and take the cause of our movement in its own hands.

It would be very disadvantageous for the socialists if the leadership in the struggle were to pass into the hands of our liberals. This would at once deprive them of their former influence and postpone for many years the formation of a socialist party among the progressive strata of the people. That is why we refer our revolutionary youth to Marxism, that algebra of the revolution, as I called it in my pamphlet, that “programme” which teaches its supporters to make use of every step in social development for the revolutionary education of the working class. And I am sure that sooner or later our youth and our workers’ groups will adopt this, the only revolutionary programme. *In this sense*, the “future” of our group is by no means “doubtful”, and I do not understand where you get your scepticism from in this case – you, a writer who, as recently as in the same No.2 of **Vestnik**, called Marx “the great teacher who ushered socialism into its scientific phase, proved its historical legitimacy and at the same time initiated the organisational unity of the workers’ revolutionary party”. [15*] For one cannot profess the theoretical principles of the “great teacher” and deduce Bakuninism or Blanquism from them in practice.

I repeat that the most consistent Marxists may disagree in the appraisal of the present Russian situation. That is why

we in no case wish to cover our programme with the authority of a great name. [7] And moreover, we are ready to admit in advance that our programme contains many “shortcomings and unpractical things”, like any first attempt at applying a particular scientific theory to the analysis of very complicated and entangled social relations. But the fact is that so far neither my comrades nor I have a finally elaborated programme, complete from the first paragraph to the last. [16*] We only show our comrades the *direction* in which the answer to the revolutionary problems interesting them is to be sought; we only defend the reliable and unmistakable criterion with the help of which they will finally be able to strip off themselves the rags of the revolutionary metaphysics which has so far held undivided sway over our minds; we only prove that “our revolutionary movement, far from losing anything, will gain a lot if the Russian Narodniks and the Russian Narodnaya Volya at last become Russian Marxists and a new, higher standpoint reconciles all the groups existing among us”. [8] Our programme has still to be completed and completed there, on the spot, by those same groups of workers and revolutionary youth who will fight for its fulfilment. Corrections, additions and improvements to this programme are quite natural, inevitable and indispensable. We are not afraid of criticism, we wait for it impatiently and will naturally not stop our ears to it like Famusov. [17*] In presenting this first attempt at a programme for the Russian Marxists to the comrades working in Russia, we are far from wishing to compete with Narodnaya Volya; on the contrary, there is nothing we desire more than full and final agreement with that party. We think that the Narodnaya Volya party *must* become a Marxist party if it at all wishes to remain faithful to its revolutionary

traditions and to get the Russian movement out of its present stagnation.

When I speak of the revolutionary traditions of Narodnaya Volya I have in mind not only the terrorist struggle, not only the political murders and attempted murders; I mean the broadening of the channel of the Russian movement which was the necessary consequence of that struggle and which showed us how narrow, abstract, and one-sided were the theories we professed at that time. Dynamite killed those theories along with Alexander II. But both Russian absolutism and Bakuninism in all its varieties are only dead, not buried. They are no longer living, they are not developing, but they are still rotting and contaminating with their corruption the whole of Russia, from her most conservative to her most revolutionary sections. Only the wholesome atmosphere of Marxism can help Narodnaya Volya to finish the work it began so brilliantly, because, as Lassalle said, “the glow of dawn is seen earlier from the high peaks of science than from the bustle of everyday life”. Marxism will show our Narodovoltsi how, while bringing into the movement new strata as yet almost untapped by them, they can at the same time avoid the reefs of fatal one-sidedness; how, while utilising the progressive aspects of the maturing liberal revolution, they can nevertheless remain perfectly loyal to the cause of the working class and of socialism. Being completely free from any narrow sectarianism, we wish Narodnaya Volya, not failure, but further success, and if we stretch out *only one* hand to it for reconciliation, the reason is that with the other we show it the theory of modern scientific socialism with the words, “*In this thou shalt conquer!*”

Unfortunately Spencer is quite right when he notes that every organisation is conservative in direct proportion to its perfection. The stern practice of struggle against absolutism evolved the strong and powerful organisation of Narodnaya Volya. This absolutely necessary and highly useful organisation is no exception to the general rule; it is an obstacle to theoretical successes for the Narodnaya Volya party, as it now strives to raise into dogmas and to perpetuate the programme and the teachings which could have but a temporary and transitory significance. At the end of my pamphlet *Socialism and the Political Struggle*, I expressed the hope that *Vestnik Narodnoi Voli* would be able to adopt a critical attitude towards the theoretical errors in the programme and the mistakes in the practical work of Narodnaya Volya. "We wish to hope," I said, "that the new publication will take a sober view of our revolutionary party's tasks, on whose fulfilment the party's future depends." I expected the Geneva *Vestnik* to go further than the Petersburg Narodnaya Volya. But if you, dear Pyotr Lavrovich, read Mr. Tikhomirov's article attentively, you will see yourself that the views it expresses are a huge step backwards even compared with Narodnaya Volya. And this is quite natural. The theoretical premises of Narodnaya Volya's old programme are so precarious and contradictory that to go on relying on them means to go downwards. It is to be expected that other, progressive elements of the "Narodnaya Volya party" will at last raise their voices and that the revolutionary movement within that party will proceed as it has always done everywhere, i.e., *from below*.

But until that happens we shall not cease to rouse public opinion among our revolutionaries, no matter how many attacks, reproaches and accusations our literary activity

provokes, no matter how much we are pained by the fact that even you, dear Pyotr Lavrovich, show dissatisfaction at that activity, you whose approval and sympathy we still so recently seemed able to rely upon. We engage in controversy with the Narodnaya Volya supporters in the interests of their own cause, and we hope that they will agree with us sooner or later. But if our sincerity is suspected, if they see us as enemies, and not as friends, we shall console ourselves with the consciousness that our cause is a just one. Being convinced Marxists, we will remain true to the motto of our teacher and go our way, letting people say what they think fit. [18*]

Geneva,
July 22, 1884

With friendly greetings,
Yours respectfully,
G. PLEKHANOV

Author's Footnotes

1. Concerning this name which you have invented, I take the liberty, incidentally, of noting the following: "Emancipation of Labour" is our group's motto and name. But to call the Emancipation of Labour group "Emanicipators of Labour" is a fault against etymology. I shall explain this by means of an example. Your collaborators talk a lot about "government of the people"; with a little consistency they should agree that the very name of their "party" – Narodnaya Volya – is but the motto, the expression of the striving for a political system the idea of which is linked with the term "government of the people". But does that mean that they can claim the title of *governors of the people*?

2. I still hope to have a special talk with Mr. Tarasov when he has finished his article. But let me now note that he does not at all understand either Marx or his "*epigoni*" and in his inviolable simplicity it is the petty-bourgeois George Molinari, and not the great socialist Karl Marx, he polemises with. Mr. Tarasov's "method" greatly embarrasses me in exactly the same way. The honourable author probably borrowed it from the same bourgeois science whose "bankruptcy" he so irrefutably proved in the first issue of *Vestnik*. [5*] Just as bourgeois writers were in the habit, when they wished to prove their "natural laws", of inventing "savages" who naturally never dreamed of anything as much as "saving and accumulating capital", so Mr. Tarasov now quite consciously ignores the modern findings of ethnology and invents "savages" who are obvious Blanquists and desire only to "seize power" over their neighbours. This originally *inductive* method threatens to reduce to complete "bankruptcy" Mr. Tarasov's Dühringian socialist "science".

3. See the pamphlet *Socialism and the Political Struggle*, p.20.

4. See the *Announcement of the Publication of the Library of Modern Socialism*, note to p.3. [9*]

5. [Note to the 1905 edition] It is now strange even to read these controversies on the future of Social-Democracy in Russia. It now predominates among revolutionaries and would have been naturally still stronger were it not for the disagreements within it.

6. An obvious example: one of the paragraphs of the Statute of the so-called Nechayevists says expressly that “the general principle of the organisation is not to convince, i.e., *not to produce forces, but to unite those already existing.*” [14*]

7. [Note to the 1905 edition] Quite recently, just a few days ago, this same statement of mine was understood by the Social-Democratic newspaper **Proletary** as expressing uncertainty as to the correctness of my opinion. But it has a different explanation. I never wished to *jurare in verba magistri*.

8. *Socialism and the Political Struggle*, p.56.

Notes

1*. This article by Lavrov was published in the bibliography section of *Vestnik Narodnoi Voli*, No.2, Section 2, pp.64-67, April 1884. It contains an analysis of two new pamphlets published by the *Library of Modern Socialism: Socialism and the Political Struggle* by Plekhanov. and *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* by Engels. The article is signed *P.L.*

2*. From Nekrasov’s poem *The honest, bravely fallen are silenced.* (N.A. Nekrasov, *Selected Works*, Goslitizdat Publishing House, 1945, p.328.)

3*. *Nonconformists* – a Protestant sect in England which did not conform to the dominant Church of England and was therefore subject to persecution,

4*. In the seventies, Plekhanov belonged to one of the groups of revolutionary Narodism, the Bakuninist “rebels”.

Bakuninists – followers of the anarchist Narodnik M.A. Bakunin. They regarded the peasants as born rebels and professed the adventurous tactics of immediate revolts, for which they were dubbed “the rebels”.

Bakunin was the leader of a secret anarchist organisation inside the First International (1864–1872). He waged a fierce struggle against Marx and was expelled from the International at the Hague Congress in 1872.

5*. The reference is to the article *Bankruptcy of Bourgeois Science* by Tarasov (N. Rusanov) in *Vestnik Narodnoi Voli*, No.1, pp.59-97.

6*. Plekhanov is referring to Tarasov’s article *Political and Economic Factors in the Life of Peoples*, the beginning of which was published in *Vestnik Narodnoi Voli*, No.2, Section 1, 1884, pp.1-36. In this article Tarasov bases himself on Dühring to affirm that the political factor plays the primary role in historical evolution.

7*. Character in Voltaire’s tale *Histoire de Genni ou l’athée et le sage*, *Oeuvres complètes*, Vol.XXI, Paris 1879, p.529.

8*. Words from Griboyedov’s *Wit Works Woe*.

9*. The *Announcement of the Publication of the Library of Modern Socialism* by the Emancipation of Labour group was published in Geneva, signed by editors P. Axelrod and G. Plekhanov, and dated September 2-5, 1883. It was printed in October of the same year as a supplement to the first edition of the pamphlet *Socialism and the Political Struggle* and in 1905 it was included in the first volume of the Geneva edition of Plekhanov’s *Works*, pp.139-40. In this last edition the footnote written by Deutsch was omitted. It was given under the title *For the Reader’s Information* on an unnumbered

page (the third). In the *Works*, Vol.II (postrevolutionary edition) the announcement is on pp.21-23.

10*. L. Tikhomirov's article *What Can We Expect from the Revolution?* was printed in *Vestnik Narodnoi Voli*, No.2, Section 1, 1884, pp.227-62.

11*. On the substance of "Tkachovism" see *Introduction*, Section 6 "P.N. Tkachov".

The polemic between Engels and P.N. Tkachov, one of the Narodnik ideologists, took place in 1874-1875. In 1874 Tkachov published in German his *Offener Brief an Herrn Fr. Engels (Open Letter to Mr. Fr. Engels)*, Zurich 1874. (Cf. P.N. Tkachov, *Selected Works*, Russ. ed., Vol.3, 1933, pp.88-98.) In reply to this letter Engels wrote his article *Soziales aus Russland* in the newspaper *Volksstaat*, 1875, No.36 and following. Republishing his reply in 1894, Engels provided it with a note in which he said that Tkachov's letter carried, in its form and content, the "usual Bakuninist imprint". (*Der Volksstaat*, Nos.44, 45, 1875.) Engels ridiculed Tkachov's conspiratorial illusions. "One cannot imagine an easier or more pleasant revolution," he wrote. "A revolt has only to be started simultaneously in three or four places and the 'revolutionary by instinct', 'practical necessity' and the 'instinct of selfpreservation' will do the rest 'of themselves'. One simply cannot understand how, if it is so easy, the revolution has not already been carried out, the people emancipated and Russia transformed into a model socialist country."

12*. V.V. – V.P. Vorontsov.

13*. On March 1, 1881, by decision of Narodnaya Volya, Alexander II was assassinated in Petersburg by I.I. Grinevitsky. The organisers of this act of terror, A.I. Zhelyabov, N.I. Kibalchich, S.L. Perovskaya, T.M. Mikhailov and N.I. Rysakov, were executed. Many members of Narodnaya Volya were imprisoned and exiled. A period of fierce reaction set in.

14*. Nechayev's organisation Narodnaya Rasprava (The People's Vengeance) (1869) was based on the principles of Jesuitism, intimidation, and terrorism professed by Nechayev and his inspirer Bakunin. To quote Bakunin, Nechayev's task was "not to teach the people, but to revolt". Marx and Engels resolutely opposed the ideas and activity of the Nechayev organisation and described their plans for reorganising society as "barracks communism".

15*. Quotation from P. Lavrov's review *Outside Russia*. (*Vestnik Narodnoi Voli*, No.2, Section 2, 1884, p.3.)

16*. The reference here is to the first programme of the Emancipation of Labour group, put out in 1884. It was accompanied by notes pointing out that it was not final but admitted of corrections and additions, provided they did not contradict the basic ideas of scientific socialism. (See *Programme of the Social-Democratic Emancipation of Labour Group*.)

17*. *Famusov* – a character in Griboyedov's comedy *Wit Works Woe*, a domineering obscurantist and hypocrite.

18*. Paraphrase of Dante's words, "Go your way and let people say what they will", with which Marx ends the *Preface* to the first edition of the first volume of *Capital*.

Introduction

1. What We Are Reproached With

What I said above about attacks, reproaches and accusations was not an empty phrase. It is still quite a short time since the Emancipation of Labour group came into existence, and yet how many objections we have had to listen to, the only cause for which was an obstinate refusal to examine the substance of our programme; how many misunderstandings have been caused only by the desire to ascribe to us thoughts and intentions which never entered our heads! By more or less veiled hints, avoiding “direct blows”, not mentioning our names but using our expressions and twisting and distorting our thoughts, some have directly and others indirectly represented us as dried-up bookworms and dogmatists ready to sacrifice the people’s happiness and welfare to the orderliness and harmony of the theories which they have hatched in their studies. And the theories themselves have been branded as a kind of imported commodity which it is just as dangerous for Russia to spread there as to import English opium to China. The time came long ago to put an end to this confusion of conceptions, to clear up these more or less sincere misunderstandings!

I begin with what is most important.

In the first chapter of my pamphlet I said a few words deriding revolutionaries who are afraid of “bourgeois” economic progress and who inevitably arrive at the “amazing

conclusion that Russia's economic backwardness was a most reliable ally of the revolution and that stagnation was to be blazoned as the first and only paragraph of our minimum programme". I said that the Russian anarchists, Narodniks and Blanquists could become "revolutionary in substance and not in name alone" only if they "revolutionised their own heads and learned to understand the course of historical development and led it instead of asking old mother history to mark time while they laid new, straighter and better beaten roads for her." [1]

At the end of the third chapter I endeavoured to convince my readers that "to bind together in one two so fundamentally different matters as the overthrow of absolutism and the socialist revolution, to wage revolutionary struggle in the belief that these two elements of social development will *coincide* in the history of our country *means to put off the advent of both.*" [2] I further expressed the thought that "the rural population of today, living in backward social conditions, is not only less capable of conscious political *initiative* than the industrial workers, it is also less *responsive* to the movement which our revolutionary intelligentsia has begun ..." "And besides," I continued, "the peasantry is now going through a difficult, critical period. The previous 'ancestral' foundations of its economy are crumbling, the ill-fated village community itself is being discredited in its eyes, as is admitted even by such 'ancestral' organs of Narodism as *Nedelya*; and the new forms of labour and life are only in the process of formation, and this creative process is more intensive in the industrial centres."

From these and similar passages it was concluded that my comrades and I, convinced that the immediate future in our

country belongs to capitalism, were ready to drive Russia's working population into the iron embraces of capital and considered as "untimely" any struggle waged by the people for their economic emancipation.

In his article *What Can We Expect from the Revolution?* Mr. Tikhomirov, describing the "curious role" of public figures whose programmes "have no link with life", gives a particularly detailed picture of the "tragic situation" of socialists who think "that in order to work out the material conditions necessary to make the socialist system possible, Russia must necessarily go through the phase of capitalism". Mr. Tikhomirov imagines the situation as simply desperate; in it

Not a step but leads to horror!

Our socialists have to "fuss about creating a class in whose name they wish to work, and for that they have to desire the speedy dismissal of the millions of working people who exist in reality but, having the misfortune not to be proletarians, have no role in the scientific scheme of social progress." But the fall from grace of these pedants of socialism cannot be confined to the sphere of "fuss" and "desires". *Wer A sagt, muss auch B sagen!* "Had he been consistent and placed the interests of the revolution above his own moral purity, the socialist should then have entered into a direct alliance with the knights of *primitive accumulation* whose hearts and hands do not tremble at developing various 'surplus-values' and uniting the workers in the all-saving situation of the beggarly proletarian." The revolutionary is thus transformed into a supporter of the exploitation of labour, and Mr.

Tikhomirov is very “timely” when he asks: “Where, then, is the difference between the socialist and the bourgeois?”

I don’t know just what “socialists” the honourable writer has in view in this case. As we see, he has no liking for “direct blows”, and without mentioning his adversaries he merely informs the readers that “some other people” think this or that. The reader is completely unaware who those *other people* are and whether it is true that they *think* what Mr. Tikhomirov *says* they do. Neither do I know whether his readers share his horror of the position of the socialists whom he criticises. But the subject he touches upon is so interesting, the accusations which he brings against *certain* socialists so much resemble accusations made more than once against us, his whole programme and “what he expects from the revolution” are to such an extent determined by the negative solution of the question of capitalism that it is his article which must provide the *occasion* for as complete and comprehensive an elucidation of this question as possible.

And so, “must” or “must not” Russia go through the “school” of capitalism?

The answer to this question is of the highest importance for the correct posing of our socialist party’s tasks. It is therefore not surprising that it has for a long time claimed the attention of Russian revolutionaries. Until recent times the great majority of these were inclined to answer the question categorically in the negative. I also had my share of the general infatuation, and in the editorial of No.3 of *Zemlya i Volya* I attempted to prove that “history is by no means a monotonous mechanical process”; that capitalism is

a necessary predecessor of socialism only “in the West, where the village community broke up as early as in the struggle against medieval feudalism”; that in our country, where the community “constitutes the most characteristic feature of the peasantry’s relations to the land”, the triumph of socialism may be achieved in an entirely different way; collective ownership of the land may serve as the starting-point for the organisation of all aspects of the people’s economic life on socialist principles. “That is why,” I concluded, “our main task is to create a militant popular-revolutionary organisation to carry out a popular-revolutionary upheaval in the nearest possible future.” [1*]

Thus, as early as January 1879, I supported the very same proposition that Mr. Tikhomirov defends, true,

Mit ein bisschen anderen Worten [2],*

now, in 1884, when he says that “beyond the mysterious line where the waves of history’s flood seethe and foam”, or, to put it more simply, after the fall of the present social and political system, “we shall find” not the reign of capitalism, as “certain people” maintain, but “the foundation of the socialist organisation of Russia”. The necessity for creating a “militant popular-revolutionary organisation” is relegated to the background by Mr. Tikhomirov and gives place to a conspiratorial organisation of our intelligentsia which is to seize power and thus give the signal for the popular revolution. In this respect his views differ as much from those I formerly held as the programme of Narodnaya Volya from that of Zemlya i Volya. But Mr. Tikhomirov’s mistakes about the economic side of the question are almost “identical” with those I made in the article mentioned.

Consequently, in answering Mr. Tikhomirov I shall have to make frequent corrections to arguments which once appeared to me perfectly convincing and final.

Precisely because Mr. Tikhomirov's standpoint is not distinguished by freshness or novelty I cannot confine myself to criticising his arguments, but must examine as fully as possible all that had already been said to support a negative answer to the question which now occupies us. Russian literature in the preceding decades gives us far more wealthy critical material than the article *What Can We Expect from the Revolution?*

2. Posing of the Question

Actually, Mr. Tikhomirov was unable even to present the question properly.

Instead of saying all that he could to defend the possibility of laying "the foundation of the socialist organisation" on the ruins of the contemporary social and political system in Russia, Mr. Tikhomirov devotes almost a whole chapter of his article to criticising the "consolation" which people who believe in the "historical inevitability of Russian capitalism" still have. In general he somehow too quickly and unexpectedly not so much passes as leaps from the objective standpoint he held at the beginning of the first chapter, in which he sought to prove that "the logic of history, the historical course of events, and so on", are "an elemental force which nobody can divert from the path it has chosen for the very reason that the path itself is not an arbitrary choice but expresses the resultant force of the combination of those forces outside which society contains nothing real, capable of producing any action whatever". We ask: is that

“elemental force” stopped by considerations of the *inconsolability* of the Russian socialists? Obviously not. So before discussing what would happen to the Russian socialists if capitalism were to triumph, Mr. Tikhomirov should have tried to form a “correct idea of that force and its direction”, an idea which “every public figure must have, for no political programme which does not conform to it can have any significance whatever”, as the same Mr. Tikhomirov seeks to convince us. But he prefers the reverse method. He endeavours first of all to intimidate his readers, and then, in the “following chapters”, outlines “roughly” the “aims and means of our revolution”, which allow us to believe in the possibility of diverting the cup of capitalism from Russia’s lips. Without saying for the time being how far he succeeds in his attempt to intimidate his socialist readers, I shall merely note that such a method of argument should not be used in solving serious social questions.

For reasons which it would be out of place to consider here, the Russian intellectual had to take an intense interest in “the role of the individual in history”. Much has been written on this “cursed” question, and it has been still more discussed in various groups; and yet Russian public figures are still often incapable even of distinguishing the sphere of the *necessary* from that of the *desirable* and are prepared at times to argue with history in exactly the same way as Khlestakov [3*] with the waiter in the inn. “But I must eat something! I can waste away altogether like this,” said the immortal Ivan Alexandrovich. What kind of a socialist will I be after that? Shall I not have to “enter into a direct alliance with the knights of primitive accumulation!” some reader may exclaim, intimidated by Mr. Tikhomirov. But it is to be hoped that Mr. Tikhomirov’s argument on the invincible

force of the “logic of history” will do much towards correcting this big “blunder of immature thought”.

The Emancipation of Labour group’s standpoint, for its part, leads, it seems to me, to the removal of such abuses of the “subjective method in sociology”. For us the desirable arises from the necessary and in no case replaces it in our arguments. For us the freedom of the individual consists in the knowledge of the laws of nature – including, incidentally, the laws of history – and in the ability to *submit* to those laws, that is, incidentally, to *combine them in the most favourable manner*. We are convinced that when “a society has got upon the right track for the discovery of the natural laws of its movement ... it can neither clear by bold leaps, nor remove by legal enactments the obstacles offered ... *But it can shorten and lessen the birth-pangs.*” [3] [4*] It is precisely this “shortening and lessening the birth-pangs” that, in our opinion, constitutes one of the most important tasks of socialists who are convinced of the “historical inevitability of capitalism in Russia”. Their consolation must lie in the *possibility* of lessening those birth-pangs. The *consistency* which Mr. Tikhomirov tries to impose upon them is, as we shall see later, that of the metaphysician who has not the slightest notion of the dialectics of social development.

But let us not wander away from our subject.

3. A.A. Herzen

As early as the beginning of the fifties A.I. Herzen, in proving the inevitability of the socialist revolution in the West, set rising Russian democracy the

Ever-alarming and new question

which since then

So many restless heads has wearied ...

So many sufferings has brought

and which provided the occasion, incidentally, for our "controversy with the Narodnaya Volya party" too.

"Must Russia pass through all the phases of European development, or will her life proceed according to other laws?" [4] he asks in his *Letters to Linton*. [5*]

"I absolutely deny the necessity for these repetitions," the famous writer hastens to answer. "We may have to pass through the difficult and painful trials of the historical development of our predecessors, but in the same way as the embryo passes through all the lower degrees of zoological existence before birth. The finished labour and the result obtained become the general possession of all who understand – such is the mutual guarantee of progress, the birthright of mankind ... Every school-child must himself find the solution of Euclid's theorems, but what a difference there is between the work of Euclid, who discovered them, and the work of the pupil of today!" ... "Russia has been through her embryogenesis in the European class. The nobility and the government in our country represent the European state in the Slav state. We have been through all the phases of political education, from German constitutionalism and English bureaucratic monarchy to the worship of the year 1793 ... The Russian people need not begin that hard work again. Why should they shed their blood to achieve those semi-solutions that we have already reached and whose only

importance was that through them we arrived at other questions, at new strivings? We went through that work for the people – we have paid for it with the gallows, casemates and banishment, with the ruin and the intolerable life which we are living!”

The connecting link, the bridge by which the Russian people can reach socialism, Herzen saw, of course, in the village community and the peculiarities of way of life that go with it.

“Strictly speaking, the Russian people began to be acknowledged,” he says, “only after the 1830 Revolution. People saw with astonishment that the Russians, though indifferent, incapable of tackling any political questions, were nearer to the new social system by their way of life than all the European peoples ...”

“To retain the village community and give freedom to the individual, to extend the self-government of the village and *volost* to the towns and the whole state, maintaining national unity – such is the question of Russia’s future, i.e., the question of the very antinomy whose solution occupies and worries minds in the West.” [5]

It is true that doubts occasionally arose in his mind about the Russian people’s exceptional nearness “to the new social system”. In the same *Letter* he asks Linton: “Perhaps you will reply that in this the Russian people resembles some Asian peoples; perhaps you will draw attention to the rural communities of the Hindus, which have a fair resemblance to ours?” But, without rejecting the Russian people’s unflattering resemblance to “some Asian peoples”, he nevertheless saw what seemed to him very substantial differences between them. “It is not the community ownership system which keeps the Asian peoples in stagnation, but their exceptional clan spirit, their inability to emerge from patriarchalism, to free themselves from the tribe; we are not in such a position. The Slav peoples ... are endowed with great impressionability, they easily assimilate

the languages, morals, customs, art and technique of other peoples. They can acclimatise themselves equally well on the shores of the Arctic and on the Black Sea coast.” This “great impressionability”, enabling the Slavs to “emerge from patriarchalism, to free themselves from the tribe”, solved the whole question, Herzen thinks. His authority was so great, and the shortened road to socialism which he suggested was so tempting that the Russian intelligentsia in the early sixties was little inclined to be sceptical of his suggested solution of the “social antinomy”, and apparently gave no thought at all to the question of just what places that historical short cut lay through and who would lead the Russian people – “indifferent, incapable of tackling any political questions” – along it. The important thing for the intelligentsia was first of all to find some philosophical sanction for their radical strivings, and they were satisfied for a start with the abstract consideration that no philosophy in the world could force them to be reconciled to bourgeois “semi-solutions”.

But that abstract consideration was naturally not sufficient to outline a practical mode of action or to elaborate any at all suitable methods of fighting their environment. The data for the solution of this new problem had to be sought outside the philosophy of history, even if it were more rigorous and scientific than Herzen’s philosophy. Between its abstract formulae and the concrete requirements of social life there was a gap which could be filled only by a whole series of new and increasingly particular formulae, requiring in turn knowledge of a whole series of increasingly complicated phenomena. By the way, philosophy in this case indirectly rendered Russian thought the service of acquainting it with the dialectical method and teaching it the truth – so often

forgotten later on – that in social life “everything flows”, “everything changes”, and that the phenomena of that life can be understood only in motion, in the process of arising, developing and disappearing.

4. N.G. Chernyshevsky

The *Criticism of Philosophical Prejudices Against Communal Land Tenure* was and still is the most brilliant attempt made in our literature to apply dialectics to the analysis of social phenomena. [6*] We know what an enormous influence this essay had on the development of our revolutionary intelligentsia. It strengthened their faith in the village community by *proving* that this form of land tenure could, under certain conditions, pass directly into a communist form of development. But strictly speaking, Chernyshevsky himself and his followers drew from the *Criticism of Philosophical Prejudices* far more sweeping conclusions than the character of the premises warranted. The solution which Chernyshevsky found for the question of the community's destiny was in substance purely algebraic; and it could not be otherwise, because he opposed it to the purely algebraic formulae of his opponents. The Russian supporters of the Manchester School sought to prove that communal land tenure must necessarily and everywhere be superseded gradually by private landownership. That was the scheme of development of property relations which they advanced. Chernyshevsky proved, first, that this scheme did not embrace the entire process of development, since at a certain stage social ownership must again become the predominant form; moreover, he quite legitimately drew attention to the circumstance that there are no grounds whatsoever for ascribing an invariable and once-for-all

determined duration to the historical interval that separates the epoch of primitive communism from the time of the conscious reorganisation of society on communist principles. Generally speaking, this interval is x , which has a particular arithmetical magnitude in each individual country, depending on the combination of internal and external forces determining its historical development. As this combination of forces necessarily varies considerably, it is not surprising that the x in which we are interested, i.e., the length of the interval during which private ownership will be predominant, will in certain cases be infinitely small and may therefore be equalled to *nought* without any considerable error. It was in this way that the *abstract possibility* of the primitive commune passing immediately into a “higher, communist form” was proved. But precisely because of the abstractness of the *line of argument*, this general result of philosophico-historical dialectics was equally applicable to all countries and peoples which had retained communal land tenure, from Russia to New Zealand, from the Serbian *zadruga* to one or other of the Red Indian tribes. [6] That is why it proved insufficient for even an approximate forecast of the community’s future in each of these countries taken individually. *Abstract possibility* is not concrete *probability*; still less can it be considered as a final argument in reference to *historical necessity*. In order to speak at all seriously of the latter, algebra should have been replaced by arithmetic and it should have been proved that in the case in point, whether it be in Russia or in the Ashanti State, in Serbia or on Vancouver Island, x would indeed be equal to *nought*, i.e., that private property must die out when still in the embryo. To this end statistics should have been resorted to and an appraisal made of the inner course of development of the

country or tribe concerned and the external influences affecting them; not the *genus*, but the *species* or even the *variety* should have been dealt with; not primitive collective immovable property in general, but the Russian, the Serbian or the New Zealand system of communal land tenure in particular, taking into consideration all the influences hostile or favourable to it, and also the state which it had reached at the time in question owing to those influences.

But we do not even find a hint of such a study in the *Criticism of Philosophical Prejudices Against Communal Land Tenure*, in which Chernyshevsky dealt with “philosophising sages”. In other cases, when he had to argue with “economising sages” and to shatter prejudices “arising out of lack of understanding, forgetfulness or ignorance of *general* truths relating to man’s material activity, to production, labour and its general laws” – in those essays too he spoke only of the advantages of collective land tenure in general, and consequently he arrived only at algebraic formulae, general economic theorems. [7]

By the way, this is by no means surprising of him. The critic of Mill could have in mind only the pre-Reform village community, when it had not yet emerged from natural economy and was reduced to a common denominator by the levelling influence of feudalism. Naturally, this influence did not remove the “economic contradictions” inherent in the village community, but it kept them latent and thus reduced their practical significance to a negligible minimum. That is why Chernyshevsky could be satisfied with the consideration that in our country “the masses of the people still consider the land as the property of the community”, that “every

Russian has his native land and also a right to a plot of it. And if he himself gives up his right to that plot or loses it, his children will still be entitled, as members of the village community, to demand a plot in their own right". Understanding perfectly well that the emancipation of the peasants would place them in completely different economic conditions, that "Russia, which has thus far taken little part in the economic movement, is being quickly drawn into it, and our mode of life, which has as yet hardly been influenced by the economic laws which display their strength only when economic and commercial activity grows, is beginning to submit to their strength very quickly", that "soon we too, perhaps, shall be drawn into the sphere where the law of competition is in full operation", he was only concerned with preserving the form of land tenure which would help the peasant to begin the new economic life under more favourable conditions. "Whatever transformations the future may hold for Russia," he wrote in April 1857, "we shall not presume to touch the sacred and salutary custom bequeathed to us by our past life, the poverty of which is abundantly compensated by this single precious legacy; no, we shall not presume to encroach upon the communal use of the land, that blessing on whose acquisition the prosperity of the agricultural classes in Western Europe now depends. May their example be a lesson for us."

Here we are not undertaking an analysis of all Chernyshevsky's views on communal land tenure: we are only trying to bring out their most typical features. Not entering into details which are out of place here we shall confine ourselves to saying that the advantages which he expected from communal land tenure may be reduced to two

points, one of which belongs to the domain of law, the other to that of agricultural technology.

Re I. “The Russian village community system,” he says quoting Haxthausen, “is infinitely important for Russia, especially at present, as far as the state is concerned. All West European states are suffering from the same disease, whose cure is so far an *unsolved problem* [8]; they are suffering from pauperism, proletarianism. Russia does not know this social evil; she is ensured against it by her village community system. Every Russian has his native land and also a right to a plot of it. And if he himself gives up his right to that plot or loses it, his children will still be entitled, as members of the village community, to demand a plot in their own right.” [9]

Re II. After describing, again according to Haxthausen, the life of the Ural Cossacks, “whose whole territory forms a single community from the economic, military and civil points of view”, Chernyshevsky notes: “If the people of the Urals live under their present system to see machines introduced into corn-growing, they will be very glad of having retained a system which allows the use of machines that require big-scale farming , embracing hundreds of *dessiatines*.” He notes at the same time, however, that his argument is intended only as an example of “how the Ural Cossacks will think at some future time which will come we know not when (although the success of mechanics and technology shows beyond any doubt that such a time will indeed come) – and we are not concerned with too distant a future: our great grandchildren will probably manage to live on by their own intelligence without our worrying about

them – it will be enough for us to worry about ourselves and our children.” [8*]

Readers who are acquainted with Chernyshevsky’s works naturally know that such reservations did not prevent him from thinking and “worrying” very much about the future. One of Vera Pavlovna’s dreams shows clearly how he imagined the social relations of “the very distant future” [9*], just as his heroine’s practical activity gives us some idea of the methods by which the advent of that happy time could be hastened. It would therefore be strange if the author of *What Is To Be Done?* had not linked the form of contemporary peasant land tenure which was so dear to him with the ideals of a future, which, distant as it was, was desirable and, indeed, inevitable. True enough, he returns time and again to this subject in his articles on communal land tenure, examining the influence this form of property relations has had on the peasants’ character and customs. He naturally does not agree that “the village community kills energy in man”. That thought “definitely contradicts all known historical and psychological facts”, which prove, on the contrary, that “man’s intelligence and will are strengthened by association”. But the chief advantage of communal land tenure is that it preserves and develops the spirit of association without which the rational economy of the future is unthinkable.

“The introduction of a better order of things is greatly hindered in Western Europe by the boundless extension of the rights of the individual ... it is not easy to renounce even a negligible portion of what one is used to enjoying, and in the West the individual is used to unlimited private rights. The usefulness and necessity of mutual concessions can be learned only by bitter experience and prolonged thought. In the West, a better system of economic relations is bound up with sacrifices, and that is why it is difficult

to establish. It runs counter to the habits of the English and French peasants.” But “what seems a Utopia in one country exists as a fact in another ... habits which the Englishman and the Frenchman find immensely difficult to introduce into their national life exist in fact in the national life of the Russians ... The order of things for which the West is now striving by such a difficult and long road still exists in our country in the mighty national customs of our village life ... We see what deplorable consequences resulted in the West from the loss of communal land tenure and how difficult it is to *give back to the Western peoples what they have lost*. The example of the West must not be lost on us”. [10]

That is how Chernyshevsky appraises the significance of communal land tenure in the present and future economic life of the Russian people. Much as we respect this great writer, we cannot help seeing in his appraisal certain mistakes and instances of one-sidedness. For example, the “cure” of the West European states from the “ulcer of proletarianism” could hardly be considered as an “unsolved problem” at the end of the fifties, many years after the appearance of the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, *The Poverty of Philosophy* and *The Condition of the Working Class in England*. Not only the “cure”, but also the whole historical significance of the “illness” which frightened Chernyshevsky were shown in the works of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels with a completeness and power of conviction that are still models. But everything shows that the Russian economist was not familiar with these works, while the socialist Utopias of the preceding period failed, of course, to provide a satisfactory solution for many, very many, theoretical and practical questions. The main shortcoming in the Utopians’ outlook was, however, due to the fact that “the proletariat ... offers to them the spectacle of a class without any historical initiative or any independent political movement”, that they had not yet adopted the standpoint of the class struggle and that the proletariat

existed for them only in view of its being the “most suffering class”. [11] Replacing the “gradual, spontaneous class organisation of the proletariat” by “an organisation of society specially contrived by themselves” and at the same time differing among themselves as to the principles and character of this future organisation, they naturally led their Russian readers to the idea that even the most progressive minds in the West had not yet been able to cope with the social question. Moreover, “reducing the future history of the world to the dissemination and practical implementation of their reform plans”, they could not satisfy by their teachings a man with such a vigorously critical mind as Chernyshevsky. He was bound to seek independently the real “historical conditions” for the emancipation of the West European working class, and he apparently saw them in a return to communal land tenure. We already know that he held that “on the acquisition of this blessing the prosperity of the agricultural classes in Western Europe now depends”. But no matter what attitude anybody adopted towards the historical significance of the *Russian* village community, it is obvious to almost all socialists that its role is ended for ever in the West and that the Western peoples’ road to socialism lay and still lies *from community through private ownership*, and not *vice versa*, from private ownership through community ownership. It seems to me that if Chernyshevsky had been clearer to himself on the subject of this “difficult and long road” along which the West is progressing towards “a better system of economic relations”; if, moreover, he had defined more precisely the economic conditions of the “better system”, he would have seen, first, that the “West” tends to make the means of production the property of the state, not of a village community, and second, he would have understood that the “ulcer of

proletarianism” produces its remedy out of itself. Then he would have better appreciated the historical role of the proletariat, and this, in turn, would have enabled him to take a broader view of the social and political significance of the Russian village community. Let us explain this.

We know that any form of social relations can be considered from extremely varying points of view. For example, from the point of view of the benefits it brings to the generation concerned; or, not confining ourselves to these benefits, we can examine its capacity to pass on into another, higher form, more favourable to “the economic prosperity and the intellectual and moral development of the people; finally, we can distinguish in that very capacity to pass on into higher forms two sides – the passive and the active side, *the absence of obstacles to the transition*, and the presence of a vital inner force which is not only *capable* of effecting this transition but, indeed, gives rise to it as to a necessary consequence of its own existence. In the former case, the social form in question is considered from the point of view of the *resistance* offered to progress introduced from outside, in the latter, from the point of view of *useful historical work*. For the philosophy of history, just as for the practical revolutionary, the only forms which have any importance are those which are capable of a greater or lesser quantity of such useful work. Every stage in the historical development of humanity is interesting precisely insofar as the societies which have reached it develop out of themselves, by their inherent self-activity, a force capable of destroying the old forms of social relations and erecting on their ruins a new and better social edifice. Generally speaking, the very number of the obstacles to the transition to a higher stage of development is closely linked with the

magnitude of this vital force, because the latter is nothing but the result of the disintegration of the old forms of social life. The more intense the process of disintegration, the greater will be the number of forces which it sets free and the lesser will be the endurance of the obsolete social relations. In other words, both the historian and the practical revolutionary are interested in the dynamics, not the statics, the revolutionary, not the conservative aspect, the contradictions, not the harmony of social relations, because it is the spirit of these contradictions which

Stets das Böse will und stets das Gute schafft. [11*]

So it has been up to now. It goes without saying that it must not always be so and that the whole meaning of the socialist revolution consists in removing the “cruel iron” law according to which the contradictions in social relationships were given but a temporary solution which in turn became the source of new confusion and new contradictions. But the accomplishment of this greatest of all upheavals, of this revolution which is at last to make people “the masters of their social relations” [12*], is unthinkable without the “presence” of the necessary and sufficient historical force born of the contradictions in the present bourgeois system. In the advanced countries of the civilised world today this force, far from being merely present, is growing every hour and every minute. Consequently, in those countries history is the ally of the socialists and is bringing them with ever-increasing speed nearer to the aim they pursue. Thus we see once more – let us hope for the *last* time – that the “sweet” could only come out of the “bitter”, that for the accomplishment of a *good* “deed” history was obliged, if we may say so, to show *evil* “will”. The economy of bourgeois

societies, which is utterly “abnormal and unjust” as regards distribution, turns out to be far more “normal” as regards the development of the productive forces and still more “normal” as regards the production of people who are willing and able, in the words of the poet, “to establish the kingdom of heaven upon earth”. [13*] Not only has the bourgeoisie “forged the weapons that bring death to itself”, i.e., not only has it brought the productive forces in the advanced countries to a stage of development at which they can no longer be reconciled with the capitalist form of production, “it has also called into existence the men who are to wield those weapons – the modern working class – the *proletarians*.” [12]

From this it follows that in order to assess to the full the political significance of a given social form, one must take into consideration not only the economic benefits which it may bring to one or several generations, not only its passive ability to be perfected under the influence of some favourable outside force, but primarily its inherent capacity to develop independently in the desirable direction. Without such a comprehensive appraisal, the analysis of social relations will always be incomplete and therefore erroneous; a given social form may appear to be quite rational from one of the points of view, but quite unsatisfactory from another. This will be the case every time we have to deal with an underdeveloped population which has not yet become the “master of its social relations”. Only the objective revolutionariness of these relations themselves can bring backward people out on to the road of progress. And if the particular form of social life does not display this revolutionariness, if, though it is more or less “just” from the standpoint of law and distribution of products, it is

nevertheless marked by great conservatism, the absence of any inner striving to perfect itself in the desirable direction, the social reformer will have either to give up his plans or to resort to some other, outside, force able to compensate for the lack of inner self-activity in the society in question and to reform it, if not against the will of its members, at any rate without their active and conscious participation.

As for Chernyshevsky, he seems to have lost sight of the revolutionary significance of the West European “*illness*” – pauperism. It is by no means surprising that Haxthausen, for example, of whom Chernyshevsky so often had occasion to speak in his articles on communal land tenure, saw only the negative side of “pauperism-proletarianism”. His *political* views were such that he was absolutely unable to class the revolutionary significance of the proletariat in the history of West European societies among the positive and favourable aspects of this “ulcer”. It is therefore understandable that he gave an enthusiastic description of the institutions which can “avert proletarianism”. But views which are quite comprehensible and consistent in the works of one author often face the reader with difficulties when he comes across them in another author’s articles. We admit that we do not understand what meaning we must see in these words of Chernyshevsky about Haxthausen: “As a practical man, he very correctly foresaw in 1847 the proximity of a fearful outbreak on the part of the West European proletarians, and we cannot but agree with him that the principle of communal land tenure, which safeguards us against the fearful ulcer of proletarianism among the rural population, is a beneficial one.” [13] [14*] Here it is no longer a question of the economic hardships of the proletariat, which, incidentally, in

no way exceed those of the Russian peasantry; nor is it a question of the Russian peasant's social habits, against which the West European industrial worker can at any rate counter his habit of collective labour and all kinds of associations. No, here it is a question of a "fearful outbreak on the part of the ... proletarians", and even in this respect Chernyshevsky considers the principle of communal land tenure, "which safeguards us against the fearful ulcer of proletarianism", a "beneficial" one. One cannot imagine that the father of Russian socialism adopted the same terrified attitude to the political movements of the working class as Baron von Haxthausen. One cannot imagine that he was terrified by the very fact of the proletariat's revolt. One can only presume that he was perplexed by the defeat of the working class in 1848, that his sympathy with the political movements of the working class was poisoned by the thought that political revolutions were without result and that the bourgeois regime was barren. Such an explanation seems at least probable if not certain when we read some pages of his article *The Struggle of the Parties in France under Louis XVIII and Charles X* [15*], those pages, to be precise, where he explains the distinction between the aspirations of the democrats and those of the liberals.

"The liberals and the democrats have essentially different fundamental desires and basic motives," he says. "The democrats intend to destroy as far as possible the domination of the upper classes over the lower ones in the state structure: on the one hand, to reduce the power and wealth of the upper estates, and on the other, to give more weight and prosperity to the lower ones. *It hardly makes any difference to them* [14] how the laws could be changed in this sense and the new structure of society upheld. The liberals, on the contrary, will never agree to give the upper hand in society to the lower estates, because these, owing to their lack of education and their material poverty, are *indifferent* to those interests which are of supreme importance for the liberal party,

namely, *the right to freedom of speech and the right to a constitutional system. For the democrat our Siberia, where common folk enjoy prosperity, is far superior to England, where the majority of the people suffer dire need.* The democrat is irreconcilably *hostile only to one political institution* – the aristocracy; the liberal nearly always holds that society can attain a liberal system only with a certain measure of aristocracy. That is why the liberals have a mortal hatred of the democrats ... liberalism understands freedom in a very narrow, purely formal manner. For it freedom consists in an abstract right, authorisation on paper, the absence of legal prohibition. Liberalism refuses to understand that legal authorisation is of any worth only to those who have the material means to avail themselves of it. Neither you nor I, dear reader, are forbidden to eat out of a gold dinner set, but unfortunately neither you nor I have or will probably ever have the means of satisfying that fanciful idea. For that reason I say frankly that I do not appreciate in the least my right to have a gold dinner set and am ready to sell it for a silver ruble or even cheaper. *The same, as far as the people are concerned, with all the rights that the liberals fuss about.* The people are ignorant and in nearly all countries the majority of them are illiterate; not having the money to get education themselves or to give their children any, how can they come to treasure their right to free speech? Need and ignorance deprive the people of all possibility of understanding state affairs or of taking part in them; tell me then, will they treasure the right to parliamentary debate, can they avail themselves of it? ... There is not a single country in Europe where the overwhelming majority of the population are not completely indifferent to rights which are the object of the desires and efforts of the liberals. That is why liberalism is condemned to impotence everywhere: argue as you like, only those strivings are powerful, only those institutions lasting, which are supported by the popular masses.” [15] [16*]

Hardly ten years had elapsed since the publication of the article by Chernyshevsky just quoted when the European proletariat declared through its foremost representatives that it saw its political movement as the means of attaining its great economic aim and that “the social emancipation of the working class is unthinkable without its political emancipation”. The necessity for the working class

constantly to extend its political rights and finally to achieve political domination was acknowledged by the International Working Men's Association. "To conquer political power has therefore become the great duty of the working classes," said the first Manifesto of that Association. [17*] It goes without saying that the working population of England is nearer to and more capable of political might than the "common folk" of Siberia, and if only for that reason nobody but the Proudhonists would have said in the sixties that "Siberia is superior to England". But even when Chernyshevsky wrote his article, i.e., at the end of the fifties, it was noticeable that among the "ignorant and illiterate people" of "nearly all" West European countries there was a whole stratum – once more the same proletariat – which did not enjoy "the right of free speech and the right of parliamentary debate" by no means because it was indifferent to them, but because of the reaction that reigned throughout Europe after 1848 and whose concern was primarily to prevent the people from achieving these "abstract rights". Beaten, so to speak, all along the line, stunned by the blows of reaction, disappointed in its radical and "democratic" allies in the bourgeois parties, it had indeed fallen into something like a temporary lethargy and showed little interest in social questions. But so far as it was interested in them it did not cease to see the acquisition of political rights and their rational utilisation as a powerful means of its emancipation. Even many of the socialist sects which had formerly been completely indifferent to politics began to show a great interest in it precisely, in the early fifties. In France, for instance, the Fourierists joined Rittinghausen and preached with great energy the principle of direct popular legislation. As for Germany, neither the "democrat" Johann Jacobi and his followers nor the Communists of Marx and Engels'

school would have said that for them “it is almost indifferent how the laws could be changed” in the sense of decreasing the power and the wealth of the upper estates and ensuring the prosperity of the lower classes. They had a well-defined *political* programme, “irreconcilably hostile” by no means to the “aristocracy alone”.

The West European peasantry was indeed often indifferent to all “abstract rights” and was prepared perhaps occasionally to prefer the Siberian system to the English. But the point is that true, i.e., not bourgeois, but *socialist* democrats, appeal not to the peasants, but to the proletariat. The West European peasant, being a property-owner, is classed by them among the “intermediate strata” of the population, strata which, “if by chance they are revolutionary, they are so only in view of their impending transfer into the proletariat, they thus defend not their present, but their future interests, *they desert their own standpoint to place themselves at that of the proletariat.*” [16] This distinction is a very substantial one. The West European “democrats” did not emerge from the barren field of political metaphysics until they learned to analyse the concept “people” and to distinguish the revolutionary section of it from the conservative.

To make his study of communal land tenure complete, Chernyshevsky should have considered the matter from this last – social-*political* – point of view. He should have shown that communal land tenure can not only preserve us from the “ulcer of proletarianism”, that it not only offers many advantages for the development of agricultural technology (i.e., for machine cultivation of large tracts of land), but that it can also create in Russia just as active, receptive and

impressionable, just as energetic and revolutionary a population as the West European proletarians. But he was prevented from doing so by his considering the “people” in “nearly all countries” of Western Europe as an “ignorant” and in the majority of cases “illiterate” mass, indifferent to “abstract” political rights. His lack of depth in understanding the political role of the West European proletariat made it impossible for him to suggest a comparison with the political future of the Russian peasants in the village community. The passivity and political indifference of the Russian peasant could not embarrass one who expected no great independent political action from the working class in the West. This circumstance provides one reason why Chernyshevsky limited his study of communal land tenure to considerations in the sphere of law, the distribution of the products and agronomics, and did not set the question of the political influence of the village community on the state and of the state on the village community.

This question remained unelucidated. As a result, the question of the method of transition from communal land *tenure* to communal *cultivation* and – what is the chief thing – to the final triumph of socialism, was not elucidated either. How will the rural community of today pass over into a communist commune or be dissolved in a communist state? How can the revolutionary intelligentsia promote this? *What Is To Be Done* by this intelligentsia? Must they support communal land tenure and conduct communist propaganda, establish production associations similar to Vera Pavlovna’s sewing shops in the hope that in time both these shops and the rural communities will understand the advantages of the socialist system and set about introducing it? Let us suppose so, but this will take a long time, and what

guarantee is there that it will always go straight and smoothly, that there will be no unforeseen obstacles or unexpected turns? And what if the government takes measures against socialist propaganda, prohibits the associations, places their members under police surveillance or exiles them? Must we struggle against the government and win freedom of speech, assembly and association? But then we shall have to admit that Siberia is not superior to England, that the “abstract rights” which the “liberals make a fuss about” are a necessary condition for the people’s development; in a word, that we must start the political struggle. But can we count on a favourable outcome of that struggle, can we win political freedom of any duration? For, “argue as you like, only those strivings are powerful, only those institutions lasting, which are supported by the popular masses”, and in Russia, if not in other countries, those masses attach no importance to “the right of free speech” and understand absolutely nothing about “the right of parliamentary debate”. If it is “for that very reason” that liberalism “is condemned to impotence”, where will the socialists get their strength from when they begin the struggle for “the rights which are the objects of the desires and efforts of the liberals”? How can this difficulty be overcome? By adding concrete demands for economic reforms to “the abstract rights” of political freedom contained in their programme? But the people must be acquainted with that programme, i.e., we must conduct propaganda, and in doing so we again come up against government persecution, which again drives us on to the path of political struggle, which is hopeless as a result of the people’s indifference, etc., etc.

On the other hand, it is very probable that “if the people of the Urals live under their present system to see machines introduced into corn-growing, they will be very glad of having retained a system which allows the use of machines that require big-scale farming embracing hundreds of *dessiatines*.” It is also highly probable that those peasant associations also “will be glad” which “survive under their present system” until the introduction of agricultural machines. Well, what will those agriculturists be glad about *who do not survive* “under their present system”? What will the rural proletarians be glad about who have had to hire themselves as labourers to members of the village community? The latter will contrive to carry the exploitation of labour power to the same degree of intensity as in private farms. Thus the Russian “people” will divide into two classes: exploiters – the *communities*, and exploited – the *individuals*. What will be the fate awaiting this new caste of pariahs? The West European proletarians, whose ranks are constantly swelling thanks to the concentration of capital, can flatter themselves with the hope that, slaves today, they will be independent and happy workers tomorrow. Is the same consolation available for the Russian proletarians, whose numerical increase will be retarded by the existence of communal land tenure? Must they not expect hopeless slavery, a stern struggle

Without triumph, without reconciliation?

Whose side will our socialist intelligentsia have to take in that struggle? If they support the proletariat, will they not have to burn everything they had adored and reject the community as a stronghold of petty-bourgeois exploitation?

If such questions did not occur to Chernyshevsky, who wrote about communal land tenure before serfdom was abolished and could hope that the development of the rural proletariat would be made impossible by some legislative measures or others, all or nearly all those questions should inevitably have occurred to our revolutionaries of the seventies, who knew the nature of the notorious Reform of February 19. Difficult as it is to imagine laws which would safeguard the village community from disintegration without at the same time imposing the most insufferable restraint of the whole course of our industrial life; difficult as it is to combine collectivism of peasant land *tenure* with money economy and commodity *production* of all products, not excluding the agricultural products of the communities themselves, all this could still have been spoken and argued about before 1861. But the peasant reform should have given such arguments and talk a perfectly definite background. In their excursions into the more or less problematic future our revolutionaries should have proceeded from the indisputable facts of the present. And that present already had very little in common with the old picture of peasant life as Haxthausen and Chernyshevsky knew it before the Reform. The “Act of February 19” knocked the village community out of the stable equilibrium of natural economy and subjected it to all the laws of commodity production and capitalist accumulation. The redemption of peasant lands was bound, as we shall see later, to take place on a basis hostile to the principle of communal land tenure. Moreover, although our legislation retained the community in the interests of the fiscal system, it gave two-thirds of the householders the right to divide the community lands once and for all into plots attached to the houses. Re-allotments were also hindered and, to cap it all, a burden of taxes and dues completely out

of proportion to the paying capacity of the “free agriculturists” was imposed upon them. All the peasants’ protests against the “new serfdom” were suppressed with rods and bayonets, and the “new” Russia was seized with a fever of money speculation. Railways, banks and stock companies shot up like mushrooms. Chernyshevsky’s prophecy quoted above about the “considerable economic transformations” awaiting Russia came true before that great teacher of youth had time to reach his place of exile. Alexander II was the tsar of the bourgeoisie just as Nicholas was the tsar of the soldiers and nobility.

Our revolutionary youth should have taken these irrefutable facts into account when they set out to go “among the people” to conduct social-revolutionary propaganda in the early seventies. Now it was no longer a question of emancipating the landlords’ peasants from serfdom, but of emancipating the whole working population of Russia from all kinds of exploitation; it was no longer a question of a peasant “reform”, but of “establishing a peasant brotherhood in which there would be neither mine nor thine, neither profit nor oppression, but work for the common good and brotherly help among all.” [17] [19*] To found such a “peasant brotherhood” an appeal had to be made no longer to the government, to the Editorial Commission, or even to “society”, but to the peasants themselves. In undertaking the emancipation of the working people which was to be the business of “the working people themselves” it was necessary to study, determine and point out with greater precision the revolutionary factors in the life of the people; to do this, the abstract, algebraic formulae worked out by the progressive literature of the preceding decades had to be translated into the language of arithmetic and the

conclusions had to be drawn from the positive and negative influences of Russian life on the sum-total of which the course and the outcome of the emancipation depended. And as our youth already knew from Chernyshevsky's articles that "the masses of the people still consider the land as the property of the community, and the quantity of land owned by the communities ... is so large that the mass of the plots set aside from it as absolute property of private individuals is negligible in comparison with it", it was with communal land tenure that the study of the revolutionary factors in Russian life should have begun.

How did the contradictory rulings of the "Act of February 19" affect the village community? Is the latter firm enough to fight the conditions of money economy, which are unfavourable to it? Has not the development of our peasant life already stepped on to the road of "the natural law of its movement" from which neither the rigour of laws nor the propaganda of the intelligentsia will be able to divert it? If not, if our community can still assimilate the socialist ideals without any great difficulty, then this passive business of assimilation must be accompanied by an energetic act of implementation which requires struggle against many obstacles; will the conditions under which our peasants live promote the development among them of that active energy without which all their "socialist" *predispositions* would remain useless?

The various groups in our movement solved these questions in various ways. The majority of revolutionaries were prepared to agree with Herzen that the Russian people was "indifferent, incapable" of politics. But the propensity to idealise the people was so great, the interconnection

between the various aspects of social life was so poorly elucidated in the minds of our socialists, that this inability to deal with “any *political* questions” was regarded as a guarantee, so to speak, against bourgeois “semi-solutions” and a proof, as it were, of the people’s great ability to solve *economic* questions correctly. Interest in and capacity for *politics* were considered necessary only for *political* revolutions, which our socialist literature of the time contrasted to “*social*” revolutions as the principle of evil to the principle of good, as bourgeois deception to the full equivalent of the blood shed and the losses suffered by the people. An interest in *social* questions corresponded, in the conception we had then, to the “social” revolution, and the peasants’ complaints about land poverty and taxation burdens were seen as such an interest. From the people’s understanding of its immediate needs to the understanding of the “tasks of working-class socialism”, from bitter allusions to those needs to the socialist revolution seemed no long road and one that lay, again, through the village community, which we considered as a solid rock against which all the waves of the economic movement had been shattered.

But as a single point does not determine the position of a line in a plane, so the land community, which all our socialists agreed in idealising, did not determine agreement between their programmes. All felt that there was much in the community itself and in its members’ outlook and habits that was partly unfinished and unpolished and partly even directly contrary to socialist ideals. It was the way of removing these defects that proved to be the apple of discord for our groups.

In this respect, too, however, there was a feature that can be considered as common to all our revolutionary trends.

This feature common to them all was faith in the possibility of our revolutionary intelligentsia having a powerful and decisive influence on the people. In our revolutionary calculations the intelligentsia played the role of a beneficent providence of the Russian people, a providence upon whose will it depended whether the wheel of history would turn one way or the other. However any of the revolutionaries explained the contemporary enslavement of the Russian people – by the people’s lack of *understanding*, of solidarity or of revolutionary *energy*, or finally by their complete *incapacity* for political *initiative* – each one nevertheless thought that intervention by the intelligentsia would remove what he indicated as the cause of the people’s enslavement. The propagandists felt sure that they would have no difficulty in teaching the peasants the truths of scientific socialism. The rebels demanded the immediate formation of “fighting” organisations among the people, not imagining there could be any serious obstacles to this. Finally, the supporters of *Nabat* presumed that our revolutionaries only had to “seize power” and the people would immediately assimilate the socialist forms of social life. This self-assurance of the intelligentsia got along together with utter idealisation of the people and the conviction – at least as far as the majority of our revolutionaries were concerned – that “the emancipation of the working people must be conquered by the working people themselves”. This formula, it was assumed, would be applied in a perfectly correct manner once our intelligentsia took the people as an object of its revolutionary influence. The fact that this basic principle of the General Rules of the

International Working Men's Association had another, so to speak philosophico-historical meaning, that the emancipation of a definite class can be its own affair only when an independent emancipation movement arises within that class – all this partly did not occur at all to our intelligentsia, or partly conception of it was a very strange one. For example, as a proof that our people had begun without the help of the intelligentsia to understand the conditions for their true emancipation, they pointed to the people's dissatisfaction over the 1861 Reform. The people's capacity for independent revolutionary movement was usually proved by reference to our "peasant wars" – the Razin and Pugachov rebellions.

Bitter experience soon showed our revolutionaries that it was a far cry from complaints about land poverty to the development of a definite class consciousness and that it was wrong to conclude from revolts that took place one or two hundred years before that the people was ready to revolt at the moment in question. The history of our revolutionary movement in the seventies was one of disappointments in "programmes" which had seemed perfectly practical and infallible.

But at present we are interested in the history of revolutionary ideas, not of revolutionary attempts. What is needed for our purpose is to sum up all the social and political outlooks we have inherited from preceding decades.

Let us there fore see what each of the principal groups in the seventies left us in this respect.

The most instructive for us will be the theories of M.A. Bakunin and P.N. Tkachov. The programme of the so-called

propagandists, which reduced the entire further history of Russia down to the revolution to the spreading of socialist ideas, was too obviously tainted with idealism. They recommended propaganda to the Russian socialists in exactly the same way as they would have recommended it, should the case have arisen, to the Polish, Serbian, Turkish or Persian socialists – in a word, to the socialists of any country deprived of the possibility of organising the workers in an open political party. Herzen’s comparison quoted above of the fate of “Euclid’s theorems” with the probable history of socialist ideas provides a typical example of their arguments in favour of their programme. They understood this comparison – in itself quite a risky one – in the abstract and one-sided sense that once social and political ideas have been worked out no more is needed for their assimilation than the subjective logic of people, even if it is not supported by the objective logic of social relationships. They made few mistakes in analysing social relationships in Russia for the simple reason that they hardly undertook any such analysis.

Author’s Footnotes

1. *Socialism and the Political Struggle*, pp.12-13.
2. *Socialism and the Political Struggle*, p.76.
3. [*Italics by Plekhanov*]
4. Искандер, «Старый мир и Россия», стр.31-32. [Iskander, *The Old World and Russia*, pp.31-32.]
5. *Ibid.*
6. [*Note to the 1905 edition*] At that time it had not yet been made finally clear that the Russian village community had nothing in common with primitive communism. There is no longer any doubt about this.
7. [*Note to the 1905 edition*] Cf. my article *N.G. Chernyshevsky* [7*], in No.1 of the journal *Sozial-Demokrat*, Geneva 1890.
8. My italics.

9. Чернышевский, Соч., т.V., Женева 1879. «Об общинном владении землей», стр.135. [Chernyshevsky, *Works*, Vol.V, Geneva 1879. *On Communal Land Tenure*, p.135.]
10. *Works*, Vol.V, pp.16-19.
11. *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, pp.36-37. [10*]
12. [*Italics by Plekhanov*]
13. *Works*, Vol.V, p.100.
14. The italics in these extracts are mine.
15. *The Struggle of the Parties in France under Louis XVIII and Charles X*, Russian Social-Democratic Library, Vol.III, pp.5-8.
16. See *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, p.14 of my translation. [18*] [*Italics by Plekhanov*]
17. See «Хитроумная механика» [*Ingenious Mechanism*] изд. 1877, стр.47-48.

Notes

- 1*. Quotations from the first part of Plekhanov's article *The Law of Economic Development of Society and Socialism's Tasks in Russia*, in which the author still adhered to Narodnik positions, and which was published in *Zemlya i Volya*, Nos.3 and 4. (G.V. Plekhanov, *Works*, Russ. ed., 1923–1927, Vol.I, pp.62-66.)
- 2*. Margarete's reply to Faust's pantheist speech: "With words a little different." (Cf. Goethe, *Faust*.)
- 3*. *Khlestakov* – a character in Gogol's comedy *Inspector-General* – a liar and boaster.
- 4*. Quotation from Marx's *Preface* to the first edition of the first volume of *Capital*.
- 5*. A.I. Herzen's three letters to the English politician Linton were published in 1854 in English and then in 1858 they were translated into Russian under the title *The Old World and Russia*. They were included in the complete collection of Herzen's works and letters under the editorship of M.K. Lemke, Vol.VIII, St. Petersburg 1919. Plekhanov here quotes from the third letter, dedicated to Russia. (Cf. Vol.VIII, pp.45-46.)
- 6*. N.G. Chernyshevsky's article *Criticism of Philosophical Prejudices Against Communal Land Tenure* was published in *Sovremennik*, No. 12, 1858. (Chernyshevsky, *Collected Works*, in 15 volumes, Vol.V, Goslitizdat Publishing House, 1950, pp.357-92.)
- 7*. G.V. Plekhanov, *Works*, Russ. ed. (1923-1927), Vol.V, pp.21-22.

8*. All the quotations made above are from Chernyshevsky's article *Studien*, devoted to an analysis of Haxthausen's *Studien über die Inneren Zustände, das Volksleben und insbesondere die ländlichen Einrichtungen Russlands*. The article was published in *Sovremennik*, No.7, 1857. (Cf. N.G. Chernyshevsky, *Collected Works*, Vol.IV, Goslitizdat Publishing House, 1948, pp.303-48.)

9*. Describing Vera Pavlovna's fourth dream in his novel *What Is To Be Done?* Chernyshevsky gives a Utopian picture of socialist society. (Cf. N.G. Chernyshevsky, *Collected Works*, Vol.XI, Goslitizdat Publishing House, 1939, pp.269-84.)

10*. K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol.1, Moscow 1958, p.62.

11*. From Goethe's *Faust*.

12*. F. Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*.

13*. From Heine's *Germany. A Winter Tale*.

14*. From Chernyshevsky's article on Haxthausen. (See Note 8*.)

15*. Chernyshevsky's article *The Struggle of the Parties in France under Louis XVIII and Charles X* was published in *Sovremennik*, Nos.8 and 9, 1858. (N.G. Chernyshevsky, *Collected Works*, Vol.V, Russ. ed., 1950, pp.213-91.)

16*. N.G. Chernyshevsky, *Collected Works*, Vol.V, Russ. ed., 1950, pp.216-17.

17*. Quotation from the *Inaugural Address of the International Working Men's Association (First International)*, written by Marx in 1864. Cf. K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol.1, Moscow 1958, p.384.

18*. Plekhanov refers to the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* as published in 1882. (Cf. K.Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol.1, Moscow 1958, p.44.)

19*. Quotation from the pamphlet *Ingenious Mechanism* by V.Y. Varzar, Narodnik and follower of Lavrov, published in the early seventies when peaceful propagandists used to go "among the people".

Chapter I

A Few References to History

1. Russian Blanquism

It is now ten years since the most important programmes of the seventies appeared. Ten years of efforts, struggle and sometimes bitter disappointments have shown our youth that the organisation of a revolutionary movement among the peasantry is impossible under the present conditions in Russia. As *revolutionary* doctrines, Bakuninism and Narodism are antiquated and are now received with joy only in the *conservative-democratic* literary camp. Their fate will be either to lose their distinctive features altogether and merge with new and more fruitful revolutionary trends or to congeal in their old form and serve as a buttress for political and social reaction. Our propagandists of the old type have also disappeared from the stage. But that is not the case with the theories of P.N. Tkachov. Although for full ten years “every day has brought us new enemies and created new social factors hostile to us”, although the social revolution “has encountered” in that time certain considerable “obstacles”, Russian Blanquism is now raising its voice with particular force and, still confident that “the contemporary historical period is particularly favourable for the carrying out of the social revolution”, it is continuing to accuse all “dissenters” of moderation and meticulousness, repeating in

a new key the old refrain: “now, or in a very remote future, perhaps never! or “we have not the right to wait”, or “let each one gather his belongings and hasten to set out”, and so on. And it is this strengthened and, if we may so express it, rejuvenated Tkachovism that everybody has to deal with who would like to write about the present “differences” in Russian revolutionary spheres. All the more must it be taken into account in the study of “the fate of Russian capitalism”.

I have already said more than once that Mr. Tikhomirov’s article *What Can We Expect from the Revolution?* is only a new and supplemented edition – though at the same time inferior many respects – of the social and political views of N. Tkachov. If I have not been mistaken in determining the distinctive features of Russian Blanquism, the literary activity of the “Narodnaya Volya party” boils down to a repetition of Tkachov’s teachings in different keys. The sole difference is that for Tkachov “the time we are passing through” referred to the early seventies, while for the publicists of the “Narodnaya Volya party” it coincides with the late seventies and early eighties. Completely lacking what the Germans call the “sense of history”, Russian Blanquism has very easily transferred and will transfer this concept of the particularly favourable “time” for the social revolution from one decade to another. After proving a false prophet in the eighties, it will renew its prophecies with an obstinacy worthy of a better fate ten, twenty or thirty years later and will go on doing so right up to the time when the working class finally understands the conditions for its social emancipation and greets the Blanquist doctrine with Homeric laughter. For the dissemination of Blanquism every moment of history is favourable except a time which is really favourable for the socialist revolution.

But it is time to define more exactly the expressions I use. What is Blanquism in general? What is Russian Blanquism?

P.L. Lavrov hopes, as we have seen, that “the majority of the members” of the Emancipation of Labour group “may any day now be in the ranks of Narodnaya Volya”. He affirms that “Mr. Plekhanov himself has already undergone a sufficiently great evolution in his political and social convictions for us to have reason to hope for new steps on his part in the same direction”. [1*] If the “Narodnaya Volya party” professes – as far as can be judged by its literary works – the Blanquist standpoint, it turns out that my “evolution” too is taking place “in the same direction”. The Marxism which I profess at present is consequently but a purgatory through which my socialist soul must pass to obtain final rest in the lap of Blanquism. Is that so? Will such an “evolution” be progressive? How does this question appear from the standpoint of modern scientific socialism?

“Blanqui is first and foremost a political revolutionary,” we read in an article by Engels [2*], “a socialist only in feeling, who sympathises with the people in their sufferings but has no special socialist theory of his own and proposes no definite measures for social reorganisation. In his political activity he was mainly a so-called ‘*man of action*’ [1] who was convinced that a small number of well-organised people who choose the right moment and carry out a revolutionary attempt can attract the popular masses with one or two successes and thus carry out a victorious revolution. During the reign of Louis Philippe he could naturally organise such a group only, of course, in the form of a secret society and what happened then was what always happens when there is a conspiracy. The people forming it, wearied by continuous restraint and vain promises that it would soon come to the final blow, ended by losing all patience and ceasing to obey, and then one of two things remained: either to allow the conspiracy to fall to pieces or to start the revolutionary attempt without any external occasion. An attempt of that kind was made (on May 12, 1839) and was

suppressed at the very outset. This conspiracy of Blanqui, by the way, was the only one that was not discovered by the police ...

“From the fact that Blanqui viewed every revolution as a *Handstreich* by a small revolutionary minority, it naturally follows that a revolutionary dictatorship must be established after a successful upheaval; naturally not a dictatorship of the whole revolutionary class, the proletariat, but of a small number of those who have carried out the *Handstreich* and who themselves were previously subject to the dictatorship of one or a few of the elect.

“The reader sees,” Engels continues, “that Blanqui is a revolutionary of the old generation. Such conceptions of the course of revolutionary events have already grown too obsolete for the German working-class party, and even in France they can arouse sympathy only in the least mature or least patient workers.”

Thus we see that socialists of the latest, scientific school consider Blanquism as an already obsolete standpoint. The transition from Marxism to Blanquism is not impossible, of course – all sorts of things happen – but on no account will it be acknowledged by any Marxist as progress in the “political and social convictions” of any of their fellow-thinkers. Only from the Blanquist standpoint can such an “evolution” be considered progressive. And if the honourable editor of *Vestnik Narodnoi Voli* has not radically changed his views of the socialism of Marx’s school, his prophecy concerning the Emancipation of Labour group is bound to puzzle every impartial reader.

We see further from this quotation from Engels that Tkachov’s conception of the “forcible revolution” as something “imposed” on the majority by the minority is nothing but Blanquism which could be called the purest if the editor of *Nabat* had not taken it into his head to try to prove that in Russia there is no need even to impose

socialism on the majority, who are communist “by instinct, by tradition”.

The distinctive feature of the Russian variety of Blanquism is therefore merely the idealisation of the Russian peasantry borrowed from Bakunin. Let us now pass on to Mr. Tikhomirov’s views and see whether they come under this definition or are a new variety of “Russian socialism”.

2. L. Tikhomirov

I maintain that there is absolutely nothing new in them except a few historical, logical and statistical mistakes.

These mistakes indeed are something new and original, typical only of the views of Mr. Tikhomirov. Neither Blanquism in general nor Russian Blanquism in particular had any part in their appearance or their peculiar “evolution”.

Their appearance was due to a purely negative cause: lack of knowledge, which generally has a fairly prominent part in the genesis of the social and political concepts of our intelligentsia and which attains inordinate proportions in Mr. Tikhomirov’s article.

It will not be difficult for the reader to check the correctness of our appraisal if he endeavours with us to disentangle the ravelled and in several places broken threads of the “exceptionalist” considerations of our author.

Let us begin with the history of revolutionary ideas in Russia and in the West.

“Only a few years ago,” says Mr. Tikhomirov, “socialists, proceeding from the analysis of social relationships, made by their teachers in the capitalist countries of Europe, considered political activity to be harmful, if anything, to the interests of the popular masses as such, for they presumed that in our country a constitution would be an instrument for the organisation of the bourgeoisie, as it is in Europe. On the basis of these considerations, one could even find among our socialists the opinion that of two evils an autocratic tsar was at any rate better for the people than a constitutional one. Another, so-called liberal, trend was opposite in character”, etc. [2]

The Russian socialists “considered political activity to be harmful, if anything ... proceeding from the analysis ... made by their teachers in the capitalist countries of the West”. What “analysis” is Mr. Tikhomirov talking about? Which teachers does he mean? Whose “portrait’s this? Where’s such talk heard?” [3*] We know that West European socialist thought, “proceeding from the analysis ... made in the capitalist countries in Europe”, presented and still presents “two types of attitude to the question of political activity”. The followers of Proudhon profess political abstention and advise that it should be pursued right up to “the day after the revolution”. For them “political revolution is the aim, economic revolution, the means”. That is why they wish to begin with the economic upheaval, supposing that in contemporary conditions political activity is “harmful, if anything, to the interests of the popular masses as such”, and that a constitution is merely “an instrument for the organisation of the bourgeoisie”. Another trend “was opposite in character”. *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* [4*], published in Paris in 1844, roughly outlined at that time the *political* task of the working class. In 1847 Marx wrote in his *Misère de la philosophie*: “Do not say that social movement excludes political movement. There is never a political movement which is not at the same

time social. It is only in an order of things in which there are no more classes and class antagonisms that *social evolutions* will cease to be *political revolutions*.” [3] In the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* Marx and Engels again return to the same question and prove that “*every class struggle is a political struggle*” and most caustically ridicule those “true socialists” in whose opinion – as in Mr. Tikhomirov’s – the constitution “is in Europe” merely “an instrument for the organisation of the bourgeoisie”. In the opinion of the authors of the *Manifesto*, socialism, opposing the emancipation movement of the bourgeoisie, “lost its pedantic innocence” and became the instrument of *political and social reaction*. The same thought was then repeated many times in other works of the authors of the *Manifesto* and of their followers. It can be said that almost every issue of every Social-Democratic newspaper in every European country reproduces this thought in some form or other. Karl Marx and the Marxists have done everything to elucidate their social and political views and show the unsoundness of the Proudhon “programme”.

And after such brilliant literary activity – activity which opens a new epoch in the history of socialist thought in “Europe” – we hear that the Russian socialists denied the expediency of the political struggle for the sole reason that they “proceeded from the analysis made by their teachers in the capitalist countries of the West”! Can one speak seriously now of any other “analysis of social relationships” in Western Europe than that contained in the works of Marx and Engels? This would be appropriate only in a historical work dealing with the mistakes and one-sidedness of Marx’s predecessors. But either Mr. Tikhomirov is entirely unacquainted with Marxist literature or he has understood it

in exactly the same way as Mr. Ivanyukov, whose “bankruptcy” was announced and partly proved in the first issue of *Vestnik*. [6*] The Russian socialists spoke of the harmfulness of political activity, not because they generally “proceeded from the analysis of social relationships” in Western Europe, but because they proceeded from an erroneous, petty-bourgeois “analysis” made by Proudhon. But were they all Proudhonists? Were they all supporters of the teaching of Bakunin, that reformer, so to speak, of Proudhonism? Who does not know that far from all of them were! P.N. Tkachov, just as absolutely all the West European Blanquists, proceeding, by the way, not from “the analysis made in the capitalist countries of Europe”, but from the traditions of French Jacobinism, savagely attacked the principle of “political abstention”. Did not P.N. Tkachov write precisely “only a few years ago”? Must his opinions not be registered in the history of Russian revolutionary thought? It would be a very risky step for Mr. Tikhomirov to decide to answer this question in the affirmative; what if his own philosophy turned out in effect to be only a new edition of Tkachov’s? It is easy for any reader to make a comparison.

But were there only Bakuninists and Blanquists in the Russian revolutionary movement “only a few years ago”? Were there no other trends? Were there no writers who knew that a constitution “is in Europe” ... “an instrument for the organisation” *not only* of the bourgeoisie, but of another class, too, whose interests socialists cannot ignore without betraying their own banner? It seems to me that there were, and precisely in the camp of those opposed to Tkachov, who, while revolting against the thought that political activity is “harmful, if anything, to the interests of the popular masses as such”, nevertheless demanded all or nothing – either the

seizure of power by the socialists or political stagnation for Russia. When on these grounds it occurred to him to terrify the Russian socialists with the spectre of capitalism and a bourgeois constitution, here is the answer he immediately got from a well-known Russian writer in an appeal to our “social-revolutionary youth”:

“You are told that Russia must have a revolution now or she will never have one. You are shown a picture of the bourgeoisie developing in our country and are told that with its development the struggle will become more difficult, that a revolution will become impossible. The author has a very poor idea of your wits if he thinks you will yield to his arguments ...”

“What grounds are there for thinking that the struggle of the people against the bourgeoisie would be unthinkable in Russia if forms of social life like those abroad were indeed established there? *Was it not the development of the bourgeoisie that roused the proletariat to the struggle?* Are not loud calls to the imminent social revolution heard in all the countries of Europe? Does not the bourgeoisie realise the danger threatening it from the workers and continually drawing nearer? ... Our youth are by no means so cut off from the world as to be ignorant of this state of affairs, and those who would like to convince them that the domination of the bourgeoisie would be unshakable in our country are relying too much on youth’s lack of knowledge *when they draw for them a fantastic picture of Europe.*”

It is clear that the author of these lines by no means considered a constitution as an “instrument for the organisation of the bourgeoisie” alone as it “is in Europe”, to quote Mr. Tikhomirov. Let Mr. Tikhomirov judge the author to be right or wrong as he wishes, but reference should be made to him in speaking of the “types of attitude” of our “intelligent thinkers” to the question of political activity. Even if the writer we have quoted – P.L. Lavrov [4], now Mr. Tikhomirov’s co-editor – did not acknowledge the expediency of political struggle in Russia, it was by no means

because he “proceeded” from the Bakuninist analysis of the “social relationships in the capitalist countries of Europe”. Mr. Tikhomirov is absolutely unforgivable for his lack of attention to the writings of his honourable colleague.

Let us be impartial though, let us try to point out circumstances attenuating his guilt. What is the explanation for this lack of attention? Why does Mr. Tikhomirov include all Russian socialists of the recent past in his list of Bakuninists and pass over P.L. Lavrov’s writings in silence; why does he forget about Tkachov already now before “the boots” of the smugglers who brought *Nabat* into Russia “are worn out”? For a very simple reason. “There’s nothing new under the sun,” sceptics say. And if that cannot be considered as unconditionally true, there is nevertheless no doubt that in many programmes of “Russian socialism” there is absolutely “nothing new”. And yet the supporters of those programmes have great pleasure in saying that their trend was the first “open manifestation” of such and such a “consciousness”. All one has to do in order to afford oneself such a pleasure is to forget certain things in the history of the Russian revolutionary movement and to add a thing or two of one’s own. Then it will be clear that our “intelligent thinkers” were a kind of lost sheep until the programme in question appeared, but that as soon as the authors of that programme uttered their “Let there be light”, “the majestic sunrise” began, as Hegel said of the epoch of the French Revolution. [8*]The appropriate standpoint was found, the misunderstandings were dissipated, truth was discovered. Is it surprising that people to whom pleasant self-deception is dearer than “many a bitter truth” [9*] are tempted by such prospects and, forgetting their predecessors and their contemporaries, attribute to their own “party” the discovery

of methods of struggle which, often enough, far from being discovered, were not even correctly *understood* by that party?

Mr. Tikhomirov has become infatuated with precisely that kind of stereotyped method in historical research. He wanted to show that “the bulk of the Russian revolutionary intelligentsia”, despite the famous “analysis”, “could not renounce the fight against political oppression”, but all this, nevertheless, “took place only unwittingly and spontaneously. The idea of the actual equality of the political and the economic elements in the party programme was clearly and loudly acknowledged only with the appearance of the Narodnaya Volya trend” [5] (which our author humbly honours with capitals). It was to prove his proposition that Mr. Tikhomirov attributed to all the Russian socialists views held only by the Bakuninists. As the latter considered political activity “harmful, if anything”, while the Narodovoltsi rather thought it useful, it is clear that the honour of discovering that political activity is useful belongs to Narodnaya Volya. It was awkward to mention Tkachov because that would have revealed that he professed just that kind of “equality of the political and the economic elements in the party programme” which “was clearly and loudly acknowledged”, it is alleged, “only with the appearance of the Narodnaya Volya trend”. Neither did Mr. Tikhomirov find it “timely” to mention the writings of his co-editor, for to criticise and appraise them he would have had to adopt a standpoint which was quite unusual for a man who still imagined that there was no other “analysis of social relationships” in Western Europe than that “made” by Proudhon and the Proudhonists, by Bakunin and the Bakuninists.

Mr. Tikhomirov “did” all that was possible and even attempted a little of the impossible for the exaltation of his party. He brought himself, for instance, to affirm that “the former founders of *Chorny Peredel*” were once among the “fiercest opponents of the constitution”. And yet, if he had been guided in his historical research by a striving for truth and not by the interests of “party politics” he would not have forgotten that in the very first issue of *Chorny Peredel*, in *A Letter to Former Comrades* [10*], the following view on the constitution was expressed, which was far from corresponding to his idea of “the former founders” of the paper in question: “Do not think, comrades, that I am altogether against a constitution, against political freedom,” says the author of the letter.

“I have too great a respect for the human personality to be against political freedom ... It is unreasonable to say that the idea of political freedom is incomprehensible, unnecessary for the people. It” (i.e., political freedom) “is just as necessary for the people as for the intelligentsia. The difference is that among the people this need merges with other, more vital and basic needs of an economic character. These latter must be taken into consideration by any social-revolutionary party which desires political freedom to be fully ensured and guaranteed from usurpation and distortion, by hostile elements.”

These lines contain inaccuracy in expression and incorrectness in the definition of concepts. But the conclusions that “the founders of *Chorny Peredel*” were “opponents of the constitution”, and even the “fiercest” opponents, can be drawn from them only by a man who has either renounced logic altogether or consciously ignores facts in the interests of his “party”, or finally, has no knowledge at all of those facts, that is, does not know the very history of revolutionary ideas in Russia which he writes of with “the appearance of a learned expert”!

But perhaps the founders of *Chorny Peredel* changed their views on the constitution subsequently. Let us see. Under the editorship of these “founders” two issues of the paper were published. We know already what views on the political freedom were contained in the first issue; what, then, do we find in the second?

“Naturally it is not for us, who deny all subjection of man to man, to mourn the fall of absolutism in Russia; it is not for us, whom the struggle against the existing regime has cost such terrific efforts and heavy losses, to wish for its continuation,” we read in the leading article of that issue. “*We know the price of political freedom* and can only regret that the Russian constitution will not give it a large enough place as well. We welcome any struggle for human rights and the more energetically the struggle is waged the greater is our sympathy towards it ... But besides the advantages which political freedom indisputably brings with it, *besides the tasks of winning it*, there are other advantages and tasks; and they must not be forgotten precisely now that social relationships have become so acute and we must therefore be prepared for anything.” [11*]

Is that the language of the “fiercest opponents of the constitution”?

There were, of course, quite substantial errors in the programme of *Chorny Peredel*. No fewer than in the programme of the “*Narodnaya Volya* party”. But those errors can be criticised successfully only from the standpoint of scientific socialism, certainly not from that of the *Narodnaya Volya* publicists. The latter labour under the same defect as the “founders of *Chorny Peredel*” did once – namely,

inability to adopt a critical attitude to the social and political forms of our national life. People who are reconciled to the idealisation of these forms and base their practical plans on it display greater consistency when they conclude in favour of the programme of Chorny Peredel than when they subscribe to that of “the Narodnaya Volya party”.

Let Mr. Tikhomirov try to prove the contrary.

However, he will hardly have time for that. He will first have to show how his revolutionary outlook differs from P.N. Tkachov’s, how the social and political philosophy of the article *What Can We Expect from the Revolution?* differs from that of the *Open Letter to Frederick Engels*. Until he has solved that difficult problem, his arguments about the historical significance of the Narodnaya Volya trend will have no meaning at all. The reader may admit that the *actions* of Narodovoltsi were heroic, but that their *theories* were as bad as could be, and – what is the chief thing – they were by no means new; in other words, the reader can say that the Narodovoltsi-terrorists were heroes while the Narodovoltsi-writers were ... inferior to their tasks. This conclusion will not be shaken even by references to the fact that the “socialists in the Narodnaya Volya trend for the first time reached the level of a party, and of perhaps the strongest party in the country”. Even if there were not a shade of exaggeration in those words, they would still justify the conclusion being drawn from them that there are times when, despite erroneous and immature theories, energetic parties can “reach the level” of a dominating influence in the country. But no more. Only people who are ignorant of history can conclude from the influence of this or that party that its theories are infallible. The Narodnaya Volya trend is

not new even in the respect that the course of its ideas is lagging far behind the “course of things” “caused” by the trend itself. Has there been any lack of parties which did not understand the historical significance of their activity, any lack of fictions which in no way corresponded to the idea of “party” actions? From the fact that the Independents [12*] temporarily reached “the level of a party ... perhaps the strongest party in the country”, one still cannot conclude that there was more common sense and logic in their religious teachings than in the teachings of other parties. And yet the Independents even succeeded in “seizing power”, a thing which the Russian Blanquists as yet only promise to do.

While the author collects material for a more lasting exaltation of the political philosophy of the Narodnaya Volya trend we shall have time for a detailed study of the article *What Can We Expect from the Revolution?* and an exhaustive definition of Mr. Tikhomirov’s outlook. [13*]

We already know that he either does not know enough himself or did not want to give his readers the opportunity of getting to know the recent history of socialism in general and of “Russian socialism” in particular. Let us now go on to his arguments on history generally and especially the history of capitalism.

He engages in these edifying considerations for the following amazing reason:

“The political struggle,” he says, “has become such an irrevocable conclusion of Russian life that nobody can make up his mind to deny it. But, while not making up their minds, a certain section of the socialists are also unable to bring this conclusion into relation with the customary theoretical views, and in their attempts to find

this relation they resort to artificial constructions which completely distort the meaning of the political struggle which Narodnaya Volya has undertaken.”

What is this “certain section of the socialists” and what are their “customary” views? The preceding pages of Mr. Tikhomirov’s article told us that “only a few years ago, socialists ... considered political activity to be harmful, if anything, to the interests of the popular masses as such”. We decided then that in Mr. Tikhomirov’s opinion all the Russian socialists “only a few years ago” were Bakuninists, since he did not say a word of any other trends. We also saw that Narodnaya Volya noticed the Russian socialists’ mistake and helped them “to understand the character of the historical development of Russia”. It now appears that “a certain section” of the Russian socialists cannot rid themselves of their “customary views” and reach conclusions “which completely distort” the meaning of the activity of the Narodovoltsi. Apparently Mr. Tikhomirov means the Russian Bakuninists, who failed “to understand the character of Russia’s development”. That would be a logical opinion, but it is not our author’s.

“Proceeding from the thought that Russia must inevitably pass through the phase of capitalist development to become capable of accepting and carrying out the ideas of socialism, they” (the socialists who belong to the “certain section” mentioned above) “try to draw the Russian revolutionaries on to the road of purely political struggle, exclusively for a constitution, and abandon as an impossible fantasy all thought of attaining, simultaneously with a political upheaval, a greater or lesser degree of economic upheaval.”

“What a turn, God be praised! “ we would exclaim, quoting Shchedrin; but unfortunately such a lyrical outburst will not solve the “cursed questions” which torture us. Where did

this “certain section” of the Russian socialists come from, and – what is more puzzling – where did they get their “customary views” from if “only a few years ago” *all* Russian socialists denied the expediency of the political struggle? How can people who ascribe no importance to that struggle “proceed from the thought that Russia must inevitably pass through the phase of capitalist development”? This thought may be correct or it may be erroneous, but in any case it is a *new* one and it bears no relation whatever to the “customary” theoretical views of any “section of the Russian socialists”, as is vouched for by the history of the question of capitalism in Russia in general and by the historical references supplied by Mr. Tikhomirov himself. And if this thought is new, it is probably based on some new “theoretical views” which were unknown or unpleasant to Russian socialists “only a few years ago”. And if a new trend has arisen in Russian socialist thought, it should be named, defined; its genesis should be pointed out and it should not be dismissed with vague hints about some kind of “customary theoretical views” which explain nothing at all in the present case.

We have already noted, however, that Mr. Tikhomirov does not like “direct blows” and bears no resemblance to Svyatoslav, who, when about to attack one or the other of his enemies, used to tell him beforehand: “I will attack thee.” Mr. Tikhomirov attacks his opponents without any preliminary declaration of war. That, of course, is a matter of taste, and tastes differ, as we know.

Wondering, however, “why indeed” our author proceeds “with such secrecy”, we must, “by our own reason” [14*], reach the solution of this question of the new trend in

Russian socialism – a question which is highly interesting for us. We ourselves have renounced many old “customary theoretical views” of the Russian socialists – you never know, perhaps we may agree with the innovators whom Mr. Tikhomirov is analysing. It is true they are not attractive as Mr. Tikhomirov describes them, but then, “how many times has it been affirmed to the world” [15*] that the opponent must also be given a hearing!

3. The Emancipation of Labour Group

In the opinion of “the socialists of this formation” the desire for an economic upheaval is “only harmful because it terrifies the liberals with the ‘red spectre’ and deprives us of their collaboration in the struggle for a constitution”.

These words about the “red spectre” sound somewhat familiar. What article, what pamphlet do they occur in? Ah, of course! I used that expression in my pamphlet *Socialism and the Political Struggle*, where I said that the Narodovoltsi terrify our society with the red spectre.

What if all Mr. Tikhomirov says is only a parable in which “a certain section of the socialists” is to be understood as meaning the Emancipation of Labour group, and “customary theoretical views”, the views of the members of that group? But no, it would be too comical.

Indeed, has the Emancipation of Labour group ever abandoned “all thought of attaining, simultaneously with a political upheaval, a *greater or lesser degree* of economic upheaval”? What nonsense! We only do not believe in that peculiar theory according to which the cause of a certain *class* can be accomplished – “to a greater or lesser

degree” – by a small group. We only say that if a lawyer can represent his client *in court*, no Committee, whether Executive, Administrative or whatever else it may be called, can represent the working class *in history*; that the emancipation of that class *must be its own work* and that in order to carry it out the class must acquire political education and must understand and assimilate the ideas of socialism. We think that the possibility of the economic emancipation of the working class increases in direct proportion to the speed and intensity of this process of education and assimilation. Our socialist intelligentsia, for whom it would be childish even to think of carrying out the economic upheaval by their own forces, can, however, render inestimable services to the workers by preparing them to put into effect “the general idea of the worker estate.” [16*] In the very first publication of the Emancipation of Labour group, the pamphlet *Socialism and the Political Struggle*, it was said quite clearly that our intelligentsia “must become the leader of the working class in the impending emancipation movement, explain to it its political and *economic interests* and also the interdependence of those interests. They must ensure that even in the pre-constitutional period *the factual relations of the social forces in Russia are changed in favour of the working class ...* They must exert all their energy so that in the very opening period of the constitutional life of Russia our working class will be able to come forward as a separate party with a definite social and political programme. The detailed elaboration of that programme must be left to the workers themselves, but the intelligentsia must elucidate for them its principal points, for instance, *a radical review of the present agrarian relations, the taxation system and factory legislation, state help for producers’ associations,*

and so forth”. [6] Does all this resemble abandoning “all thought of attaining, simultaneously with a political upheaval, a greater or lesser degree of economic upheaval”? I hope not. And as Mr. Tikhomirov is too intelligent a man not to understand such simple things, and too conscientious a writer purposely to distort their meaning, by “a certain section of the socialists” he apparently did not mean the Emancipation of Labour group, or by “customary theoretical views”, the views set forth in the pamphlet *Socialism and the Political Struggle*.

In all probability the mention of the “red spectre” is not borrowed from my pamphlet either. If it were, I would be justified in reproaching Mr. Tikhomirov for the fact that “his quotations are not exact”. When I spoke of the “red spectre” I did not recommend that our socialists would renounce the “desire” to achieve “a greater or lesser degree of economic upheaval”. I recommended that they should renounce the “desire” to chatter about the nearness of the economic upheaval when they had done nothing or very little for the actual accomplishment of such an upheaval and when confidence in its proximity could be based only on the most childish idealisation of the people. I opposed chatter about the red spectre to effective work for the economic emancipation of the working class, as anybody can see by reading pages 71 and the following of my pamphlet, where, among other things, one can find a reminder of the example of the German Communists in 1848. [17*] Or is Mr. Tikhomirov accusing Marx himself of once renouncing “all thought of attaining, simultaneously with a political upheaval, a greater or lesser degree of economic upheaval”? Even if we presume that our author has a very poor knowledge of West European socialist literature – as

everything goes to show – such crying ignorance would be completely unpardonable. No, it was evidently not my pamphlet or what I said about the “red spectre” that Mr. Tikhomirov had in mind.

But as we have started talking about this spectre, it is worth while explaining in detail what provided me with the occasion for mentioning it in my pamphlet.

At the end of the leading article of *Narodnaya Volya* No.6, we read the following appeal to our so-called society:

“Acting in the interests of society we urge society to emerge at last from its pusillanimous apathy; we implore it to raise its voice in favour of its own interests, the interests of the people, and the life of its children and brothers, who are being systematically persecuted and killed.” [7]

I read in *Kalendar Narodnoi Voli* [18*] that “in respect of our liberals we must point out, without concealing our radicalism, that given the present setting of our party tasks, *our interests* and theirs compel us to act jointly against the government”. [8]

At the same time, Mr. Tikhomirov’s conviction that after the fall of absolutism we may anticipate “the foundation of the socialist organisation of Russia” was not the first “open” manifestation of the “Narodnaya Volya party’s” hopes. By this “foundation of the socialist organisation of Russia” were meant not those successes of the working-class minimum programme which Marx calls the first victory of economics of labour over the economics of capital, but the “social revolution” after *Nabat’s* fashion. In order to convince the reader of the possibility of such a revolution, a doctrine was invented alleging that the relations between the political and

the economic factors in Russia were particularly favourable to it.

Finally, the agitational influence of the terrorist struggle “undertaken” by the Narodnaya Volya party extended far more to “society” than to the “people” in the narrow sense of the word.

Bearing all this in mind, I wondered who it was that the “Narodnaya Volya party” was deceiving – itself or “society”? What a sophist one must be to convince the “liberals” that the “present setting of party tasks”, i.e., the social (I do not say the *socialist*) revolution after Tkachov’s fashion, “compels them” (the liberals) to act “jointly” with Narodovoltsi against the government. Where can one find “liberals” who are naive enough not to notice how loosely this sophism holds together? Not in Russia, at any rate. “While urging” our society “to emerge, at last, from its pusillanimous apathy”, Narodnaya Volya at the same time assures it that by doing so and by overthrowing absolutism it will work *directly* to promote the social revolution. Narodnaya Volya’s propaganda, I argued, cannot be successful in our society.

On the other hand, the terrorist struggle, for all its indisputable importance, has absolutely nothing in common with the “foundation of the socialist organisation of Russia”. What, in fact, has Narodnaya Volya done to prepare such an organisation? Has it founded secret revolutionary groups among the people? Then why is nothing heard of such groups? Has it conducted socialist propaganda among the people? But where is the popular literature it has created? With the exception of the very poorly edited *Rabochaya Gazeta* [19*] we know of none at all. This means that the “foundation of the socialist organisation” of Russia is “awaiting” the Narodnaya Volya party, so to speak, without having received any invitation from the latter. But we can

hardly expect such courtesy from history. Narodnaya Volya wants to reap what it has not sown, looks for the social revolution growing wild, so to speak. It aims its gun at one hare and thinks it will shoot another. What it *expects* “from the revolution” does not correspond to what it has *done* for the revolution. This being so, is it not time to bring the conclusions into agreement with the premises and to understand that the terrorist struggle is a struggle for political freedom and nothing more? Is it not time to admit that this struggle has been waged mainly “in the interests of society”, as No.6 of *Narodnaya Volya* admits? Is it not time to cease terrifying society with the appearance of the “red spectre” from a direction from which the red banner of the working class can never appear? Talk of this logically impossible appearance is harmful not only because it “deprives us of the collaboration” of the liberals “in the struggle for a constitution”. It inspires us with completely unjustified confidence that the socialist revolution “is awaiting” us independently of any efforts on our part; it diverts our attention from the most important point – *the organisation of the working class for its struggle against its present and future enemies*. This, and only this, was the meaning of what I said about the “red spectre”.

On the eve of the war of 1870 there were people in France who shouted that the French troops would not “encounter any obstacles” on the road to Berlin and gave little thought to arms and food for the soldiers. [20*] There were others who said that without wishing to terrify anybody with the spectre of the “old soldier” the first thing to do was to organise the country’s military forces. Which of these understood the interests of their country best?

But my explanation has made me digress. I wanted to study Mr. Tikhomirov’s philosophy of history and have diverted to explanations about the “red spectre”.

“A certain section of the socialists”, by their liberal programme and their “customary theoretical views”, must bring us out on to the correct road and back to the “subject” which we are interested in.

What else does this “certain section” say, and how does Mr. Tikhomirov defeat it?

In the words of our author this “section” almost limit their arguments to the considerations quoted above about the constitution and the terrifying spectre. They have not even taken the trouble to explain their “extreme partiality for a constitution”. This pernicious partiality “is somewhat incomprehensible, as are in general all these” (*all* which?) “programmes, and on the whole it gives the impression of something not fully expressed, not fully defined. These programmes arise, however, from a single common standpoint, which is already fully defined”. This at least is good; but what kind of standpoint gives rise to “all these programmes”, i.e., among others, to the programme of “a certain section” of the socialists? A very bad one, because it “creates a trend” which has “a corrupting influence on the revolutionary party”.

“We are speaking of a trend which considers Russian capitalism as historically inevitable and, reconciled to this alleged inevitable fact, consoles itself with the thought that unless it goes through the school of capitalism Russia cannot become capable of putting the socialist system into practice.”

This, we take it, is not new, for on the preceding page we read that “a certain section of the socialists” proceed from the thought that “Russia must inevitably pass through the phase of capitalist development”, etc. The common point of view which “gives rise to *all these* programmes” proves to be nothing more than the starting-point of *one of these* programmes. But even if it is neither new nor quite

logical, its interest cannot be doubted. Now it becomes clear why a certain section of our socialists display “extreme partiality for a constitution”. “Indeed, what do we need a constitution for?” Mr. Tikhomirov asks. “Surely not to give the bourgeoisie new means of organising and disciplining the working class by depriving them of land, fining and man-handling them. Hence, the only man who can go headlong to his destruction is one who has irrevocably bowed down before the inevitability and necessity of capitalism in Russia.” “A certain section of the socialists” have bowed down before that inevitability, and once they have thus sinned in thought they cannot stop on the slope of sin and vice. As if it were not enough to display “partiality for a constitution”, which is a disgrace to an orthodox Bakunist, they have begun or will begin very soon to show condescendence towards “depriving of land, fining and man-handling”, in contrast to Mr. Tikhomirov, who wants neither the bourgeois nor depriving of land, fining or man-handling. But what do “a certain section of the socialists” want all these horrors for? It is quite clear. “In the present condition of Russia, of Russian capitalism and of the Russian factory worker, the propaganda of the political struggle is bound temporarily to lead anybody who believes in the historical necessity of capitalism to a complete renunciation of socialism. The worker capable of class dictatorship hardly exists. Hence he cannot be given political power. Is it not far more advantageous to abandon socialism altogether for a while as a useless and harmful obstacle to the immediate and necessary aim? That is the way a consistent man, capable of self-sacrifice, argues.” Now we know where fines and man-handling come from, although it is not yet apparent whether they are destined to exist only in the terrified imagination of Mr. Tikhomirov or are actually to be included in the programme of “a certain section of the socialists”.

We shall try to solve this important question later; for the time being let us hasten back to Mr. Tikhomirov, who is engaging in a general battle with the socialists who are convinced of the historical inevitability of Russian capitalism.

4. L. Tikhomirov in the Battle Against the Emancipation of Labour Group

“Is not the argument of its supporters” (i.e., apparently, the supporters of capitalism) “based on a whole series of sophisms?” he asks the reader.

“We are referred to France, to Germany” (not to England? “A certain section of the socialists” apparently did not notice that mountain), “where capitalism has united the workers. So capitalism is necessary to unite ours too. That is exactly how the supporters of slavery argue. They also refer to the role of slavery in primitive history, where it taught the savage to work, disciplined the emotions of man and raised the productivity of labour. All that is quite true. But does it follow that the missionary in Central Africa” (where slavery already exists as it is, I would remind Mr. Tikhomirov) “must see that the Negroes are turned into slaves or that the teacher must use slavish compulsion for the education of children?”

The reader will readily agree, of course, that it does not “follow”, and Mr. Tikhomirov, certain in advance of the answer, continues his argument.

“At times the history of humanity proceeds by the most unbelievable roads. We no longer believe in the hand of God directing every step of mankind and pointing out the swiftest and surest road to progress. On the contrary, in history these roads were sometimes too crooked and the most hazardous that could be imagined. It naturally happened that a historical fact which was harmful and delayed the development of man by some of its aspects served the cause of progress, on the contrary, by others.

Such was the significance of slavery. But that school is not the best nor the only one. Modern pedagogy has shown that slavish compulsion is the worst of all methods of teaching labour ... The same thing applies to the development of large-scale production; it is permitted to doubt whether the roads of history were the best and the only possible ones for all times and all peoples in that respect ... It is quite true that in the history of certain European peoples, capitalism, although it gave rise to a mass of evils and misfortunes, nevertheless had something good as one of its consequences, namely, the creation of large-scale production, by means of which it prepared the ground, to a certain extent" (?!), "for socialism. But it does not follow from this that other countries, for instance Russia, could not have other ways of developing large-scale production ... All this compels us to think that the mode of socialisation of labour which capitalism was capable of is one of the worst, because, although in many respects it actually prepares the possibility of the socialist system, at the same time, by other aspects it postpones in many respects the moment of its advent. Thus, capitalism, together with the mechanical union of the workers, develops competition among them, which undermines their moral unity; in exactly the same way it tends to keep the workers at a much lower level of development than is possible according to the general condition of culture; in the same way too, it directly disaccustoms the workers from any control over the general course of production, etc. All these harmful aspects of capitalist socialisation of labour do not irremediably undermine the significance of its positive aspects, but at any rate they put into the wheel of history a lot of thick spokes which doubtlessly delay its movement towards the socialist system."

It is not without a purpose that I have made this long excerpt from Mr. Tikhomirov's article. These very pages show us the original side of the philosophical and historical theory of our author. In a controversy with Engels, P.N. Tkachov betrayed the "West", so to speak, to his West European opponent. "Your theories are based on Western relations, mine on our Russian relations; you are right as far as Western Europe is concerned, I, as far as Russia is concerned," said every line of his *Open Letter*. Mr. Tikhomirov goes further. From the standpoint of his "pure"

Russian reason he criticises the course of West European development and carries on an inquiry about the “lot of thick spokes” which have been put “into the wheel of history” and “doubtlessly delay its movement towards the socialist system”. He is apparently convinced that a characteristic of history is independent movement “towards the socialist system”, completely irrespective of the relationships created by this or that period, in the present case, the period of capitalism. The latter’s role in this “movement of history” is secondary and even rather doubtful. “Although in many respects it actually prepares the possibility of the socialist system, at the same time” capitalism “by other aspects postpones the moment of its advent”. But what communicates this “movement” to history? For Mr. Tikhomirov “no longer believes in the hand of God” which could have successfully solved the question fatal for his philosophy of history – of the “first impulse”. What a pity that this original theory “gives, the impression of something not fully expressed, not fully defined”.

Ah, this Mr. Tikhomirov! As we see, he likes to talk about important matters! Indeed, it is not a laughing matter, this conviction that “at times history proceeds by the most unbelievable roads”, this assurance that these “roads were sometimes too crooked and the most hazardous that *could be imagined*.” He will probably soon “imagine”, if he has not already done so, another road to socialism for the “West” too – one not so crooked or so hazardous as the road followed by the countries which gave the world Newton, Hegel, Darwin, and Marx, but unfortunately showed too much light-headedness in straying far from Holy Russia and her exceptionalist theories. Apparently it is not without a purpose that Mr. Tikhomirov states that “it is permitted to doubt whether the roads of history were the best, etc., in that respect” (i.e., in respect of the transition to socialism). Do not be embarrassed at the

modesty of this doubt! Here Mr. Tikhomirov is dealing with the famous question whether our world is the best “that could be imagined” or whether it suffers from some “hazardousness”. One cannot but regret that our author confines his study *de optimo mundo* to the single field of history. He would probably bring his readers to the pious doubt whether the course of our planet’s development is the best “that could be imagined”. It would be interesting to know whether *maître* Pangloss, the former teacher of metaphysico-theologo-cosmologo-nihology of the Westphalian castle of Tunder-ten-Tronk [21*], “is still alive. The honourable doctor, we know, was an optimist and proved, not without success, that “the roads of history” were the best “that could be imagined”. If asked the famous question whether the history of Roman culture could dispense with the violence suffered by the virgin Lucretia [22*] he would naturally have answered in the negative. Mr. Tikhomirov is a sceptic and considers it “permitted to doubt” the correctness of Pangloss’ answer to that question. Sextus’ feat will probably seem “hazardous” to him and the worst “that could be imagined”. Such disagreement could be the occasion for great and very edifying philosophical debates for posterity.

For us who have but little interest in the *possible* history of the *possible* West of a *possible* Europe and are completely indifferent to the historical “roads” that “can be imagined” by this or that idle metaphysician, it is an important circumstance that Mr. Tikhomirov has not understood the meaning and significance of one of the most important periods of the *real* history of the *real* West of *real* Europe. His appraisal of capitalism would not satisfy even the most extreme Slavophiles, who long ago cast their *Eastern* anathema on the whole of *Western* history. That appraisal abounds in the most blatant logical contradictions. (3n one page of *What Can We Expect from the Revolution?* we read about the “mighty culture of Europe”, a culture which “gives thousands of means

to rouse the curiosity of the savage, develop his requirements, electrify him morally”, etc., and on the next page we, Russian savages, who have been “electrified morally” by these lines, are immediately plunged into the cold water of the scepticism mentioned above. It appears that “capitalism, although it gave rise to a mass of evils and misfortunes, nevertheless had *something good* as one of its consequences, namely, the creation of large-scale production, by means of which it prepared the ground, *to a certain extent*, for socialism”. [9] Everything “compels” Mr. Tikhomirov to think that the method of socialisation of labour which capitalism was capable of is one of the worst, and so on. [Briefly, Mr. Tikhomirov, when faced with the question of the historic role of capitalism, is just as bewildered as the famous general faced with the question: whether the Earth is a sphere:

*The Earth is round, they say –
That I’m ready to admit,
Although it’s bad form, anyway,
That on a ball I have to live.] [10]*

Under the influence of this sceptical philosophy a mass of “unsolved questions” have appeared in our country. We ask whether the “mighty culture of Europe” existed in the pre-capitalist period, and if not, whether it does not owe its rise to capitalism; or in the opposite event, why does Mr. Tikhomirov only mention large-scale production incidentally, attributing to it only the “mechanical union of the workers”. If the Egyptian Pharaoh Cheops “mechanically united” hundreds of thousands of workers to build his pyramid, is his role in the history of Egypt similar to that of capitalism in the history of the West? The difference seems to us to be only one of quantity; let us assume that Cheops succeeded in “mechanically uniting” far fewer workers, but, on the other hand, he probably “gave rise”

to a lesser “mass of evils and misfortunes”. What is Mr. Tikhomirov’s opinion on that? In just the same way the Roman latifundia, by their “mechanical union” of the workers chained in gangs, “gave rise to a mass of evils and misfortunes” but probably “prepared the ground, to a certain extent”, for the transition of ancient society to socialism? What will the same Mr. Tikhomirov say? In his article we find no answer to that question, and

*Die Brust voll Wehmuth,
Das Haupt voll Zweifel ... [23*]*

we are forced to turn to the writers of the West. Will they dispel our doubts?

Author’s Footnotes

1. [*Italics by Plekhanov*]
2. **Vestnik Narodnoi Voli** No.2, p.231.
3. **Misère de la philosophie**, pp.177-78. [5*]
4. See his pamphlet, **Russian Social-Revolutionary Youth** [7*], pp.22-24.
5. *Vestnik Narodnoi Voli* No.2, p.232.
6. *Socialism and the Political Struggle*, pp.84-85.
7. I quote from the first edition published abroad.
8. *Kalendar*, p.129.
9. [*Italics by Plekhanov*]
10. [*Note to the 1905 edition*] I omitted the lines included in brackets in the first edition on the advice of V.I. Zasluch, who thought them too harsh. It is to be hoped now that their harshness will do no harm and I have restored them. – G.P.

Notes

1*. Quotation from P. Lavrov's review of *Socialism and the Political Struggle*. (*Vestnik Narodnoi Voli*, No.2, Section 2, 1884, p.65.)

2*. Quotation from Engels' *Emigrant Literature*, Section 2, "The Programme of the Blanquist Emigrés of the Commune". The article was printed in *Volksstaat* in 1874.

3*. Plekhanov's quotation from Lermontov's poem *Journalist, Reader and Writer* is not quite accurate.

4*. The journal *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* was edited by Marx and Arnold Ruge in Paris in 1844. Only one issue, a double one, appeared. Plekhanov here refers to Marx's article *Criticism of Hegel's Philosophy of Law*, published in that issue.

5*. K. Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, Moscow, p.197.

6*. Plekhanov here refers to Tarasov's article *Bankruptcy of Bourgeois Science*, devoted to the analysis of Ivanyukov's book *Basic Propositions of the Theory of Political Economy from Adam Smith to the Present Day*, in which the author tried to prove among other things that Marx was opposed to a revolution in Russia.

7*. P.L. Lavrov. (See *Introduction*, Note 31*.)

8*. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, Berlin 1848, S.536.

9*. Words of the poet in Pushkin's poem *The Hero*. The original says: "Self-glorifying lies are dearer to us than many a bitter truth."

10*. The author of *A Letter to Former Comrades* was O.V. Aptekman. The letter gave a historical and theoretical substantiation of the programme and work of the Chorny Peredel group.

11*. This leading article was written by Plekhanov.

12*. *Independents* – a political party during the English Revolution of the 17th century, expressing the interests of the middle bourgeoisie and the bourgeoisified nobles. By their demands of religious freedom and independence they drew the petty bourgeoisie and the peasantry in their wake for a time.

13*. All quotations from Tikhomirov in this and the following chapters are taken from his article *What Can We Expect from the Revolution?*

14*. Words from Griboyedov's comedy *Wit Works Woe*.

15*. From Krylov's fable *The Crow and the Fox*.

16*. This formulation is the one given by Lassalle in his famous pamphlet *Programme of Workers*.

17* See *Socialism and Political Struggle, Part III*.

18*. In the article *Preparatory Work of the Party*. (*Kalendar Narodnoi Voli for 1883*, pp.122-34.)

19*. *Rabochaya Gazeta (The Workers' Gazette)* – an illegal newspaper published from December 1880 to December 1881 by a group of workers who were members of Narodnaya Volya in Petersburg, under the editorship of A.I. Zhelyabov. In all three issues were published. Its publication ceased after the crash of the Narodnaya Volya organisation.

20*. In one of his unpublished notes kept in Plekhanov House, Leningrad, Plekhanov quotes significant pronouncements of French public figures on the eve of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71.

“Marshal Leboeuf: ‘We are ready, more than ready; if the war lasts even as much as a year we shall not be short of anything, not even buttons for the soldiers’ gaiters!’

“The President of the Senate: ‘Sire, thanks to your solicitude, France is prepared.’

“The War Minister: ‘There is no Prussian army; I deny it’.”

21*. *Pangloss* – Candide’s tutor in Voltaire’s tale *Candide*. Pangloss followed Leibniz’s proposition “All is for the best in this, the best of worlds”.

22*. According to tradition the Roman patrician Lucretia (6th cent. B.C.), raped by the Emperor’s son Sextus, committed suicide, and this, it is said, provided a pretext for the revolt which ended in the banning of the Roman emperors and the establishment of an aristocratic republic.

23*. Quotation from Heine’s poem *Fragen*.

5. *The Historical Role of Capitalism*

“The bourgeoisie” (and consequently capitalism, is it not so, Mr. Tikhomirov?), “historically, has played a most revolutionary part,” we read in the *Communist Manifesto*.

“The bourgeoisie, wherever it has got the upper hand, has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations. It has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his ‘natural superiors’, and has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous ‘cash payment’. It has drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervour, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine sentimentalism, in the icy water of egotistical calculation ...

“The bourgeoisie has disclosed how it came to pass that the brutal display of vigour in the Middle Ages, which Reactionists so much admire, found its fitting complement in the most slothful indolence. It has been the first to show what man’s activity can bring about. It has accomplished wonders far surpassing Egyptian pyramids, Roman aqueducts, and Gothic cathedrals; it has conducted expeditions that put in the shade all former Exoduses of nations and crusades.

“The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionising the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society. Conservation of the old modes of production in unaltered form, was, on the contrary, the first condition of existence for all earlier industrial classes. Constant revolutionising of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses, his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind ...

“The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country. To the great chagrin of Reactionists, it has drawn

from under the feet of industry the national ground on which it stood. All old-established national industries have been destroyed or are daily being destroyed. They are dislodged by new industries, whose introduction becomes a life and death question for all civilised nations, by industries that no longer work up indigenous raw material, but raw material drawn from the remotest zones; industries whose products are consumed, not only at home, but in every quarter of the globe. In place of the old wants, satisfied by the productions of the country, we find new wants, requiring for their satisfaction the products of distant lands and climes. In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal interdependence of nations. And as in material, so also in intellectual production. The intellectual creations of individual nations become common property. National one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and local literatures, there arises a world literature.

“The bourgeoisie, by the rapid improvement of all instruments of production, by the immensely facilitated means of communication, draws all, even the most barbarian, nations into civilisation. The cheap prices of its commodities are the heavy artillery with which it batters down all Chinese walls, with which it forces the barbarians’ intensely obstinate hatred of foreigners to capitulate. It compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilisation into their midst, i.e., to become bourgeois themselves. In one word, it creates a world after its own image.

“The bourgeoisie has subjected the country to the rule of the towns. It has created enormous cities, has greatly increased the urban population as compared with the rural, and has thus rescued a considerable part of the population from the idiocy of rural life. Just as it has made the country dependent on the towns, so it has made barbarian and semi-barbarian countries dependent on the civilised ones, nations of peasants on nations of bourgeois, the East on the West ...

“The bourgeoisie, during its rule of scarce one hundred years, has created more massive and more colossal productive forces than have all preceding generations together. Subjection of nature’s forces to man, machinery, application of chemistry to industry and agriculture, steam-navigation, railways, electric telegraphs,

clearing of whole continents for cultivation, canalisation of rivers, whole populations conjured out of the ground – what earlier century had even a presentiment that such productive forces slumbered in the lap of social labour?” [24*]

That is how Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, “revolutionaries by logic and by feeling”, understand capitalism. And how do intelligent and educated *conservatives* understand it?

Almost in the same way. “Joint-stock undertakings” (the highest phase of capitalist development, is it not, Mr. Tikhomirov?) ... “have their historic mission,” we read in one of Rodbertus’ letters to R. Meyer, “they are destined to complete the work of God’s hands, to pierce isthmuses where the Almighty forgot or did not consider it opportune to do so, to link under the sea or over the sea lands which it separates, to burrow through high mountains, etc., etc. The pyramids and the Phoenician stone constructions cannot be compared with what will yet be done by joint-stock capital”, etc. [25*]

Such is the general cultural and historical significance of capitalism. But what is its influence, particularly on the workers, their intellectual make-up, their moral habits?

What workers did capitalism have to deal with at the beginning of its development? “What the moral and intellectual character of this class was may be guessed,” we read in Engels’ work about English weavers. “Shut off from the towns ... so shut off that old people who lived quite in the neighbourhood of the town never went thither until they were robbed of their trade by the introduction of machinery and obliged to look about them in the towns for work – the weavers stood upon the moral and intellectual plane of the

yeomen ... They regarded their squire ... as their natural superior; they asked advice of him, laid their small disputes before him for settlement, and gave him all honour, as this patriarchal relation involved ... In short, the English industrial workers of those days lived and thought after the fashion still to be found here and there in Germany [11], in retirement and seclusion, without mental activity and without violent fluctuations in their position in life. They could rarely read and far more rarely write; went regularly to church, never talked politics, never conspired, never thought, delighted in physical exercises, listened with inherited reverence when the Bible was read, and were, in their unquestioning humility, exceedingly well-disposed towards the 'superior' classes. But intellectually, they were dead" (listen, Mr. Tikhomirov); "lived only for their petty, private interest, for their looms and gardens, and knew nothing of the mighty movement which, beyond their horizon, was sweeping through mankind. They were comfortable in their silent vegetation, and *but for the industrial revolution* [12]" (i.e., capitalism, Mr. Tikhomirov) "they would never have emerged from this existence, which, cosily romantic as it was, was nevertheless not worthy of human beings. In truth, they were not human beings; they were merely toiling machines in the service of the few aristocrats who had guided history down to that time. The industrial revolution has simply carried this out to its logical end by making the workers machines pure and simple, taking from them the last trace of independent activity, and so forcing them to think and demand a position worthy of men ..." This industrial revolution in England tore the workers out of their "apathetic indifference to the universal interests of mankind" and "drew them into the whirl of history". [13]

Those words are from Engels, whom bourgeois economists accuse of having painted the condition of the workers in the pre-capitalist period in too bright colours and given too gloomy a description of their condition in the period of capitalism. Such accusations abound, for instance, in Bruno Hildebrand's *Die Nationalökonomie der Gegenwart und Zukunft*.

But what are the West and its pseudo-sages to us, as Mr. Aksakov would say; let us listen to Moses and the prophets, let us read Bakunin himself.

“From the Renaissance and the Reformation right up to the Revolution, the bourgeoisie” (thanks to rising capitalism, Mr. Tikhomirov, or not?) “in Italy, France, Switzerland, Britain and Holland, if not in Germany, was the hero and the representative of the revolutionary genius of history. Out of it came most of the free thinkers in the eighteenth century, the religious reformers in the preceding two centuries and the apostles of human emancipation, among these also the German figures of the last century. The bourgeoisie alone, leaning, of course, on the mighty arm of the people who had faith in it, carried out the revolution in 1789 and 1793. It proclaimed the fall of the royal power and of the Church, the fraternity of the peoples, the rights of man and of the citizen. Those are its rights; they are immortal!” [14]

In view of these immortal services of West European capitalism, Mr. Tikhomirov, the man of the East, cannot renounce his Slavophile scorn for the West, and yawning lazily, he says that this road of development was nevertheless not the best “that could have been imagined”. In all the history of the bourgeoisie he sees but the “mass of evils” and the “mechanical union of the workers”. For him this “union” contains the whole significance of “large-scale production”. Talking about slavery he still mentions the increase in the productivity of labour that it led to, but when he goes on to capitalism he does not even hint at “the

gigantic means of production conjured up”, which were alone capable of preparing the victory of the proletariat! He has not the slightest idea of the influence of capitalism on the development of philosophy, public and private law, the philosophy of history, natural science and literature. And yet there can be no doubt of that influence and there was a time when Russian writers understood the influence of class relations in society (and what, if not capitalism, created the class relations in *contemporary* society?) on the course of development of learning in general and of philosophical thought in particular. “Political theories, and indeed, all philosophical doctrines generally, have always been created under the extremely powerful influence of the social position of their authors, and every philosopher represented one of the political parties struggling at that time for domination over that society to which the philosopher belonged,” says Chernyshevsky [15] ... “ Philosophical systems are permeated through and through with the spirit of the political parties to which the authors of the systems belonged.” Or does Mr. Tikhomirov presume that the political and philosophical systems of the epoch of capitalism are inferior to the corresponding systems of the Middle Ages? Does he think that the theories which characterise capitalism were worse than those which he himself can “imagine”? In that case, let him “imagine” as many of them as he pleases, let him go on ignoring the history of West European culture! In this disagreement of the editor of *Vestnik Narodnoi Voli* with the West, the former loses very much and the latter absolutely nothing.

It is not Mr. Tikhomirov, however, who must be considered as the initiator of this discord. On this question our author only repeats what was said in various articles by Mr. V.V.

who in general is inclined, as we know, to narrow down the cultural and historical significance of Western capitalism and, on the contrary, to exaggerate the corresponding influence of the present Russian “authority”, which “has no serious opponent in society” and therefore “need not fear the factors of progress against which the West European governments waged a continuous war”. [16] Examine attentively the volume *The Destinies of Capitalism in Russia*, which is full of endless repetitions and therefore quite bulky, and you will not find any indications of the significance of capitalism other than references to the “socialisation of labour” which is in turn identified with the “union of the workers” and the development in them of some feelings or others with which Mr. V.V. sympathises. And this narrow and one-sided appreciation is wholly adopted by Mr. Tikhomirov in his article; on it he bases what he *expects* “from the revolution”! Our author has forgotten, it appears, the fine piece of advice which Lassalle gave to one of his opponents: “study, study, but not from newspaper articles.”

Russian writers are not content with their absurdly narrow philosophy of the history of capitalism. They themselves analyse this form of production and, so to speak, their own intelligence shows them the contradictions inherent in it. But what contradictions! They are not solved by historical dialectics through the old social form being replaced by a new one which has grown within the former as a result, apparently, of the very logical development of the principle underlying it. They are not the contradictions whose historical meaning was thus expressed by Goethe:

Vernunft wird Unsinn, Wohlthat Plage. [29*]

They are contradictions which have *no* historical meaning *whatever*, and which are only the result of the attitude of the petty-bourgeois observer to the object of his study, an attitude which may be described by the words: "Measure ten times before cutting your cloth." It is a kind of eclecticism which sees a good and a bad side in everything, encourages the former and condemns the latter and sins only by not seeing any organic link between the "bright" and "darkening" features of a given historical epoch. Capitalism could have said to such critics Feuerbach's words: "You condemn my defects, but note that my good qualities are conditioned by them." In this case the Russian writers apply to the historical categories the method of Proudhon, who saw it as the task of dialectics to point out the good and the evil sides of every *economic* category. "*Il veut être la synthèse,*" Marx wrote about him, "*il est une erreur composée.*" [30*]

Proudhon is said to have been once Bakunin's pupil. Did he not get this method, which he shares with many Russian critics of capitalism, from the one common teacher?

A brilliant representative of this method of "composite error" can again be seen in the same Mr. Tikhomirov, who, having shown the good side of capitalism, the union of the workers, immediately goes on to show its shady sides. We have already seen how far his "praise" of capitalism corresponds to reality. It is not surprising that the reproach he makes turns out to be completely unfounded.

"Capitalism, together with the mechanical union of the workers, develops competition among them, which undermines their moral unity ..."

Apparently Mr. Tikhomirov wants to “imagine” a way of transition to socialism in which competition would be unknown. Leaving aside the question of the role of competition in the existence of the economic category known as the exchange value, which brings the labour of various specialists to the common denominator of simple human labour, without the understanding of which conscious communist tendencies would be unthinkable, let us give attention to the *evil* side of competition which our author points out. Here we will first of all note that only what exists in reality, not in Mr. Tikhomirov’s sympathies and “expectations”, can be “undermined”. Was there moral unity of the workers during the pre-capitalist period? We already know there was not. In the most flourishing period of guild production there was “moral unity” among workers of one association or, at most, of *one branch of labour* within quite restricted local limits; but the idea of the worker as such, the consciousness of the unity of the whole of the productive class never existed. [17] Capitalism undermined, disrupted, removed the “moral unity” of patented *specialists* and set up in its place the moral unity of “*working men of all countries*,” a unity which it achieved by means of competition. Why, then, does Mr. Tikhomirov thus attack competition? We have already seen that in his opinion history has some kind of independent, abstract “movement towards the socialist system”; given such a “movement” one can with impunity “criticise” all the motive powers and springs which first compelled progressive mankind “to face with sober senses, their real conditions of life, and their relations with their kind”.

Capitalism “tends to keep the workers at a much lower level of development than is possible according to the general condition of culture”.

This sentence seems to have been taken in full from the minutes of the Eisenach Congress of the German *Katheder Sozialisten*, in whose opinion the social question comes to the question of raising the *workers* to a higher “level of development”. But the *Katheder Sozialisten* know what they are demanding, although, in spite of all their efforts, they have not yet decided how to attain their demands. They understand the epoch-making and revolutionary significance of the modern proletariat and they want to undermine that significance with their palliatives and to impose on the workers Rodbertus’ motto: “*monarchisch, national, sozial.*” By a higher level of development they understand a somewhat higher and better guaranteed wage, far greater narrow-mindedness and incomparably less responsiveness in the working class. They know that the “iron law” of wages [31*] is the death sentence for modern society and are not against *sweetening* this law to repeal the sentence. They foresee that, if affairs remain in their present condition, the proletariat will soon take *everything*, and that is why they are doing their utmost to force the proletariat to barter its impending birthright for a mess of pottage. They want a bourgeoisie without any proletariat. But what does Mr. Tikhomirov want? In which of the historical periods previous to capitalism did the working class have a higher level of development than at present? Was it in the ancient world, the epoch of slavery, or in the Middle Ages, the epoch of serfdom? Or is Mr. Tikhomirov comparing bourgeois society with the “future”, socialist society? If so, then, of course, he is right in the sense that the social system of the

“future historic epoch” will bring man’s development into greater conformity with the productive forces created by civilisation. But, not to mention that to accuse capitalism of not being socialism means not to understand the historical genesis of socialism, we will point out to Mr. Tikhomirov that by force of habit he has got mixed up in his terminology. It is obvious that socialist society is unthinkable without people who work, but it can be said in all probability that there will be no *workers* under socialism; for a worker presupposes capitalist employers, landowners, etc., just as the slave presupposed the slave-owner and the serf the feudal lord. What Mr. Tikhomirov says boils down in this case to the amazing proposition that the modern workers are at a lower level of development than the workers in a society in which there are no workers at all.

Or is Mr. Tikhomirov comparing the condition of the workers in capitalist society with their condition under the social relationships “that can be imagined” as transitional steps to socialism? If so, let him “imagine” such relationships; we will read his *imagination*s with great interest. But he should not be too much infatuated with fiction, he should not forget that one must distinguish between the *degree* and the *type* of culture, and that if the degree of material culture of the present-day proletariat is not very high, it is nevertheless a culture of a much higher type than any which existed before. We are not even speaking of the intellectual and moral culture of this class, which is much higher in its development than the productive classes of all preceding periods. Mr. Tikhomirov should devote serious attention to this development, which cannot be replaced either by primitive forms of land tenure and production or by strict discipline instituted by this or that

“Committee” in the revolutionary organisations of *raznochintsi*.

“In exactly the same way” capitalism “directly disaccustoms the workers from any control over the general course of production, etc.”

Capitalism could answer this unexpected accusation with the Russian saying: “You’re welcome to the best we have.” It cannot teach the workers control “over the general course of production” for the simple reason that it does not know any such control itself. Industrial crises are conditioned, among other things, precisely by this lack of control. But, we ask, can such control be imagined outside socialist society? Let Mr. Tikhomirov prove that it can, and then we will enter into greater details with him. Now we will only repeat that to accuse capitalism of not being socialism means to accuse history of not having started immediately by putting into practice the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* instead of its “*movement towards the socialist system*”.

This dispute about the significance of Western capitalism may appear completely unwarranted to many readers. It is Russia we are interested in, not the West, they will say; why spend so much time on an appraisal of the historical development of the West? Even if Mr. Tikhomirov has overlooked some things, and got mixed up in a thing or two over this question, what relation has that to our domestic matters?

The most direct relation. Mr. Tikhomirov “criticises” Western capitalism for the completely definite practical purpose of working out a programme for the Russian social-revolutionary party. He “expects” certain blessings “from the

revolution”, on the basis, by the way, of his appraisal of West European history. If his appraisal is correct, then his expectations are grounded; if, on the contrary, this appraisal reveals complete ignorance of the history of the West and of the methods of contemporary philosophical and historical criticism, then his very “ expectations” prove to be completely unfounded. That is why I have devoted many pages to unravelling this confusion which found so comfortable room in two pages (238 and 239) of the second issue of *Vestnik*. When we have dealt with it, we can go on to Russian questions.

6. The Development of Capitalism in the West

“Don’t idolise private business capital,” exclaims Mr. Tikhomirov on his return from one of his philosophical-historical excursions; “the more so as there still remains the great question whether such capital will be able to do for Russia even that” (!) “which it did for Europe. Our present condition differs considerably from that of the European countries at the moment when they began to organise national production on the basis of private capital. There the private businessman was provided with extensive markets and encountered no particularly terrible competition. But we have absolutely no markets and in everything he undertook the private businessman encountered insuperable competition from European and American production.” [32*]

All these arguments of our author are again not his, they are borrowed from Mr. V.V. But, without going into their genealogy, let us examine how serious they are. Here again we are faced with a difficult and thankless task – that of unravelling the “lost unbelievable muddle of facts and concepts.

First of all, we ask Mr. Tikhomirov why he attacks “*private*” business capital and does not mention other forms of the same *business* capital. Why does he, to use Rodbertus’

expression, prefer blondes to brunettes? Does he think “that *state* business capital in the hands of the Iron Chancellor is better than private capital in the hands of Borsig or Krupp”?

Or is he opposing private business capital to the same capital belonging to workers’ associations? Why, in that case, did he not make the reservation that his sympathy for business capital not belonging to private individuals extends only to one variety of that capital? And indeed, can one have sympathy for this variety without new and very substantial reservations?

German [33*] Social-Democracy demands state credit for workers’ associations, but it knows by experience that these can be successful, i.e., not degenerate into exploiters of other people’s labour, only on condition that they are strictly controlled on the basis of socialist principles. Workers’ socialist parties can and must be representative of such a control. Thus, whoever speaks of state credit for workers’ associations either speaks of strengthening the influence of the workers’ party or suggests a measure capable of resulting in splitting the proletariat and strengthening the influence of the bourgeoisie or the government. Mr. V.V. is not afraid of the latter outcome, and that is why he fearlessly addresses his projects of reform to “the existing authority”. Mr. Tikhomirov is one of the irreconcilable enemies of absolutism and at the same time is very sceptical of the possibilities of a bourgeois regime and a workers’ socialist party coming to exist in our country. Hence his plans for the institution of workers’ industrial associations – plans, however, about which we *can only make surmises*, thanks to his confused terminology – belong to the more or less

distant future when the “seizure of power by the revolutionaries” will be “the starting-point of the revolution”. As we shall have a lot to say about this seizure and its possible consequences, we will not stop here to consider the conditions under which Russian workers’ industrial associations can promote the cause of socialism. Now, however, having pointed out to Mr. Tikhomirov his lack of clarity and definition in the economic terminology, let us go on to his historical contrasts.

There would be no doubt, if the formulation were at least tolerable, that “our present condition differs considerably from that of the European countries at the moment when they began to organise national production on the basis of private capital”. Any schoolboy knows that no two facts in the whole of history have been accomplished under exactly identical conditions; it is therefore not surprising that every historical period in each country “differs considerably” from the corresponding period in any other country. But as a consequence of this, we may say *a priori* that the stereotyped contrasting of Russia with the “West” loses all human meaning if it is not accompanied by a number of reservations, amendments and additions, since by Western Europe we mean not one single country but many greatly differing ones. Mr. Tikhomirov sees no necessity for these additions. He contrasts the “present condition of Russia” with the “*moment*” in the history of “the European countries when they began to organise national production on the basis of private capital”. But not to mention that one cannot “organise national production on the basis of private capital” and that complete anarchy, i.e., the absence of any organisation, is a characteristic feature of “national production” in capitalist countries; forgiving Mr.

Tikhomirov these blunders in logic and terminology, we will ask him whether the foundation of capitalist production was laid at a single “moment” “in the European countries”. Were there not, on the contrary, just as many “moments” as there were “European countries” engaging on the road of capitalism? And if so, did not those historical “moments” differ “considerably” one from another? Was the beginning of English capitalism like the beginning of capitalism in Germany? As far as we know, it was by no means alike, so unlike that at one time in Germany, too, the opinion was held that the country completely lacked the conditions for developing large-scale manufacturing industry and would have to remain for ever an agrarian country. Those who held that opinion based it on the very fact that the “present” condition of Germany “differed considerably”, etc. What has Mr. Tikhomirov to say about this question in general and about these false prophets in particular?

In the pamphlet *Socialism and the Political Struggle* I spoke of those Russian writers who are supporters of the geographical school founded by the Jewish boy in Weinberg’s story. “Russian writers, propagandists of exceptionalism,” I wrote, “introduced only one new thing into that clever geographical classification of the poor schoolboy: they divided ‘abroad’ into East and West, and, not stopping long to think, began to compare the latter with Russia, which was ascribed the role of a kind of ‘Middle Empire’.” When I wrote those lines it did not even occur to me that such absurdities could be repeated in a publication edited, incidentally, by P.L. Lavrov. Now I see that Lavrov’s co-editor is among the followers of the Jewish boy and heaps together, in a “moment” of some kind “imagined” by himself, quite a number of highly complicated and “considerably”

different historical phenomena. *Vestnik Narodnoi Voli* was apparently fated to disappoint the expectations of its readers in many, many respects!

In this case, however, there is an attenuating circumstance for Mr. Tikhomirov. He was led into his mistake by the conviction that in “the European countries” at a historical “moment” with which we are already familiar “the private businessman was provided with extensive markets and encountered no particularly terrible competition” whereas “we have practically no markets”. Were this correct, his contrast between Russia and the West would be sufficiently well founded. No matter how greatly the conditions under which capitalism arose differed in each of “the European countries”, they would have had in common one feature of the highest importance not repeated in contemporary Russia: the presence of “extensive markets” for the disposal of wares. This circumstance, which was favourable to “the European countries”, would have given a completely different colouring to the economic history of the West. The trouble is that Mr. Tikhomirov, or rather the author of the articles from which he derived his conviction, was cruelly mistaken. In the countries referred to, the private businessman was *not* provided with any “extensive markets” at all. The bourgeoisie *created* the markets, they did not find them *ready made*. In the feudal and handicrafts period which had preceded, not only were there no “extensive markets”, there were no markets at all in the modern sense of the word; at that time only surpluses were exchanged – what remained after the producers’ own consumption – and the handicraftsmen worked *to order* for a specified person in a specified locality, and not for the market. Nobody who has even the slightest understanding of the economic relations

in the Middle Ages will dispute that. In the same way everybody, “even if he has not been trained in a seminary”, will understand that demand, and with it markets, could only appear side by side with production, as they were called for by the latter and in their turn called for it. “Most often, needs arise directly from production or from a state of affairs based on production. World trade turns almost entirely round the needs, not of individual consumption, but of production.” [18] But the modern, indeed “extensive”, world market is characterised precisely by the fact that not consumption calls forth production, but the other way round. “Large-scale industry, forced by the very instruments at its disposal to produce on an ever-increasing scale, can no longer wait for demand. Production precedes consumption, supply compels demand.” [19]

For brevity's sake we may admit as indisputable that Western Europe encountered no “particularly terrible competition” during the period when capitalism arose, although the not unfrequent prohibitions of imports to “European countries” of Eastern industry's products during that period show that indeed the manufactories in the West feared competition from Asia. But the “particularly terrible” rivals of West European producers were the West European producers themselves. This will cease to seem paradoxical if we remember that capitalism by no means began to develop at one and the same “moment” in the different “European countries”, as Mr. Tikhomirov thinks. When industrial development reached a certain level in one of those countries, when the representatives of capital attained such power and influence that they could make legislation an instrument to further their purposes, it turned out that “in everything he undertook the private businessman

encountered insuperable competition” from neighbouring countries. Then agitation for state intervention began. The history of the seventeenth century with its tariffs, which were the object of diplomatic negotiations, and its trade wars, which necessitated colossal expenditures for those times, is a tangible proof of the enormous efforts that the “European countries” had to make to acquire the markets which are said to have been ready-made for them. It was a question not only of winning foreign markets, but of defending the home market too. Is there any need to illustrate by examples a history which seems to be generally known? Perhaps it will not be superfluous in view of the ignorance of our home-grown and exceptionalist economists. Let us begin with France.

Colbert “saw that France was importing from abroad far more goods than she was exporting, that in spite of the existence of the Tours and Lyons manufactories, Italy was continuing to supply silk wares, gold and silver fabrics, and gold yarn; that Venice was getting millions from her annually for mirrors and lace; that England, Holland and Spain were supplying her with woollen goods, spices, dyes, hides and soap ... he saw ... that the large companies and colonies which Richelieu had tried to set up were ruined and that all France’s sea trade was still in the hands of the English and the Dutch. In order to hinder this overrunning of French ports Fouquet had already placed a tax of fifty sous on every ton of goods brought in foreign ships and constant complaints from the Dutch proved to Colbert that his predecessor had dealt them a heavy blow. Such was the situation. Colbert set himself the aim of changing it in France’s favour, of freeing the country from all trade subjection and raising it by industrial development to the

level of the more prosperous nations”, etc. [20] He set about the matter with such diligence that his direct intention was to “annihilate” Dutch trade by the 1667 tariff.

“The English and Dutch countered in like manner, the tariff dispute was the occasion for the 1672 war, and finally, the Peace of Nymwegen [36*] compelled France to restore the 1664 tariff.” [21]

We see that France was by no means “provided with” extensive markets, she had to win them by the appropriate economic policy, diplomatic negotiations and even arms. Colbert relied only on “time and great diligence”, thanks to which France would be able, he thought, to become “the teacher of the nations which had taught her lessons”. We know that France’s protection and prohibition policy did not end with the influence of Colbert any more than it had owed him its beginning. Not until after the Peace of Versailles [37*] did the French Government take the first step towards free trade in 1786. But this attempt did not favour French industry. By an agreement with England in 1786 each of the contracting countries imposed a duty of only 12 per cent of the cost price on woollen and cotton fabrics, porcelain, pottery and glass wares, of 10 per cent on metal goods – iron, steel, copper, etc.; flax and hemp fabrics were taxed according to the tariff fixed for the most favoured countries; but England, being able to produce these goods 30, 40, or 50 per cent cheaper than the French manufacturers, soon became the mistress on the French market. That was why in 1789 the electors almost unanimously demanded a more energetic protection of French industry. The governments of the Restoration and the July monarchy also adhered to a strictly protectionist tariff. To guarantee the sale of French wares the colonies were forbidden to trade with any country but the

metropolitan country. Not until 1860 was there a turn in favour of free trade, but even this aroused great opposition in the country and was censured, incidentally, by Proudhon. Finally, as recently as 1877, fear of English competition moved the protectionists to form the “Association for the Protection of National Labour”. The 1882 tariff was a compromise between demands for protection and the desire for free trade displayed mainly by the representatives of commercial capital. [22]

Such is the history of the “extensive markets” that were at the disposal of the French capitalists. Has Mr. Tikhomirov heard of it?

And what about Germany, to which our author is “referred” by “a certain section of the socialists”?

Here matters stood no better. Here too, “in everything he undertook the private businessman” encountered “insuperable competition” from the more progressive countries. We know that the appearance of German capitalism was relatively recent. Not only in the last century, but even at the beginning of this, competition with France or England was out of the question for Germany. Let us take Prussia as an example. In 1800, Prussia absolutely prohibited the import of silk, semi-silk and cotton fabrics. In the preceding eighty years the government had spent more than ten million *taler* only on silk factories in Berlin, Potsdam, Frankfort on the Oder and Köpenick (from which Mr. Tikhomirov can clearly see that not the Russian Government alone displayed efforts to “organise” national production “according to bourgeois principles”). But French and English wares were so much better than the Prussian

that the prohibition of imports was evaded by smuggling, which no severe legislative measures could stop. Napoleon's victory deprived Prussia of the possibility of saving her manufactories by a "wall" of prohibitive tariffs. With the invasion by the French army, French goods began to glut the markets in the conquered territories. At the beginning of December 1806, the invaders demanded the admission of French goods at low customs tariffs to all parts of the territory occupied by French troops. In vain did the Prussian Government draw their attention to the local industry's inability to hold out against competition from French manufacturers. It tried in vain to prove that the Berlin manufacturers had held their own only thanks to protection tariffs, with the abolition of which the population would be irretrievably impoverished and the factory workers would be completely ruined. Bourgeois France's victorious generals answered that the import of French goods was the "natural result" of the conquest. Thus, side by side with the governments' political struggle there proceeded the economic struggle of the nations, or more exactly of those sections of the nations in whose hands the means of production are still concentrated. Side by side with the struggle of the armies was the struggle of the manufacturers; alongside the warfare of the generals was the competition of commodities. The French bourgeoisie needed to gain control of a new market, and the Prussian bourgeoisie did all in their power to safeguard the market they owed to protection tariffs. Where, then, were the ready-made "extensive markets"? When, after the declaration of war in 1813, the Prussian industrialists were at last freed from their French rivals, they found themselves faced by new and still more dangerous opponents. The fall of the continental system gave English goods access to the European markets. Prussia

was glutted with them. Their cheapness made it impossible for the local producers to compete with them in view of the low customs dues imposed on goods from friendly and neutral countries. Complaints from the Prussian industrialists again forced the government to limit imports of at least cotton goods. [23] From then on until this very day the Government of Prussia, and indeed of Germany as a whole, has not ventured to waive protective tariffs for fear of “insuperable competition” from more advanced countries. And if the Russian Blanquists seize power while Bismarck is still alive, the Iron Chancellor will probably not refuse to reveal to them the secret of his trade policy and will convince our journalists that “extensive markets” do not and never did grow on trees.

Let us pass on to America.

“In respect of industry the North American colonies were held in such complete dependence by the metropolitan country that they were to have no kind of industry except domestic production and the usual crafts. In 1750 a hat factory founded in Massachusetts so attracted the attention of Parliament and was the object of such jealousy on its part that factories of all kinds (in the colonies, of course) were declared common nuisances. As late as 1770 the great Chatham, perturbed by the first attempts at factory production in New England, said that not a single nail was to be made in the colonies.” [38*] During the War of Independence, thanks to the rupture with England, “factories of all kinds received a strong impulse” and this, in turn, influenced agriculture and led to an increase in the price of land.

“But as, after the Peace of Paris, the constitution of the states prevented elaboration of a general trade system and thus gave free access to English manufactures with which the newly built North American factories could not compete, the country’s industrial prosperity disappeared even more rapidly than it appeared. ‘On the advice of the new theoreticians,’ a speaker in Congress said later, referring to this crisis, ‘we purchased where it was cheaper for us and our markets were glutted with foreign goods ... *Our manufacturers were ruined*, our merchants went bankrupt and all this had such a harmful effect on agriculture that a general devaluation of land followed and as a result bankruptcy became common among landowners too.’ [39*]”

Hence we see that a threat once hung also over American production, whose “insuperable competition” now threatens the Russian “private businessman”. What lightning-rods did the Americans invent? Were they convinced by this that their situation “differed considerably from that of the European countries at the moment when they began to organise national production on the basis of private capital”? Did they renounce large-scale industry? Not in the least. Taught by bitter experience, they merely repeated the old story of protecting the home market against foreign competition. “Congress was stormed by all states with petitions for protective measures favouring local industry”, and as early as 1789 a tariff was proclaimed making considerable concessions in this direction to local manufacturers. The 1804 tariff went still further along this path, and in the end, after a few vacillations in the opposite direction, the rigorous protection tariff of 1828 finally guaranteed American producers against English competition. [24]

Once more, where were the “extensive” markets that Mr. Tikhomirov speaks of? I completely agree that the course of development of West European capitalism which he

indicates must be acknowledged as more “straight” and less “hazardous”; what risk does the “private businessman” run when he is “provided with extensive markets”? But Mr. Tikhomirov, on his side, must agree that he, or rather his teacher, “imagined” this course of development for the sake of a doctrine and that it has nothing in common with the true history of the West. The matter proceeds so differently there that Friedrich List even establishes a particular law according to which each country can come out in the struggle on the world market only when it has allowed its industry to strengthen by mastering the home market. In his opinion, “the transition of every nation from the wild state to that of herdsmen and from the state of herdsmen to that of tillers of land and the early beginnings in agriculture are best effected by free trade”. Then the “transition of agrarian peoples to the class of simultaneously agricultural, manufacturing and trading nations could take place under free trade only *if*, in all nations called upon to develop manufacturing power, *one and the same vital process took place at one and the same time*, if nations raised no obstacles whatsoever to each other’s economic development and if they did not impede each other’s success by ,war and customs systems. But as the nations which had attained superiority in manufactures, trade and navigation saw that success as the most effective means of acquiring and consolidating political influence over other nations, they” (i.e., the advanced nations) “strove to set up institutions which were and still are calculated to guarantee their own monopoly in manufactures and trade and to prevent backward nations from succeeding. The aggregate of these institutions (import prohibition and customs dues upon imports, restrictions on snipping, premiums for exports, and so on) is called the customs system. Under the influence of

the earlier successes of other nations, the customs system of foreign countries and wars, the backward nations find themselves forced to seek at home means for the transition from the agrarian to the manufacturing condition; they are obliged to restrict trade with the advanced countries – since it hinders that transition – by their own customs system. The latter is therefore by no means an invention of speculative brains, as some maintain, but the natural consequence of the nations' desire to guarantee themselves lasting existence and progress or even dominating influence. But this wish can be recognised as legitimate and reasonable only inasmuch as it *does not hinder* the economic development of the nation displaying it, *but, on the contrary, promotes* it and does not contradict the higher aim of humanity – the future world confederation”. [25]

These words are from Friedrich List, who understood well the interests of German capitalism in his time and whose only fault was a certain pompousness in the definition of the future “higher aims of humanity” which for the bourgeoisie boil down not to a “world federation” but to a fierce struggle on the world market. List was embarrassed neither by the accusation that his views were obsolete nor by the reference to the impossibility of Germany's securing any favourable opportunities in the future struggle on the world market. To the first objection he replied that he was not at all an unconditional enemy of free trade, for he demanded only temporary restrictions of it, and at the same time stood for free trade within the limits of the German customs union. To the second he replied by criticising the very theory of markets, or rather the conditions of their acquisition. He pointed out that the backward countries may and must form alliances with one another to fight jointly their stronger

enemies and that those backward countries must strive to acquire colonies of their own. "Every industrial nation must strive to have direct exchange with the countries in the torrid zone; if all second-rate manufacturing nations understand their own interests they must act in such a way that no nation can acquire overwhelming influence in respect of colonial possessions." [26] He supported the possibility of acquiring new colonies by pointing out that up to then a great number of convenient places in the torrid zone had not been utilised in this way by Europeans.

At the time when List was agitating, many people doubted the possibility of a large-scale manufacturing industry being developed in Germany. Now nobody doubts this, but the programme of economic policy which he suggested has not yet been finally carried out. The question of acquiring colonies is only now being raised in Germany. Reality has surpassed his expectations. One part of his programme has sufficed to consolidate German large-scale industry.

Not only does no sceptic now ask whether a large-scale manufacturing industry is possible in List's country, but Mr. Tikhomirov "is referred" among other things "to Germany, where capitalism united the workers" and "private businessmen" are alleged to have been provided with "extensive markets". How much that country's first difficult steps on the road of capitalism have been forgotten! But is it a long time since List wrote? No more than half a century, no more than five times as long as the Russian Blanquists have been making fruitless efforts to "seize power". What if Marx and Engels and their followers, convinced that the people must be taken "as they are" and that the German Communists of the forties still needed, to use Mr.

Tikhomirov's picturesque expression, "only to set about the creation of the class in whose name they wished to act"; what if Marx and Engels, I say, had given the "West" up as lost and decided that "the starting-point" of the social revolution in Germany had to be "the seizure of power" by the forces of the then existing Communist League? [40*] What if they had directed all their work towards that aim? Would German Social-Democracy have got far by now? And yet the question of such a "seizure of power" is by no means an exclusive feature of the Russian movement. It was raised even in the Communist League and caused its splitting into two groups: Marx and Engels on one side, Willich and Schapper on the other.

The story of this division is so instructive that it is worth relating to the readers. [41*]

"Since the defeat of the 1848-49 Revolution, the party of the proletariat on the continent was deprived of all that it had during that, short period-freedom of the press, of expression and of association, i.e., the legal means of organising a party. After 1849, as before 1848, there was only one road open to the proletariat – the road of secret societies ... The immediate aim of one section of those societies was to overthrow the existing state power. That was timely in France, where the proletariat had been defeated by the bourgeoisie and where attacks on the existing government were equivalent to attacks on the bourgeoisie."

Another section of these secret societies was working in countries such as Germany "where the bourgeoisie and the proletariat were both subjected by their semi-feudal governments, and where, therefore, a successful attack on the existing governments, instead of breaking the power of the bourgeoisie or of the so-called middle classes, had first to help them to power" – in such countries the progressive representatives of the proletariat, while not refusing to take

part in the impending revolution, saw as their immediate aim not to seize power, but to prepare the working-class party of the future. Such, by the way, was the aim of the Communist League, in which Marx and Engels played the leading role. "The Communist League was not therefore a society of conspirators but a society which aimed at the secret organisation of the proletariat, because the German proletariat was under an interdict, was deprived of the *fire and water*, of press, expression and association." It goes without saying that activity "which had in view the establishment not of a *governmental* but of an *oppositional party of the future*", had exerted little attraction on people intellectually backward and impatient, and accordingly "a group broke off from the *Communist League*, demanding, if not actual conspiracies, at least a conspiratorial appearance and a direct alliance with the democratic heroes of the day". The motives of this split, which many people ascribed to personal quarrels between the leaders of the two groups, were explained as follows by the very actors in these events.

According to Marx, "the minority" (the Willich and Schapper group) "replace the critical outlook by a dogmatic one, the materialist by the idealist. They take their own will instead of the existing relations for the principal revolutionary motive force. Whereas we say to the workers: you must still pass through 15, 20, or 50 years of civil war and popular movements, and this not only to change existing relations but to re-educate yourselves and become capable of being the dominant party, the minority, on the contrary, say: we must win supremacy at this very moment or we shall be unable to do anything other than sit back and relax. Whereas we point out to the German workers the undeveloped condition of the German proletariat, you flatter the national

feeling and estate prejudices of the German craftsman [27] in the vilest way, this, of course, being a far more popular method ... Like the democrats, you replace revolutionary development by revolutionary phrases”, etc., etc.

Schapper, for his part, formulated his outlook as follows:

“I did in fact express the outlook attacked here, because generally I support it with enthusiasm. The question is: will we start to chop off heads, or will ours be chopped off? First the workers in France will rise, then we in Germany. Otherwise I would, in fact, sit back and relax. But if our plans are fulfilled, we shall be able to take steps to guarantee the supremacy of the proletariat” (as Mr. Tikhomirov promises steps to guarantee “government by the people” for Russia, we will remark). “I am a fanatical supporter of this view, but the Central Committee” (Marx’s group) “wishes the opposite”, etc.

This dispute took place on September 15, 1850, when the final break between the two groups occurred. Each of them set about its work. Willich and Schapper began to prepare to seize power, Marx and Engels continued to prepare the “oppositional party of the future”. Fifteen years went by and that “party of the future” became a threat to the bourgeoisie in all nations and countries; the views of the authors of the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* were assimilated by tens of thousands of workers. And what did Willich and Schapper do? Did they succeed in immediately “seizing power”? We all know they did not, but not all know that the same “fanatic” Schapper was soon convinced of the impossibility of carrying out his plans and even “many years later, a day before his death, when he was already on his death-bed” he could not speak of his unsuccessful ventures without “bitter irony”. [28]

Groups of the Willich-Schapper type are the natural result of undeveloped social relationships. They appear and may have a certain success as long as the proletariat is undeveloped and during its first attempts to achieve its emancipation. “The revolutionary literature that accompanied these first movements of the proletariat had necessarily a reactionary character,” as the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* says. When, under the influence of more highly developed relationships, a serious socialist literature is at last evolved in the more advanced countries, it is in part the object of more or less peculiar counterfeits in countries which consider their backwardness as a sign of “exceptionalism”; and in part provides the occasion for incorrect interpretations and reactionary practical programmes. Not only in Russia, but in Poland too, and in the East of Europe generally, we now meet or may meet “social-revolutionaries” of the Willich and Schapper fashion. [29] It goes without saying that the further development of the European East is discrediting their “expectations from the revolution” just as it discredited the expectations of Willich and Schapper in Germany.

Author’s Footnotes

11. Written in the early 1840s.
12. [Italics by Plekhanov.]
13. Die Lage der arbeitenden Klasse in England, S.13-14. [26*]
14. Dieu et l’Etat, Geneva 1882, pp.92-93.

15. «Антропологический принцип в философии», стр.2-3. [The Anthropological Principle in Philosophy, pp.2-3.] [27*]
16. «Судьбы капитализма в России», предисловие, стр.6. [The Destinies of Capitalism in Russia, Preface, p.6] [28*]
17. “Although all workers, whatever profession they belonged to, had essentially the same interests,” Simon said of the medieval workers’ associations, “and should therefore have formed a single general association... instead of that, their spirit of antagonism prevailed over the spirit of association, and division did not cease to reign among them. The struggle that took place between the journeymen of the different associations must have dated to their very foundation ... Considering these deadly combats, which were provoked without cause and waged without reason, who would not be tempted to believe that the sad words of the gloomy philosopher, ‘Man is wolf to man’, were not said of one of these associations.” Etude historique et morale sur le compagnonage, by J. Simon, Paris 1853, pp.43-44. It must be admitted that it was very difficult for capitalism to “undermine” such a moral unity of the workers” in the preceding period!
18. Misère de la philosophie, p.16. [34*]
19. Ibid., p.48. [35*]
20. Levasseur, Histoire des classes ouvrières en France, Vol.2, pp.174-75.
21. See Henry W. Farnam, Die innere französische Gewerbepolitik von Colbert bis Turgot, S.17.
22. See Histoire du commerce français, par Ch. Perigot, Paris 1884.
23. Die neuere Nationalökonomie, von Dr. Moritz Meyer.
24. See Das nationale System der politischen Ökonomie, von Friedrich List, zweite Auflage, 1842, B.I, Kap.9. Cf. also Geschichte der Nationalökonomie, von Eisenhart, III.Buch, 2.Kapitel.
25. Das nationale System, etc., S.18-19.
26. List, ibid., S.560-61.
27. However, it is hardly possible that even the Schapper group has ever published a proclamation like the famous one in Ukrainian on the occasion of the anti-Jewish disorders, a proclamation with which the

editors of Narodnaya Volya declared their complete solidarity and which was the vilest flattery of national prejudices of the Russian people. [42*]

28. See Enthüllungen über den Kommunisten-Prozess zu Köln von Karl Marx, second edition, which we take all the above-cited details from.

29. [Note to the 1905 edition.] These lines were written when we could not become clear about the trend of the “organ of the international social-revolutionary party” (?) Walka Klass. [43*] Now, after the publication of three issues of this paper, it can be said with assurance that it has made the dissemination of “theories” after the Willich and Schapper fashion its main aim. However, one must be very careful when talking about the theories characterising such a trend, for, as Marx noted, “die Partei Schapper-Willich hat nie auf die Ehre Anspruch gemacht, eigne Ideen zu besitzen. Was ihr gehört, ist das eigentümliche Missverständnis fremder Ideen, die sich als Glaubensartikel fixiert und als Phrase sich angeeignet zu haben meint.” [44*]

Notes

24*. K. Marx and F. Engels, Manifesto of the Communist Party. Cf. Selected Works, Vol.1, Moscow 1958, pp.36-39.

25*. Cf. Letter of January 6, 1873, in Briefe und sozial-politische Aufsätze von Dr. Rodbertus-Jagetzow, edited by Rud. Meyer, Berlin 1882, Bd.I, S.291.

26*. K. Marx and F. Engels, On Britain, Moscow 1953, p.38.

27*. N.G. Chernyshevsky, Collected Works, Vol.VII, Goslitizdat Publishing House, 1950, p.223.

28*. V.V. (Vorontsov)’s book The Destinies of Capitalism in Russia was published in 1882.

29*. Quotation from Goethe’s Faust.

30*. Quotation from K. Marx’s The Poverty of Philosophy, Moscow, p.197.

31*. “The iron law of wages” – a dogma of bourgeois political economy based on Malthus’ reactionary population theory. It was Lassalle who described it as “iron”. Marx expounded this law as follows:

“According to them, wages rise in consequence of accumulation of capital. The higher wages stimulate the working population to more rapid multiplication, and this goes on until the labour-market becomes too full, and therefore capital, relatively to the supply of labour, becomes insufficient. Wages fall, and now we

have the reverse of the medal.” (K. Marx, *Capital*, Vol.I, Moscow, 1958, p.637.)

Proceeding from the doctrine that wages find in the growth of the population “natural”, “inherent” limits, bourgeois economists maintained that the poverty and unemployment of the working classes were the fault not of the capitalist mode of production, but of nature. Both in *Capital* and his *Critique of the Gotha Programme* Marx proved that “the iron law”, as opposed to the Lassallean theory of wages, is completely unfounded.

32*. Quotation from Tikhomirov’s article *What Can We Expect from the Revolution?* (*Vestnik Narodnoi Voli*, No.2, 1884, p.240.)

33*. The first edition has “Western”.

34*. K. Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, Moscow, p. 45.

35*. *Ibid.*, pp.75-76.

36*. The Peace of Nymwegen was concluded between France and the Netherlands in 1678.

37*. The Peace of Versailles was signed on September 3, 1783, between the USA and its allies, France, Spain and Holland, on the one side, and England on the other.

38*. Quotation from Friedrich List, *Das nationale System der politischen Oekonomie*, 2-te Aufl., Stuttgart und Tübingen 1842, Bd.1, Kap.9, S.154.

39*. *Ibid.*, S.155.

40*. Communist League – the first organisation of the revolutionary proletariat, founded by Marx and Engels in the summer of 1847 in London. Marx and Engels were charged by this organisation to write the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* which was published in February 1848. The defeat of the revolution in Germany 1848-1849 led in 1850 to a split between Marx and Engels’ supporters and the Willich-Schapper group within the Communist League. At the end of 1852, on Marx’s initiative, the League was officially dissolved. The Communist League was one of the predecessors of German Social-Democracy and the First International.

41*. This and the following quotations are from Marx’s article *Revelations about the Cologne Communist Trial*.

42*. Plekhanov here refers to the proclamation of the Executive Committee of *Narodnaya Volya* To the Ukrainian People, dated August 30, 1881, in connection with the anti-Jewish pogroms. The editorial board of the paper *Narodnaya Volya* expressed its solidarity with that proclamation in *Home Review*. (*Narodnaya Volya*, No.6, October 23, 1881.) p.209

43*. *Walka Klas* (*The Class Struggle*) – organ of the International Social-Revolutionary Party published in Geneva in the Polish language.

44*. K. Marx, *Enthüllungen uber den Kommunisten-Prozeß zu Köln* (Marx/ Engels, *Werke*, Bd.8, Berlin, 1969, S.413).

Chapter II

Capitalism in Russia

1. The Home Market

We now know that every backward country can at first, until the home market is glutted, eliminate “insuperable competition” from its more advanced neighbours by means of a customs system. Mr. Tikhomirov’s arguments that in our country there are hardly any markets thus lose a considerable portion of their specific weight. For backward countries the question can be formulated only as follows: will Western capitalism succeed – and to what extent – to draw them into its wake before it gives place to a higher form of social organisation? To answer this question we must weigh attentively the present situation of each of those countries separately. That we will do in the next chapter; let us now return to Mr. Tikhomirov and see how he makes this analysis.

Anybody who has followed social trends in our country in recent years knows, of course, that the efforts of our “private businessmen” are directed precisely towards guaranteeing the home market. This striving meets with support from the government, from the press and also from the section which only Mr. Tikhomirov’s peculiar terminology can allow one not to recognise as “intelligentsia”. A fair number of our professors and scientists are already rallying to that banner. Nevertheless, the cause of Russian capitalism seems to Mr. Tikhomirov to be a very difficult “if not an altogether hopeless one”. In his opinion, “industry is developing sluggishly. It is always complaining of a

shortage of intelligent and energetic forces”. That is true, of course, to a certain extent; but does this show “the hopelessness of Russian capitalism’s striving”? Is not the “sluggish development” of Russian industry determined by the influence of contemporary political oppression? Free institutions are a necessary condition for capitalism at a certain stage of its development – that has long been clear to everybody both in “Europe” and in Russia, where voices were raised as early as the fifties demanding freedom for the sake of industrial success. It would be very useful for Mr. Tikhomirov to read the late I. Babst’s speech, *On Certain Conditions Promoting the Increase of the National Capital*, delivered in June 1856 at a great assembly of Kazan University. It would help him to understand how the same capitalism which at first hides under the “cloak of an autocrat” gradually comes into contradiction with the interests of absolute monarchy and stands in opposition, in its own way of course, moderately and in an orderly fashion. “It is difficult to imagine how harmful bad administration, lack of security, arbitrary extortions, plundering and evil institutions are to economy and accumulation, and at the same time to the increase of the national capital,” says the economist I have just named. “Internecine wars, the struggle of the political parties, invasions, pestilence, and famine cannot have on the national wealth the destructive influence of despotic and arbitrary administration. What have the blessed countries of Asia Minor not suffered, what upheavals have they not experienced, and they have constantly been transformed again into an earth paradise until they were pinned down by Turkish administration. What happened to France in the eighteenth century, when the infamous system of taxation weighed down on the agricultural population and when, into the bargain, every official was able to plunder without fear and with impunity under cover of taxes? Thieves and robbers can be kept in check, but what can be done with bodies and officials of the supreme authority who consider their position as a lucrative

trade? Here all energetic labour, all care for the future, for the improvement of one's living, run low and ... capitals and their accumulation, gentlemen, fulfil their real purpose only *when the road for their activity is fully and freely opened.*" In vain does Mr. Tikhomirov refer to the circumstance that "the reign of Alexander II was a continual attempt by the monarchy to restore its stability by organising Russia on bourgeois principles" (?) as an argument to support the idea that Russian capitalism's striving is hopeless. The history of the French absolute monarchy, beginning with Henry IV, was also almost "a continual attempt" to maintain the stability of the old state system by organising France "on bourgeois principles". As early as at the assembly of the Etats Generaux in 1614 the nobility complained of this in the most unambiguous terms. We have already said what care Louis XIV's minister applied to France's industrial development. In the eighteenth century, on the eve of the revolution, there was set up a whole school of economists professing solidarity of interests between capitalism and the absolute monarchy, proclaiming the bourgeois principle "laissez faire, laissez passer" and at the same time quoting China as a model of a political system. The monarchy endeavoured according to its ability to adapt itself to the new conditions, as far as was possible without renouncing absolute power. At the opening of the Etats Generaux in 1789, when it had one foot in the grave, the monarchy, with Louis XVI as its mouthpiece, condemning "illusions", promised to satisfy all the "reasonable" demands of the country. But the implacable logic of things shows in a manner which is unexpected even to many members of the bourgeoisie that, although not everybody realised it, the fall of absolutism was the country's most "reasonable" demand. The political ideals of the physiocrats [1*] were an unrealisable Utopia, and many contemporaries of the physiocrats realised that absolutism was incompatible with the bourgeoisie's further development. The socialist Mably, at least, and his *Doutes*

proposes aux philosophes economistes, may be given as an example. In his time the bourgeoisie as a class had not yet thought of “seizing” supreme political power in the country, but, unlike Mr. Tikhomirov, he did not say that “if it were strong enough it would do so now”. He knew that there are epochs in history in which the strength and political consciousness of a given class rise just as rapidly as the level of the water in a river when the ice breaks. He also knew that the strength of each class is a relative concept, defined, among other things, by the degree of decay of its predecessors and the level achieved by the successor in its development. Given the low development of the people, the French bourgeoisie was the only class capable of exercising supremacy. Absolutism was a hindrance to France’s further development under the guidance of the bourgeoisie and was therefore doomed. The bourgeoisie revolted against the autocracy under whose “cloak” it had grown to “sedition”. Mably foresaw this outcome and, in spite of his communist ideals, he realised that the immediate future belonged to the bourgeoisie.

If the significance and future prospects, not only of social classes, but even of the philosophical and political theories, could be denied on the grounds that they all develop for some time under the auspices of a principle which is incompatible with their further development, we would have to deny all human culture and “imagine” for it new and less “hazardous roads”. Did not philosophy grow within and at the expense of theology? “Unity, subordination and freedom are the three relationships to church theology in which the philosophy of the Christian period successively stood,” says Friedrich Überweg in his history of philosophy [1]; and this order of mutual relations between knowledge and faith may be recognised as a general law if we, on our side, add that “freedom” clears the road for itself only by the bitterest struggle for existence. Every new social or philosophical

principle is born in the womb of – and consequently on the nutritive juice of – the old which is its *opposite*. To conclude from this that the fate of the new principle is “hopeless” means not to know history.

Our exceptionalists, indeed, have a very poor knowledge of history. When they listen to the arguments of the Manchester School [2*] on the harmfulness of state intervention, knowing at the same time that the Russian capitalists have a weakness for such intervention so long as it is manifested in protective tariffs, subsidies, guarantees, etc., the home-grown Russian sociologists conclude that the road of development for our capitalism is diametrically opposed to that of Western Europe; in the West the bourgeoisie speak only of “non-intervention”, here, only of subsidies and guarantees. But if Messrs. V.V. & Co. did not believe in the word of the Manchester School economists and would leave aside at least for a time their “exceptionalist” sources, they would find out that the West European bourgeoisie did not always or everywhere maintain the principle of non-intervention in their own country and still less did they support that principle in the colonies. Having found this out, they would see that their contrapositions have hardly any sense at all. We know that the radical mistake of the bourgeois economists of the Manchester School consisted precisely in elevating to the dignity of eternal immutable “natural laws” principles which have only a transient significance. Not sharing bourgeois economists’ “expectations” from the future, many Russian exceptionalists are nevertheless convinced that their views on the past are correct. They believe that in the history of the West the bourgeoisie never needed state intervention and government support and derived nothing but harm from it. That is the principal defect of our exceptionalist theories and programmes. Mr. V.V. believes what the Manchester School says, and thinks even a slight acquaintance with the

economic history of Europe superfluous. Mr. Tikhomirov believes what Mr. V.V. says, and sees the increasing influence of the Russian bourgeoisie's interests on the economic policy over the last twenty-five years "(the reign of Alexander II was a continual attempt", etc.) as the principal sign of the weakness and still-bornness of Russian capitalism.

Mr. V.V., a supporter of absolutism and for that reason if for no other a bitter reactionary, does not interest us in the least. But we confess that we are very much grieved by the credulity of the editor of a revolutionary paper.

That the interests of the Russian bourgeoisie are now coming into irreconcilable contradiction to the interests of absolutism is known to anybody who has given the slightest attention to the course of Russian life in the last decade. [2] That the very same bourgeoisie is able, however, to derive profit from the existing regime and therefore not only supports some aspects of it, but stands for it as a whole, in some of its sections, is also no wonder. The development of a given social class is too complicated a process for us to be able to judge of the whole trend from some separate aspects. Our bourgeoisie is now undergoing an important metamorphosis; it has developed lungs which require the fresh air of political self-government but at the same time its gills, with which it still breathes in the troubled water of decaying absolutism, have not yet completely atrophied. Its roots are still in the soil of the old regime, but its crown has already attained a development which shows that it absolutely needs to be transplanted. The kulaks are continuing to get rich thanks to the predacious character of our state economy, but the big works owners and manufacturers, merchants and bourgeoisified agriculturists already understand that they must absolutely acquire political rights for their own welfare. This is proved to us by the petitions fairly frequently

addressed to the government in the last ten years; in one of them the big industrialists and tradesmen even asked the government not to take any financial measures without consulting representatives of big capital. What is the tendency of such a petition? Does it not show that the destructive influence of absolutism is reflected in a palpable and noticeable manner in the incomes of the trading and industrial companies? Does it not show that the system by which each individual businessmen can influence ministers and ministries by all sorts of “petitions”, “patriotic” subscriptions and outright bribery is already becoming insufficient and ineffective and therefore tends to be replaced by organised and legal participation of the industrial class in the administration of the country? S.S. Polyakov can still be of the opinion that the ministers he has bribed are better than responsible, constitutional ministers. [3*] But His Excellency’s rivals, whom he defeated by presents and bribes, probably do not share his point of view. A political regime which is profitable to separate *individuals* becomes unprofitable to the business *class* as a whole. Naturally, the representatives of that class do not come out into the streets, put up barricades or publish underground leaflets. However, the bourgeoisie in general do not like such “hazardous” means. Only in very rare cases were they the first to raise the banner of revolt even in Western Europe: for the greater part they merely undermined the hated system little by little and reaped fruits from the victory of the people who “fought against their enemies’ enemies”. As for secret political propaganda, what kind of a bourgeoisie would they have been had they not understood the significance of the division of labour? The bourgeoisie leave propaganda to the so-called intelligentsia and do not let themselves be distracted from the task of their own enrichment. They know that their cause is “certain” and that the political struggle begun by our intelligentsia will sooner or later clear the ground for their, the bourgeoisie’s domination. Did not

the Italian bourgeoisie let the revolutionaries pick out of the fire the chestnuts of political emancipation and unification and are they not now feeding on those chestnuts?

And what if the revolutionaries “seize power” and carry out a social revolution? The bourgeoisie do not believe in that, and soon, indeed, the revolutionaries themselves will cease to believe in it. Soon they will all understand that if people open their umbrellas when it is raining, that does not mean that rain can be caused by opening umbrellas; they will soon see that if the “seizure” of political power is the inevitable consequence of the development of the working class, just as of any other class, one must not conclude that it is enough for “revolutionaries from among the privileged sections” to seize power and the working population of Russia will be able to carry out a socialist upheaval. Soon all our socialists will understand that one can serve the interests of the people only by organising and preparing the people for *independent struggle* for those interests.

But nothing could be more profitable for the Russian bourgeoisie than the confidence some of our revolutionaries have in the bourgeoisie’s powerlessness. The bourgeoisie themselves are perhaps ready to join in their song. They even do so whenever the occasion offers. Just take the question of the number of our industrial workers. According to our author “out of 100 million inhabitants” in Russia “there are only 800,000 workers united by capital”; and besides this relatively negligent number of workers “in our country ... is not growing, but perhaps is even” (!) “remaining at the same figure”. Noting that it “*is not growing*” and therefore exactly “*is remaining at the same figure*”, let us trace the genesis of this conviction.

2. Number of Workers

Here Mr. Tikhomirov is repeating the words of Mr. V.V., to whom the credit is due for having noticed the numerical stagnation of our working class. For Mr. V.V., the entire significance of capitalism is reduced to “the union of the workers”; it is understandable why he exerts himself so much to prove that the number of our workers “is remaining at the same figure”. Once this proposition is proved, capitalism’s inability to contribute to the success of Russian culture in any sense at all is also proved. People who know that the role of capitalism is not confined to “the union of the workers” also know that the fact quoted by Mr. V.V. would not prove anything at all, even if it were correct. And those who are familiar with today’s Russian statistics know, besides, that the fact itself is incorrect. How, indeed, does Mr. V.V. prove it? From a single article in *Vestnik Yevropy* [4*] he “drew the following table on the history of Russian non-taxable factories and works”. [5*]

Year	Number of workers	Number of factories	Production in rubles	Production per worker in rubles
1761	7,839	200	2,122,000	
1804	95,202	2,423	26,750,000	approx. 300
1842	455,825	6,930	97,865,000	
1854	459,637	9,444	151,985,000	approx. 330
1866	393,371	16,451	342,910,000	approx. 870

From these figures Mr. V.V. concludes that from 1842, i.e., the time when England allowed the free export of machines, and mainly from 1854, the development of Russian production began to follow the “law” which he had developed, i.e., that “side by side with the increase of its” (capital’s) “turnover, there was a decrease

in the number of workers – production expanded not in width, but in depth”. [3] Is that true? Not quite.

In order to find the “law” of the development of Russian production, one must take into account all Russian production as a whole, and not its separate sections. Why, then, does Mr. V.V. base his conclusions only on figures for “non-taxable factories and works”? We do not know, and probably neither does Mr. Tikhomirov, who indiscriminately repeats what other people say. And yet, so long as this question remains unanswered the “law” found by Mr. V.V. will only have one leg to stand on. Not a few examples are to be found in the history of West European capitalism of “expansion of production not in width, but in depth”. In France, according to Moreau de Jonnes, the total value of woollen industry products increased by 74 per cent from 1811 to 1850, the number of looms used nearly doubled, and the number of workers employed “dropped by 15,000”. [4] Does this mean that from 1811 the number of French workers “remained at the same figure” or even decreased? Not at all: the decrease in one branch of production was compensated by an increase in others; in the forty years preceding 1850, capitalism doubtlessly drew into its wake an enormous mass of workers, although, of course, it did not provide them with a guaranteed wage, as bourgeois economists try to assure readers. Mr. V.V. should have proved that no similar phenomenon took place in Russia, above all as, precisely from the forties, there was rapid development in certain taxable industries in our country.

Did he do so? He could not do so, because the statistic figures he quoted are of no use for any serious conclusions; for instance, the figures relating to 1842 are simply incommensurable with those for the second half of the sixties; they were collected by various institutions using various methods and are therefore not equally reliable. Up to 1866 statistic computations were based mainly on Ministry of Finance information supplied by the manufacturers themselves and mostly inaccurate. Up to 1861, taxable works were

not taken into account at all. And finally it was in 1866, thanks to the efforts of the Central Statistical Committee, that more accurate figures were obtained. Mr. V.V. would have shown more caution by not basing any laws on the shaky foundations of such “statistics”. But leaving that aside, the figures quoted by him do not agree with those of the Central Statistical Committee, i.e., the only data which are at all reliable. According to the information of this Committee, the number of workers employed in the “manufacturing industry” in European Russia (not including the Kingdom of Poland and Finland) was 829,573. They were divided as follows among the various groups of production [5]:

	Workers
Working up of fibrous materials	294,866
wood	14,639
livestock products	38,757
mineral products	49,332
metals	128,058
chemical production	13,628
tobacco	26,116
food products	262,026
others	3,052

“What song do these figures sing?” we ask, using Mr. V.V.’s words. First of all that even in the non-taxable industries the number of workers in 1866 was much higher than the figure which was to testify in favour of his “law”.

But these figures are not accurate either, they are lower than the reality. In an addendum to the chapter on the manufacturing industry, the editors of *Voyenno-Statistichesky Sbornik* admit that “in the index to the exhibition (of 1870) and in Timiryazev’s atlas” they “came across many factories and works which were not mentioned in previous sources”. Pages 913 and 914 of *Sbornik* are

printed in very small, close-set type and are completely filled by a list of such factories. This new list only mentions enterprises with a production of not less than 25,000 rubles and the greater part of it deals with factories with a production of over 100,000 rubles. But Mr. Timiryazev's atlas was not complete either. Mr. Skalkovsky, basing himself on declarations of "many manufacturers", said that the figures in that atlas "are all the same far from the truth", even after the corrections made to them by Messrs. Alafuzov and Alexandrov. [6]

This is quite understandable. It was precisely after 1842, i.e., after England allowed free export of machines, that many of the "non-taxable branches of our industry developed rapidly both 'in width' and 'in depth'." It was only after that time, for example, that our cotton-spinning mills began to develop. This development was "partly promoted by the fact that in 1841 ... we had an increase of customs dues on imported yarn". And although these dues were abolished in 1850 the success of Russian cotton spinning was nevertheless assured, our own yarn began to oust the foreign article more and more. The following figures show what a great change took place in our cotton manufactures in a matter of some forty years:

In 1824-25 we imported	74,268	poods of raw cotton
	2,400,000	yarn
In 1844	590,000	raw cotton
	600,000	yarn
In 1867	3,394,000	raw cotton
	186,804	yarn

That this "change" was caused by the expansion of our capitalist industry after 1842 "in width" also, by the way, is seen from the fact that many new weaving, cotton and other mills in our country date from quite recent times. "The development of cotton spinning

affected the further processing of cotton yarn. The peasants' weaving looms began gradually to be moved out of the cramped houses into roomy weaving halls [6*]containing ten or more looms at which not only the master but also *hired people worked* ... Finally, the bleaching, dyeing and printing industries were renovated. *Out of home production and crafts establishments in these sectors grew real factories*, some of which became comparable with those abroad in a short time." [7] In "one of the less industrial *uyezds* of Moscow *Gubernia*", namely Klin, Mr. Erisman says, "the majority of the small weaving mills now existing were founded in the late sixties and early seventies. The Balin and Makarov cottonspinning mill (employing 432 workers of both sexes) was founded in 1840; the power-loom cotton factory of Kaulen, Kapustin and Krasnogorov (776 workers of both sexes) in 1849; the Flandensilk-weaving and carpet factory (275 workers) in 1856; the power-loom cotton factory of Kashayev (from 500 to 700 workers) in 1864. Match production began in 1863 with the equipment of the first Zakharov works (90 workers in his two factories and 60 in the Stram factory). Approximately at the same time the working of calf-leather, begun earlier, was considerably extended by the establishment of several new works in Steshino. As for the development of factory industry in the *uyezd* during the seventies, an idea of this can be obtained from the following figures, which show the number of factories and works *among those that we examined* which are known to have been built *after 1871*.

Weaving factories	16	Fringe factories	1
Bleaching and dyeing establishments	3	Mechanical works	1
Dyeing establishments	3	Treacle works	1
Leather factories	3	Starch works	1
Mirror factories	6	Match works	1
Sandalwood mills	1	Chemical works	1
		Shoemaking works	1

“Actually, the number of factory establishments founded after 1871 and in particular the number of small weaving mills set up in the seventies is much larger than shown here since, firstly, we did not visit all the small establishments and, therefore, cannot say anything about the time of their foundation, and secondly, even in the establishments we examined we did not always get exact data about the time of their establishment.

“Moreover, it must be note that even now (1880) new factories are being set up in Klin *Uyezd*. Thus, the Kashayev association is expanding production by equipping a cotton–spinning mill; F.O. Zakharov has built another match works in Klin; in the village of Shchekino, Troitskoye Volost, a new boltingmill has been founded, belonging to the peasant Nikifor Pavlov; the steam sawmill at Zavidovo Station. Nikolayevskaya Railway, has expanded production, and finally, the Frishmak works producing wheel grease has been built near Solnechnogorsk Station.” [8]

“What song” do these facts, taken from the economic life of one of the least industrial *uyezds* of Moscow *Gubernia*, “sing”? Certainly not that the number of factory workers is “remaining at the same figure”. Rather that our exceptionalist writers use too exceptionalist methods to prove Russian exceptionalism. That in general; but to Mr. Tikhomirov they sing in chorus that his programme is based on too superficial a knowledge of the contemporary condition of our industry. Mr. Tikhomirov is quite mistaken if he seriously thinks that in our country “the number of factory and plant workers does not exceed 800,000”. According to official information the figure for factories and plants in European Russia (not including the Kingdom of Poland) “does not”, indeed, “exceed” the figure given by Mr. Tikhomirov: in 1879 it was 711,097, which, *however, does not include the number of workers at distilleries*. But Mr. Tikhomirov forgets that this “figure” applies only to the manufacturing industry. He takes no account of mining and metallurgical workers. And in those industries in the same year 1879 the number of workers was 282,959, and in the following year, 1880, the number *increase*. by nearly ten thousand. The total is, therefore, 1,003,143. But can this figure be

considered as even approximately correct? Do not forget that these are official figures collected by our administration and sarcastically called “ministerial figures” by our administration itself. We already know that the publishers of *Voyenno-Statistichesky Sbornik* pointed out that the figures thus obtained were “in the majority incomplete and lower than the reality”. At the First All-Russia Congress of Manufacturers, Works Owners and Persons Interested in National Industry, at the sitting of the Third Session on May 29, 1870, it was also noted that “the existing method of collecting statistic information on industry exclusively through routine returns made by the police at *zemstvos* is extremely unsatisfactory” and that the statistic data thus collected are considerably lower than the reality. In the opinion of N.S. Ilyin, “it is a commonly known truth that we have *no statistics*, either of industry or of trade”. [9] This incompleteness and this inaccuracy are still indisputable facts today. In the study by Mr. Erisman that we quoted above we read (p.6) that according to information collected by him “*the number of workers was twice as large as shown in the reports of the district police officer*”. This depends, he said, “mainly on the fact that works and factory owners, when asked officially about the number of workers at the establishments they own, *nearly always give figures considerably lower than the real ones*”. Are there any grounds for thinking that if we had a more accurate method of investigation of statistics we would not come across the same thing in other *uyezds* and *gubernias* in Russia? And if not, will we not be obliged to almost “double” the general total of factory and plant workers? From the debates which took place at the Congress of Manufacturers already referred to it will be seen that this assumption is hardly exaggerated. According to Mr. A.B. von Buschen, some manufacturers “openly admitted to him that they *reduce the real figures by half*.” Mr. T.S. Morozov, representing one of the biggest firms in Russia, stated that “when

the police collect information, a big manufacturer, for instance, orders his clerk to write the same as the previous year, and similar reports are returned year in, year out over ten years, whereas both the quantity of material processed and the number of workers have changed. The official writes down what he is told, he knows nothing about the matter". Mr. M.P. Syromyatnikov says that "*there are many instances of production figures being cut by half, and not by small, but by very substantial businessmen; figures are sometimes divided by ten. This is a reliable fact.*" We ask our readers not to forget that all these revelations are made by manufacturers themselves, for whom such falsifications are all the same a "delicate question". What are we then to think of writers who not only base their social and political theories on data whose inaccuracy is obvious *a priori*, but continue to maintain that "the number of factory workers remains at the same figure" even after the manufacturers have explained the perfectly simple reason for this phenomenon? At the very best we must admit that such writers do not know the subject they are discussing!

But why do manufacturers resort to such cunning? "Many of them," Mr. von Buschen replies, "give false reports purposely, for fear of levies of some kind ... Some have openly stated that certain *zemstvos* tax factories in proportion to the number of *machines, workers, etc.*, and consequently it is with absolute deliberation that they give smaller figures." When the collector of statistic information arrives, "the factory owner says: 'Ah! they're from the *zemstvo*, they probably want to levy some tax according to the number of workers', and he gives orders to report only half as many workers as he has". [10]

Hence we see clearly how our revolutionaries' confidence of the bourgeoisie's economic powerlessness is advantageous to the bourgeoisie themselves. Fearing income tax and all other attacks

on their capital, our “private businessmen” try by all means in their power to hide the real scale of their production. With amazing naivete our revolutionaries take their “oh’s” and “ah’s” at face value and do not doubt for a minute the accuracy of the figures they give; they build upon them whole theories about the “balance of forces on Russian soil” and spread among our youth erroneous ideas on the forms of exploitation of the Russian people. By so doing, our revolutionaries play into the hands of the “knights of primitive accumulation” and capitalist production.

However, it would be unfair to accuse *Vestnik Narodnoi Voli* of disseminating such erroneous ideas. *Vestnik*’s main fault is that it constantly contradicts itself and that, as the Gospel says, its right hand does not know what its left is doing. Mr. Tikhomirov assures his readers that Russian “industry is developing sluggishly”. But in the article, *The Condition of the Ore Miners and Factory Workers in the Urals*, written “according to personal observation” and published in the same issue No.2 of *Vestnik Narodnoi Voli* we read exactly the opposite. The author of the article is “sure” that if his readers saw “the various locomotives, sowing or winnowing machines and many other kinds of big machines made here in Russia by our workers”, many of those readers of *Vestnik Narodnoi Voli* would not be able to help exclaiming: “What the devil! [11] Russia is making giant steps forward. Why, only yesterday, so to speak, they could not have made anything of that kind even of barely tolerable, not to speak of good, quality ... Only some fifty years ago there were hardly ten factories in the whole of Russia! And now? Now there are nearly 200 iron works in the Urals alone, and how many in Petersburg, Moscow, and so on and so forth. There’s something for you! Just give us freedom ... In ten or fifteen years the number of works in our country would double and production itself, technology would improve”, etc. The author of the article thinks that this rather long “exclamation” expresses

“correctly” the real state of affairs. According to what he says – and what he says, we know, is founded on “personal observation” – “we have had enormous success recently in this (i.e., the industrial) respect: the number of works is continually increasing, technology is improving (there is ‘sluggish development’ for you!). Our last exhibition [7*] showed that some of our metal works are almost on a level with the best in Europe.” [12] Is there anyone who can clear up this confusion? Whom are we to believe: Mr. Tikhomirov, or a man who has “personally observed” the development of our industry? To top it, we will note that when the latter author “has the occasion to read articles” not based on personal observation but written by “some learned or non-learned writer on the condition of our workers, they arouse no reaction” in him but “bitter laughter”. I imagine that he had a fit of Mephistophelean laughter when he read Mr. Tikhomirov’s report on the “sluggish” development of our industry!

But let us leave the *economic contradictions of Vestnik Narodnoi Voli* and return to Mr. Tikhomirov: at present the part interests us more than the whole.

We have shown our author that the figures he reports do not correspond even to the “official truth”. Moreover, we have quoted figures on the basis of which we can be sure that the “official truth” in turn does not correspond to the reality. Now we shall tell him that he simply does not know how to deal with the inaccurate statistical figures that he has at his disposal, because he operates with magnitudes that are in no way commensurable. According to him “out of 100 million inhabitants in our country there are 800,000 workers united by capital” – a most unfavourable proportion for our industry. But the figure 100 million (to be more exact 101,342,242) represents the population of the whole empire, i.e., not only European Russia (76,589,965), but also the Kingdom

of Poland (7,319,980), Finland (2,060,782), the Caucasus and the Kars and Batumi regions (6,254,966), Siberia (3,965,192) and Central Asia (5,151,354). But the number of workers indicated by Mr. Tikhomirov is only for European Russia and exclusively for “manufacturing industries”. What can we say about such methods of comparative statistic study?

Author's Footnotes

1. Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie, Th.III, S.2.
2. [Note to the 1905 edition.] The present behaviour of the Russian bourgeoisie shows that the contradiction which I point out was, indeed, irreconcilable.
3. See The Destinies of Capitalism in Russia, pp.26-27.
4. Statistique de l'industrie de la France, p.34
5. See Voyenno-Statistichesky Sbornik No.IV, Russia, St. Petersburg 1871, pp.322-25.
6. See Shorthand Account of the Sittings of the Third Session of the First All-Russia Congress of Manufacturers, Works Owners, etc., p.37.
7. Voyenno-Statistichesky Sbornik No.IV, p.378.
8. Collection of Statistical Reports on Moscow Gubernia, Section on Sanitation Statistics, Vol.III, No.1, Erisman, Study of Factory Establishments in Klin Uyezd, Moscow 1881, pp.7-8.
9. See Shorthand Account of the Sittings of the Third Session of the Congress mentioned above, pp.47 and 54.
10. Ibid., p.31.
11. There is no need to say that we are not responsible for the fine language of the quotations we make from our author.
12. Vestnik Narodnoi Voli No.2, pp.155-56.

Notes

1*. *Physiocrats* – a group of French bourgeois economists in the second half of the 18th century (Quesnay, Turgot and others) who considered agricultural labour as the only productive work and supported the development of industrial agriculture.

2*. *Manchester School* – a group of English economists (Cobden, Bright and others) who in the first half of the 19th century expressed the interests of industrial bourgeoisie of the premonopolistic epoch, aspirations of that bourgeoisie for free trade, and its protest against any state interference in economic life. These economists fiercely fought against corn taxes, on the one hand, and against restricting the length of the working day by legislation, on the other. They considered free competition to be the main motive force of production. Marx showed that Manchesterian demagoguery covered up the desire to achieve freedom of capitalist enterprise and to intensify the exploitation of the working class.

3*. *Polyakov* – a Russian capitalist – used to bribe the ministers to obtain concessions in railway building.

4*. **Vestnik Yevropy (European Messenger)** – a monthly magazine devoted to politics and history, bourgeois liberal in trend, that appeared in St. Petersburg from 1866 to 1918. From the nineties it fought Marxism.

5*. Vorontsov borrowed this table from V.I. Veshnyakov's article *Russian Industry and Its Needs*, **Vestnik Yevropy**, No.10, 1870.

6*. *Weaving hall* (Russian *svetyolka*) – here it is a special light, roomy loghouse used for work.

7*. Here the All-Russia Arts and Industry Exhibition, Moscow, 1882, is meant.

3. *Handicraftsmen*

But that is not all. In quoting his figures he means workers “united by capital”, who are “more or less dependent on the bourgeoisie”, etc. Does he know that the number of such workers is far greater than the probable number of factory and plant workers proper? Such dependence is the condition of an enormous number of handicraftsmen, who have lost almost all their independence and been very successfully “united” by capitalism. This circumstance has already been pointed out by *Voyenno-Statistichesky Sbornik*, which was published in 1871. More up-to-date investigations have fully confirmed this evidence. Thus we learn from Mr. V.S. Prugavin that “in Moscow *Gubernia* alone the number of handicraft weavers amounts to 50,000. And yet *only 12 handicraftsmen* attended the exhibition as exhibitors from the whole of the enormous Moscow weaving district ... The reason for this was mainly that the *great bulk of handicraft weavers do not work on their own account* but for more or less big masters who distribute the raw material to be worked up by the peasants at home. Briefly, *in the weaving industries the domestic system of large-scale production is dominant*”. [13] In *Vladimir Gubernia* “extremely varied” weaving industries play a highly important role in the economic life of the population. In the *single*, formerly *Oparino Volost*, *Alexandrov Uyezd*, “22 villages with 1,296 workers are employed” in wool production alone. The annual production of the handicraftsmen amounts to 155,000 rubles. Well, are not these handicraftsmen free from more or less complete dependence on the bourgeoisie? Unfortunately not. “When we direct our attention to the economy of the trade, we become aware first of all of the fact that the bulk of the handicraftsmen have no independent

handicraft occupation and work for master workers or manufacturers.” Things have gone so far in this respect that in the “production of dyes, where the independent craftsman gets one and a half times as much as the dependent craftsman, *the number of producers working on their own account is only 9 per cent of the total number of handicraftsmen*”. [14]

The fact that handicraft wool production has already entered the “path of natural movement” of capitalism can be seen from the very “economics” of this industry and also from the inequality which it creates among the peasants. “The wool industry, with its sudden transitions from complete stagnation to revival during war, made them” (the craftsmen), “at least the bigger producers among them, familiar with industrial speculation, all the attraction of stockjobbing, rapid enrichment and still more rapid failures ... The enriched manufacturers [15] hastened first and foremost to build large buildings with nine to fifteen windows on every floor. Half the houses in the village of Korytsevo are buildings of this kind. When in the Oparino district you see a brick house, or in general a large one, you can be sure that a master manufacturer lives there.” [16]

In Vladimir *Gubernia* the cotton-weaving industry has developed most. “In Pokrov *Uyezd* alone there are more than 7,000 weaving looms working up two and a half million rubles’ worth of wares per year. In Alexandrov *Uyezd* the cotton industry has spread to 120 villages, where more than 3,000 looms are operated.” But here, too, the process of the transformation of the handicraft industry into the capitalist system of large-scale production spoken of above is noticed. “It is interesting,” says Mr. V.S. Prugavin, “to observe in the

trade that we are studying the gradual process of transition from the small handicraft form of production to large-scale power-loom weaving. Between these two economic forms of production there are many transitional ones: to speak of them would mean to examine the gradual process by which handicraft weaving becomes capitalist. In Pokrov *Uyezd* we see, for example, in cotton production, all possible forms of industrial units. The house of a handicraftsman is still the dominant form. In Pokrov *Uyezd* there are now 4,903 looms operated in homes, while 3,200 are used in power-loom establishments. The transitional forms are the large weaving halls – totalling 2,330 looms – which range from 6-10 looms to full sized factories of a hundred or more looms. In these large weaving halls using hand-loom the weaver's dependence on the manufacturer is more striking, the net earnings of the craftsman smaller and the conditions of labour less favourable than in small industrial units. Another step and we are in the domain of power-loom weaving production where the craftsman weaver is already completely transformed into an operative worker. *The number of large weaving halls in Pokrov Uyezd is constantly growing and of late some of them have already gone over to power-loom weaving production.* The number of small independent weaver craftsmen is very limited. There are *none at all* in Alexandrov *Uyezd*, and in Pokrov *Uyezd* not more than 50. Although the large weaving halls do not substantially differ in any way from the small ones, their larger dimensions and their constant numerical growth show beyond doubt that there is a tendency and actual gradual approaching by the purely handicraft form of cotton weaving to the form of large-scale, factory production, the capitalist type of organisation of national labour.” [17]

Let us go on to other *uyezds* in the same Vladimir *Gubernia*.

“The economic organisation of cotton weaving in Yuryev *Uyezd*,” we read in another work by V.S. Prugavin, “generally resembles what we observed in Alexandrov and Pokrov *uyezds*. As in the two *uyezds* considered earlier, the economic conditions of cotton production have taken here the shape of the domestic system of large-scale production ... 98.95 per cent of the cotton wares produced in Yuryev *Uyezd* is put out by the domestic system of *large-scale production* and only 1.05 per cent comes from”... independent craftsmen, you think? No, “small independent manufacturers”. [18]

In general, in the whole of the north-west of Vladimir *Gubernia* “the spinning and weaving factories employ nearly all the free labour-power and almost the whole of the population here has become factory workers, so that small handicraft production here is nothing more than the *last survival* of a once vigorous handicraft industry. Of course, the ownership of the land has preserved for the peasant in this region *certain* features of the agriculturist, especially in places where the soil is fertile, but he is hardly less subordinate to capital than any other factory worker not possessing his own house ... Many pure craftsmen, in spite of all their apparent independence in production, are completely dependent on middlemen who in substance are manufacturer-customers not belonging to any firm”. [19]

In the Shuya cotton-weaving district as far back as in the late sixties and early seventies “with the opening of new mechanical weaving mills the rural population began rapidly to be attracted to the big factories and to be transformed

into a pure factory class of workers. Thus the rural work of the weavers finally lost the last trace of independence which it enjoyed in work in the ‘weaving halls’, those low, stinking sheds filled with looms and packed with workers of both sexes and all ages”. [20]

It would be a mistake to think that the facts described are true *only* of Moscow and Vladimir gubernias. In Yaroslavl Gubernia we see exactly the same thing. Even N.F. Stuckenberg in his *Description of Yaroslavl Gubernia* [21] spoke of the weavers of Velikoye village, of whom he counted 10,000, as independent producers. He wrote this essay on the basis of Ministry of the Interior figures relating to the forties. At that time and “up to 1850 linen production in the village of Velikoye was a purely peasant and handicraft one. Every peasant house was a linen factory. But in 1850 the *peasant* Lakalov of that village installed weaving looms, began to purchase yarn from Tula Gubernia and gave some of it to the peasants to weave. Many others followed his example and thus linen factories began to appear: The Velikoye factories gave out as much as 30,000 poods of yarn every year to the peasants not only of that village but also of Kostroma and Vladimir gubernias. Up to 100,000 pieces of linen were woven by the villagers in Velikoye alone in 1867 ... As recently as a few years ago only the women in Velikoye were engaged in cloth-weaving, but now, with the introduction of improved weaving looms, weaving has become almost exclusively an occupation for men and boys from the age of ten”. [22] This last change means that weaving has already secured a more important role in the distribution of employment among the members of the village families. This is indeed so. Flax spinning and linen weaving are now “the main trade of the peasants in the

area around Velikoye village”. The role played by the *factory* in peasant *handicraft* weaving can be seen from the fact that “with the development in this locality of flax-spinning and scutching factories and of chemical linen bleaching establishments the flax industry is developing there year by year”. [23]

In Kostroma *Gubernia* flax spinning and weaving have provided and are providing “earnings for peasants of both sexes, especially in the villages of Kineshma, Nerekhta, Kostroma, and Yuryevets *uyezds*”. But here, too, the trouble is that “with the development of flax-spinning factories the weaving of linen articles out of home-spun yarn has declined drastically in the region because the peasants have seen the impossibility of competing with factory production of yarn and have begun to dress the flax more carefully and sell it instead of spinning it into home-made yarn and making *their own* linen”.

It must not be forgotten that home-weaving sometimes provided an occupation for the whole peasant family, for nine months, i.e., three-quarters of the year. Where will that family apply its labour now that with the “introduction of spinning looms and power-loom weaving the hand weaving and dressing of articles have decreased by more than half”? It is easy to understand where. “The peasants prefer to work in the nearest factory rather than to weave articles at home.” [24]

Some branches of handicraft production in Kaluga *Gubernia* are apparently exceptions to the general rules we have pointed out. There peasant weaving is beating the big dealers’ factories. Thus ribbon and braid production

“appeared in Maloyaroslavets *Uyezd* with the establishment in 1804 of the merchant Malutin’s cotton-braid factory, the production of which rose from 20,000 rubles to 140,000 in 1820. as a result of the equipment with Rochet mill looms, on which one worker can weave 50 ribbons or braids at once. But after the same type of looms began to be used in peasant weaving in the district, the production of Malutin’s factory dropped to 24,000 rubles by 1860 and finally the factory was closed altogether”. From this our exceptionalists will conclude that Russian handicraftsmen are not afraid of capitalist competition. But such a conclusion will be just as light-headed as all their other attempts to establish some kind of economic “laws”. First, if the independent handicraftsman did indeed triumph over Malutin’s factory, it had still to be proved that the victory could be a lasting one. The history of the weaving trade in the same *gubernia* gives strong reasons for doubting this. The first cotton-weaving factory opened on the estate of P. M. Gubin in 1830 was also unable to withstand competition from village producers, and handicraft weaving flourished until 1858. But “since that time *machine-operated*, power-loom factories have been introduced with steam-engines which, in turn, have begun to oust hand weaving. Thus, in Medyn *Uyezd* there were formerly 15,000 hand looms, but now there are only 3,000”. [25] Who can guarantee that as regards braid and ribbon production further technical improvement will not tip the scales in favour of the big capitalists? For industrial progress is constantly accompanied by a relative increase in constant capital which is extremely harmful to small producers. And besides, it would be a big mistake to think that in the examples quoted the struggle was between independent producers, on the one hand, and capitalists, on the other. Gubin’s factory was

undermined not by the independent producers but by “larger weaving establishments in the peasant houses” which immediately lowered the “*piece pay in the factories*”. The struggle was between big and small capital, and the latter was victorious because it intensified the exploitation of the working people. It was the same in ribbon and braid making. “Masters”, not independent handicraftsmen, have purchased Rochet looms. The weaver, braid-maker and ribbon-maker increasingly lose all trace of independence, so that they are obliged to choose between the local manufacturers and the “masters”, who “get the warp from the Moscow manufacturers, weave it in their domestic factory and *pay by the arshin* or give it out to other peasants and then deliver the ready-made commodity to the manufacturer”. Many of these masters have, in their way, quite a big business, and they are being transformed into real “manufacturers”. In Maloyaroslavets *Uyezd* two cotton-weaving “handicraft factories” employ as many as 40 workers; five cotton braid-making peasant factories in Ovchinino and Nedelnoye *volosts* have 145 looms and 163 workers, a cotton ribbon factory in Ovchinino *Volost* has seven looms and eight workers, and so on. [26] In the “handicraft” brocade production of Moscow *Gubernia* there are “peasant brocade factories with a turnover of hundreds of thousands of rubles”. [27]

“What song do these figures” and facts “sing”? They convinced Mr. Prugavin that “handicraft weaving is fatally, though slowly, being transformed into a large-scale form of production”. But can this conclusion be confined to weaving? Alas! There are not a few other branches of handicraft production in which one must be blind not to notice the same process.

For example, shoemaking in Alexandrov *Uyezd*, Vladimir *Gubernia*. In this trade, “the extensive proportions of fixed and circulating capital and the negligible role or small workshops in production, the strict, detailed division of labour in big establishments and the negligible expenses from the general turnover for the purchase of labour-power – all this bears witness to the fact that we are dealing with a process which is passing from the stage of a craft to the level of a manufacture”. [28]

Or again the leather handicraftsmen who “are continually decreasing numerically”, because of competition from big works. “The works, thanks to their better conditions, material as well as technical, are able to work better and more cheaply than the handicraftsmen. There can be no doubt that the leather handicraftsmen will find it difficult to hold out against competition from factory production, which better satisfies modern demands.”

And finally the production of starch and treacle. In Moscow *Gubernia* “this industry is concentrated in 43 villages in which there are 130 establishments, 117 producing starch and 13 treacle. There are not yet any big factories here as in the weaving districts, but here too handicraft production is beginning to assume a capitalist character. Hired labour plays a great part in this industry: in 29.8 per cent of the establishments it provides the only source of labour-power and in 59.7 per cent it has an equal share in production with the members of the master’s family, [29] only 10 per cent of the establishments doing almost without its help. The causes of this are found in the considerable size of the fixed capital, which is beyond the capacity of most of the peasants”.

The blacksmith industry in Novgorod and Tver *gubernias* and all *gubernias* in which it has a role of any importance in the life of the peasants, and all the small metal works of Nizhny Novgorod *Gubernia* also show a definite loss of all independence by producers. [30] The handicraftsmen have not yet felt competition from big industrial capital, but the role of exploiter is fulfilled with distinction by their peasant brothers or the merchants who provide them with raw material and buy their finished product.

In Nizhny Novgorod *Gubernia* “there are quite a number of places where the whole population live exclusively on hand-made production and differ little from factory workers as far as living conditions are concerned. This is the case in the well-known villages of Pavlovo, Vorsma, Bogorodskoye, Lyskovo and certain *volosts* and villages in Semyonovo and Balakhna *uyezds*.” [31] The workers here are not “united” by capital but there is no doubt that they are *tied down* to it and are, so to speak, the irregular army of capitalism. Their inclusion in the regular army is only a matter of time and of expediency as the employer sees it.

The contemporary condition of the handicraftsmen is so unstable that producers are often threatened with the loss of their independence merely as the result of an improvement in the means of production. For instance the craftsman I.N. Kostylkov invented four machines to make rakes. They considerably increase the productivity of labour and are, properly speaking, very cheap. Nevertheless, Mr. Prugavin expresses quite justified fears that “they will cause a very big change in the economic organisation of rake making”, in the sense, of course, of undermining the independence of the

producers. Mr. Prugavin presumes that there should be “help in this case for the mass of rake-makers to give them the possibility of acquiring machines on a collective basis”. Of course it would be very good to do so, but the question is: *Will* it be done? Those who are now in power, we know, have very little sympathy for a “collective basis” and we really do not know whether we shall soon have a government with sympathy for such a basis; whether, for example, we shall soon have at the helm the “Narodnaya Volya party”, which would lay the “foundation of the socialist organisation of Russia”. And as long as that party only talks about seizing power, matters can change only for the worse: the present candidates for the proletariat may become proletarians in reality tomorrow. Can this fact be ignored in a study of economic relationships in contemporary Russia? There are several *million* handicraftsmen in our country and many branches of handicraft production are partly changing and have partly changed into the domestic system of large-scale production. According to information collected as early as 1864 “the approximate number of workers in the villages engaged in manufacturing cotton goods from the manufacturers’ yarn” (only workers of that category!) “was about 350,000”. To say after this that the number of our industrial workers does not exceed 800,000 means to study Russia only by means of statistical exercises of clerks, district police officers and non-commissioned officers.

4. Handicraft Trade and Agriculture

So far our handicraftsmen are still peasants. But what kind of peasants! From a so-called subsidiary trade handicraft production has been transformed in many places into the staple item of the peasant’s income. This places agriculture

in a dependent, subordinate position. It feels all the vacillations of our industry, all the vicissitudes of its development. The same Mr. Prugavin says that “*the disruption of the peasant economy*” of the weavers in Vladimir *Gubernia* is the inevitable consequence of our industrial crises. Once agriculture thus depends on industrial labour, there is no need to be a prophet to foretell the time when the weavers’ peasant economy will be ultimately ruined: that ruin coincides with the transition of “the domestic system of large-scale production” to the factory system. The former handicraftsman will have to give up one of his occupations in order not to be deprived of both. And he will naturally prefer to give up the land which, in the industrial zone of Russia, is far from paying the taxes and dues imposed upon it. Instances of peasants giving up land already occur now.

According to Mr. A. Isayev, the village of Velikoye which we mentioned above “ceased long ago to be an agricultural village. Only 10 to 15 of the total number (up to 700) of householders cultivate the soil, while most of the villagers can no longer use a plough or even a scythe ... These ten to fifteen householders and peasants in the neighbourhood of Velikoye rent the communal land from the people in Velikoye at the rate of a ruble a *dessiatine* of ploughland” (with such a high rate of “land rent” it is easy enough to give up the land altogether, be it noted incidentally). “The situation of cattle-rearing corresponds entirely to the low level of grain cultivation: there is hardly one cow and one horse to three households ... The Velikoye peasant has lost all resemblance to a peasant.”

But is this process observed only in the village of Velikoye? *Voyenno-Statistichesky Sbornik* noted the fact that the cotton handicraft industry “is in many places a subsidiary occupation; but there are places where it is the main and even the only one.” [32] Similarly, “shoemaking is now the principal means of subsistence of the Kimry peasants and has pushed agriculture into the background. Nobody who studies the Kimry region can fail to notice the number of abandoned strips of land: one is struck by the decay of agriculture,” Mr. Prugavin informs us. Like a true Narodnik, he consoles himself with the thought that “at present it is not the industry itself that is to blame so much as the unfavourable conditions in which agricultural labour is placed” and that most of the craftsmen “have *not yet finally* abandoned their land”. But, first, the *Report of the Imperial Commission for the Study of the Present Condition of Agriculture*, which we have already quoted, shows, contrary to Mr. Prugavin, that precisely the majority of the Kimry peasants have “abandoned the land” for ever. [33] Secondly, all that he says on this subject is a fairly doubtful consolation. No matter who or what causes the fall of agriculture, it is an existing fact, as a result of which many craftsmen will soon be able to free themselves altogether from the “power of the land”. Of course, this process could still be slowed down now by providing agriculture with better conditions. But here again we face the question: who will provide it with those conditions? The present government? They do not want to. The revolutionary party? It cannot yet. And by the time the sun rises you can be wading in dew – by the time our revolutionaries acquire strength enough to carry out their reform plans, peasant agriculture may be but a memory in many places.

The decline of agriculture and the disintegration of the old “foundations” of the peasant *mir* are the inevitable consequence of the development of handicraft production, under the *actual* conditions, of course, not under the *possible* conditions with which our Manilovs [8*] console themselves and which will be a reality we know not when. For example, in Moscow *Gubernia* “frequent relations” (of the craftsmen) “with the Moscow trading world have a disrupting influence on the relations of common law; the *mir* has no say in dividing out family property, which is governed by the elders or the *volost* court ‘according to the law’; the father shares his property among his children *by testament* ... after the death of the husband the childless widow is deprived of immovable property” (the house) “which goes to the relatives on the husband’s side, while she receives one-seventh of the inheritance”. [34] How the same handicraft industry, when it reaches a certain degree of development, tends to undermine agriculture can be seen from the example of starch and treacle production.

“A characteristic fact in the industry we are investigating is *the extreme unevenness with which plots are distributed between the householders* ... Thus, in the village of Tsibino, Bronnitsy *Uyezd*, 44.5 per cent of all the land intended for 166 households is in the hands of only 18 factory owners (from among the *peasants*), each of them having 10.7 personal allotments, while 52 prosperous peasants have only 172 personal allotments, or 3.3 per household. It is understandable that the more paying the industry becomes, the more the factory owners will be stimulated to lay their hands on as much land as they can, and it is quite possible that the 35 householders who now cultivate their plots by using hired labour will find it more profitable, when the rent is raised, to give up cultivating their plots and hand them over to the factory owners. Exactly the same thing is encountered in other villages in which starch and treacle production is more or less developed.”

5. The Handicraftsman and the Factory

But that is enough; we are not studying handicraft industry in Russia. All we want is to point out the indisputable facts which show beyond refutation the transitory situation of our national economy. While those who have made the safeguarding of the people's interests the main aim of their life close their eyes to the most significant phenomena, capitalism is going its way: it is ousting independent producers from their shaky positions and creating an army of workers in Russia by the same tested method as it has already practised "in the West".

"Thus, hand in hand with the expropriation of the self-supporting peasants, with their separation from their means of production, goes the destruction of rural domestic industry, the process of separation between manufacture and agriculture ..."

"Still the manufacturing period, properly so called, does not succeed in carrying out this transformation radically and completely. It will be remembered that manufacture, properly so called, conquers but partially the domain of national production, and always rests on the handicrafts of the town and the domestic industry of the rural districts as its ultimate basis. If it destroys these in one form, in particular branches, at certain points, it *calls them up again elsewhere* [35], because it needs them for the preparation of raw material up to a certain point. It *produces* [36], therefore, a new class of small villagers who, while following the cultivation of the soil as an accessory calling, find their chief occupation in industrial labour, the products of which they sell to the manufacturers directly, or through the medium of merchants ...

"Modern industry alone, and finally, supplies, in machinery, the lasting basis of capitalistic agriculture, expropriates radically the enormous majority of the agricultural population, and completes the separation between agriculture and rural domestic industry ..." [37]

At present we are going through that very process of the gradual conquest of our national industry by manufacture. And this process of “*bringing into existence*” or at least temporarily livening many branches of small handicraft industry gives Mr. V.V. and his associates the possibility of trying to prove with apparent success that in our country there is no “capitalisation of handicraft industry”. [38] The meagre pay for which the handicraftsmen sell their labour somewhat retards the transition to large-scale machine industry. But in this phenomenon as in its indubitable consequences there is not and cannot be anything *exceptionalist*.

“The cheapening of labour power, by sheer abuse of the labour of women and children, by sheer robbery of every normal condition requisite for working and living,... meets at last with natural obstacles that cannot be overstepped. So also, when based on these methods, do the cheapening of commodities and capitalist exploitation in general. So soon as this point is at last reached ... the hour has struck for the introduction of machinery, and for the thenceforth rapid conversion of the scattered domestic industries and also of manufactures into factory industries.” [39]

We have seen that this hour has struck already for the *uyezds* of the Shuya cotton-weaving district. Soon it will strike in other industrial localities too. The giving out of work to be done “at home” is profitable to the capitalist only as long as industrial labour is a side-line and a subsidiary occupation for the handicraftsmen. The income from agriculture allows the labourer to be satisfied with an incredibly low pay. But as soon as this income ceases, as soon as corn-growing is finally ousted by industrial labour, the capitalist is obliged to raise the wage to the level of the famous minimum of the worker’s requirements. Then it is more profitable for him to exploit the worker in the factory,

where the productivity of labour is increased by its very collectiveness. Then comes the era of large-scale machine industry.

Cotton spinning and weaving are, as we know, the most advanced branches of modern capitalist industry. That is why the process which has only just set in, or perhaps not yet quite set” in in other productions, is there almost complete. At the same time the phenomena observed in more advanced branches of industry may and must be considered prophetic as regards other spheres of industry. What happened there yesterday can happen here today, tomorrow or in general in a not distant future. [40]

6. Russian Capitalism's Success

Mr. Tikhomirov does not acknowledge the successes of Russian capitalism. We ourselves are prepared to say to our bourgeoisie: “What thou dost, do quickly.” [11*] But, “fortunately or unfortunately”, they do not need to be urged on. Mr. A. Isayev, in his objections to the Russian “state socialist’s” book, drew the reader’s attention to our manufacturing industry. [12*] He was of the opinion that the recent Russian exhibition could provide the best answer to premature rejoicings over the allegedly wretched “destiny of capitalism in Russia”.

“The class of fibrous materials is worth developing”, he said, “it holds out prospects of millions. We have a fair number of factories, even for linen production, which bring a million to a million and a half yearly. And in the cotton goods class the figure of one million is a completely negligible one. The Danilov Manufacture produces 1.5 millions’ worth a year, the Gübner factory 3 millions’, the Karetnikovs factory 5.5 millions’, the two Baranov firms 11 millions’, the Yaroslavl manufactory association 6 millions’, the Prokhorovs’ 7 millions’, the Krenholm Manufacture up to 10

millions', and so on. The sugar mills also give an enormous production of 5, 6 and 8 millions' worth. Even the tobacco industry has its millionaires ... And the figures for 1878–1882 show a large expansion in production, which slowed down during the Russo-Turkish War”.

These and many other facts led Mr. Isayev to conclude that “large private capital production in Russia is growing uninterruptedly”. [41] Nor is he alone of this opinion. The last All-Russia Exhibition convinced Mr. V. Bezobrazov that in our industry “the progress of the last ten years (since the 1870 Petersburg Exhibition) is obvious; in comparison with the state of affairs twenty-five years ago this progress of our industry – particularly manufactory – is enormous: the industry is unrecognisable in many respects ... Besides improvement in the quality of products we must also note the enormous expansion in all branches of our industry during the last 25 years. This expansion is especially remarkable in the last decade, since the end of the crisis caused by the abolition of serfdom and the Turkish War. To see this one has only to compare our manufacturers' bills with the reports given by the latest official Ministry of Finance statistics. These are for 1877. Comparison of the figures for manufactory production in 1877 and 1882 (figures for the latter from bills) shows a tremendous increase in the quantity of products for these five years: it has doubled in many big enterprises. [42] A very large number of factories have been established in the last five years. Industries for processing fibre (silk, broadcloth, linen and cotton) hold first place. Our cotton industry has been enormously developed; some of its products can stand comparison with the most up-to-date and beautiful in Europe”. [43] These conclusions drawn by scientists are fully confirmed by the correspondent of *Vestnik Narodnoi*

Voli quoted above, who personally observed the “enormous successes” of large-scale production in our country. Finally, foreigners who have written or who write about Russia say the same thing. They already place some branches of our industry on a level with those of Western Europe. Thus, sugar production, according to Ed. de Molinari, is “*au premier rang de l’industrie de l’Europe*”. [44] In 1877 Russian refined sugar even appeared on foreign markets, particularly in France. Alongside of such facts the striving towards and influx of foreign *productive* capital in our country is a sure sign that capitalism finds there a convenient field of development. We see that foreign capitalists are looking with growing attraction towards Russia and let slip no opportunity of founding new industrial establishments there. What would be the meaning of that tendency if industry there were really developing as “sluggishly” as it seems to Mr. Tikhomirov? But the fact is that this opinion is defended mainly for the sake of a doctrine for the triumph of which our exceptionalist writers are prepared to ignore a whole series of absolutely categorical facts. “Sluggish development” is a feature not so much of Russian capitalist production as of those of our revolutionaries whose programmes cannot conform to our contemporary reality.

And what about capitalist accumulation, money circulation in the country and credit operations? Their successes are in truth enormous. Before 1864 we had hardly any private credit establishments; this year “the State Bank capital reached 15 million rubles and various individuals deposited 262.7 million rubles at interest, out of which sums only 42 million rubles were expended on the needs of trade (23.1 million were issued against bills of exchange and 18.6

million as subsidies on securities)”. Thirteen years have elapsed and the state of affairs has changed beyond recognition. “By 1877 the capital of all the credit establishments already totalled 167.8 million rubles and individuals deposited 717.5 million at interest (percentage, current account, time deposits, etc.), i.e., capital increased by 1,018 per cent, current accounts, deposits, etc., by 173 per cent, in all, by 220 per cent; consequently, these sums more than trebled. At the same time their distribution also completely changed. In 1864 15 per cent only of these sums was issued in subsidies or on bills of exchange, but by 1877 96 per cent, that is, almost the whole of the sums, was invested in the bills of exchange or subsidies ... Subsidies rose from 1864 to 1877 from 18.6 million by 337.9 million, or by 1,829 per cent. The growth of the accounting operations – trade operations in the narrow sense – was still greater in the same time: from 23.7 million the sum of account bills rose to 500 million rubles, i.e., by 2,004 per cent!! While the sums invested at interest increased, their mobility was more than doubled. In 1863 the investments circulated less than twice, but in 1876 4.75 times.

“Credit and the railways hasten the transformation of natural economy into money economy. And money economy – commodity economy, is capitalist economy; consequently, both credit and the railways hasten the turning of the economic conditions of production under which the producers are the owners of the instruments of production into conditions under which the producers become wage-labourers.” [45]

7. Markets

The facts quoted need no further comment. They show clearly and convincingly that it is high time for us to stop shutting our eyes to reality, at least in respect of the manufacturing industry, and to come to the conviction that this reality has little in common with the naive illusions typical of the Narodnik period of our movement. It is time for us to have the courage to say that in this field not only the immediate future but the present of our country, too, belongs to capitalism. All the conditions of exchange, all the production relations are increasingly shaping in a manner favourable to capitalism.

As for markets, we have already said that this question is by no means as insoluble as Mr. V.V. and his *epigoni* think. Any country's transition from natural to money economy is necessarily accompanied by an enormous expansion of the home market and there can be no doubt that in our country this market will go over in its entirety to our bourgeoisie. But there is more to it than that. The capitalist who looks ahead can already foresee the glutting of that market and is in a hurry to secure foreign markets. Some Russian goods will naturally find an outlet even in the West, and others will go to the East in the company of "white" and other generals whose patriotic mission is "to strengthen our influence in Central Asia". It was not a coincidence that the last congress of our mill and factory owners discussed "measures to develop trade relations with the Balkan Peninsula" and the conclusion of "trade treaties with Asia". Practical steps have already been made in this direction and there is no reason to expect that they will fail. Relations with the East are not a novelty for Russian businessmen, and though foreign competition has often had an adverse effect on their interests, it would be a mistake to think that the countries which stepped on to the road of capitalist development

before others have, or will always be able to maintain, the monopoly of cheaper transport, less expensive production and better quality. France entered upon that road later than England and yet she has succeeded in winning an honourable place in the international market. The same may be said of Germany compared with France, and so on. In the “West” there are many countries for which the industrial struggle with the more advanced countries is difficult just as for Russia, and yet it did not occur to any of the revolutionary writers in those countries to “preach exceptionalism” after the manner of our Narodniks. It is true that modern productive forces are far ahead of the possibility to extend markets, the international market is nearing the glutting point and periodic crises tend to merge into one solid chronic crisis. But until all this happens nothing prevents the appearance on the market of new competitors relying on some physical peculiarity of their country or some historical conditions of their social development: the cheapness of labour-power, of raw material, etc. Moreover, it is the appearance of such competitors that will hasten the fall of capitalism in the more developed countries. Naturally, a victory of the working class in England or France would necessarily affect the development of the whole civilised world and would shorten the domination of capitalism in the other countries. But all this is a matter of the future, still more or less remote, and meanwhile our capitalism can become, and we have seen that it is becoming, the exclusive master in Russia. Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof; no matter what the impending socialist revolution in the West holds out for us in the future, the evil of the present day in our country is all the same capitalist production. [46]

Author's Footnotes

13. В.С. Пругавин, «Кустарь на выставке 1882 года», Москва 1882, стр.9. [V.S. Prugavin, *The Handicraftsman at the 1882 Exhibition*, Moscow 1882, p.9.]
14. **Ibid.**, p.10.
15. Note that they are also of peasant origin.
16. V.S. Prugavin, **op. cit.**, p.11.
17. **Ibid.**, p.13.
18. The total number of looms in Yuryev Uyezd is 5,690; of these 5,630 work for big masters and 60 for small manufacturers. What remains in the hands of independent producers? See *The Village Community, Handicraft Industries and Agricultural Economy of Yuryev Uyezd, Vladimir Gubernia*, Moscow 1884, pp.60-61.
19. See *Statistic Records of the Russian Empire*, Issue III, Material for the Study of Handicraft Industry and Manual Labour in Russia, St. Petersburg 1872, p.198.
20. *Ibid.*, p.200.
21. Статистические труды Штукенберга, статья X, «Описание Ярославской губ.», СПб 1858. [*Statistical Works of Stuckenberg, Essay X, Description of Yaroslavl Gubernia*, St. Petersburg 1858.]
22. See above-quoted issue of *Statistic Records*, pp.149-50.
23. See *Report of the Imperial Commission for the Study of the Present Condition of Agriculture*, Appendix I, Section 2, p.166.
24. *Ibid.*, pp.170-71.
25. *Ibid.*, Section 2, pp.158-59.
26. *Ibid.*, Section 2, pp.158-59.
27. *Statistic Records*, Issue III, p.308.
28. V.S. Prugavin, *The Handicraftsman at the 1882 Exhibition*, p.28.
29. The situation of the workers in these businessmen's families can be seen from the following words of Mr. Erisman: "A mirror factory owner's son, asked by us whether he was employed at coating mirror glass with mercury, answered: 'No, we take care of ourselves'." Erisman, *ibid.*, p.200.
30. See the article *The Blacksmith Industry in Uloma Volost, Cherepovets Uyezd, Novgorod Gubernia* in the Report already quoted.
31. *Statistic Records of the Russian Empire*, Issue III, p.83.
32. p.384.

33. "In this village, peasant and land-poor single peasant households number 670, but not more than 70 householders cultivate grain and make use of all the land belonging to the village" (these no longer engage in shoemaking). Report, Section 2, p.153. This information was obtained from "the elders and peasants of Kimry Volost".

34. Prugavin, The Handicraftsman at the 1882 Exhibition.

35. [Italics by Plekhanov.]

36. [Italics by Plekhanov.]

37. Das Kapital, 2. Aufl., S.779-80. [9*]

38. Those who have grasped the essence of the domestic system of large-scale production will understand how the process referred to takes place. Let us give some explanatory facts just in case. "Print manufacturers generally print either on other people's cloth according to orders from outsiders or on their own wares, buying yarn and giving it to be woven in different places." Successful business by print manufacturers is bound to lead to an intensified giving out of the yarn to be woven "in different places and consequently to the development of small handicraft industry. Handicraft cotton production has extensively developed with the participation of many capitalist merchants who, buying cotton yarn, either warp it in their own establishments and then give it out to weavers or give it unwarp to masters who, only doing the warping and giving it out in the villages, are middlemen between the capitalists and the weavers". Voyenno-Statistichesky Sbornik No.IV, pp.381 and 384-85. The firm Sawa Morozov Sons, which employs 18,310 permanent workers, also has 7,490 "occasional" workers. These "occasional" workers are in reality nothing but handicraftsmen who owe their living to large-scale industry. Such facts, which bear an unambiguous relation to capitalism, move the Narodniks so much as to make them forget the simplest truths of political economy.

29. Kapital, S.493-94. [10*]

40. [Note to the 1905 edition.] Subsequently these thoughts of mine were not badly developed in a number of studies by Mr. Tugan-Baranovsky.

41. Yuridichesky Vestnik, January 1883. Article Novelties in Economic Literature, p.102.

42. In making this comparison account must be taken of the inaccuracy noted above and the incompleteness of our official statistics on which production figures for 1877 are based. But on the whole, Mr. Bezobrazov's conclusions are borne out also by his personal observation. "I myself," he says, "was able to note the increase in our manufactory during my travels in the Moscow industrial region."

43. Economiste français, 26 Août, 1882, Lettres de Russie, par Wlad. Besobrasoff.

44. See *Journal des Economistes*, Juillet 1883, *L'industrie du sucre en Russie*.

45. Николай—он, «Очерки нашего пореформенного общественного хозяйства», Слово, 1880, кн.10, стр.86-135. [Nikolai—on, *Outlines of Our Social Economy Since the Reform*, Slove, 1880, No.10, pp.86-135.]

46. [Note to the 1905 edition.] Hence it is clear that I have never shared the theory imagined by our Narodniks – which found its way from their works even into *Encyclopaedia Britannica* – according to which the development of capitalism is impossible in Russia because our country has no markets. My view of this question was expounded elsewhere soon after the publication of *Our Differences* as follows: According to the teaching of Mr. V.V., the Narodnik theoretician, “the appearance on the world market of new competitors in the form of new countries, must henceforth be considered impossible, for the market has been finally conquered by the more advanced states. Therefore V.V. doubts the future of Russian capitalism ... V.V.’s theory is not without a certain cleverness but, unfortunately, it shows complete ignorance of history. There was a time when England dominated the world market almost exclusively and her domination postponed the decisive clash of the English proletariat with the bourgeoisie. England’s monopoly was broken by the appearance of France and Germany on the world market, and now the monopoly of Western Europe is being undermined by competition from America, Australia and even India, which will naturally lead to a sharpening of relations between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie in Europe. Hence we see that Mr. V.V.’s theory is not confirmed by the actual course of events. Mr. V.V. thinks that having once become dominant on the world market the industrially more developed countries absolutely close it to the less developed countries and thus drive the latter on to the road of social reform, which reform must be undertaken by a government supposed to be above class interests, for example the Government of His Imperial Majesty the Autocrat of All Russia. But facts show just the opposite. They tell us that the less developed countries do not stand still, but gradually prepare for themselves the road to the world market and by their competition drive the more developed countries on to the road of social revolution, which will be carried out by the proletariat when it has become aware of its class task, relying on its own strength and having seized political power ...” [13*]

I now add that my arguments have been confirmed perfectly by the subsequent development of world economy and that numerous figures could be quoted in their favour both from English Blue-Books on this subject and from the reports of English consuls. I will also note, on the other hand, that I have never been a supporter of the theory of markets in general or that of crises in particular, a theory which spread like the plague in our legal literature on Marxism in the nineties. According to this theory, whose main propagator was Mr. Tugan-Baranovsky [14*], overproduction is impossible and crises are explained by the simple disproportion in the distribution of the means of production. This theory is very gladdening for the bourgeoisie, to whom it brings the pleasant conviction

that the productive forces of capitalist society will never outgrow the production relations peculiar to capitalism. And it is not surprising that Mr. Werner Sombart, one of the best theoreticians of the modern bourgeoisie, was very gentle towards it in the paper which he read on September 15, 1903, at the Congress of the League of Social Politics in Hamburg. (See *Verhandlungen des Vereins für Sozialpolitik über die Lage der in der Seeschifffahrt beschäftigten Arbeiter und über die Störungen im deutschen Wirtschaftsleben während der Jahre 1900ff.*, Leipzig 1903, S.130.) The only surprising thing is that Mr. W. Sombart considers the prominent Russian scientist Tugan-Baranovsky as the father of this supposedly new theory. The real father of this by no means new doctrine was Jean Baptiste Say, in whose "course" it is given a fairly complete exposition. It is very interesting that in this respect bourgeois economics is returning to the point of view of the vulgar economist whom it avoids naming as if yielding to a commendable feeling of shame. Besides Mr. Tugan-Baranovsky, Mr. Vladimir Ilyin also professed the theory of J.B. Say in *Note on the Theory of Markets* (Scientific Review, January 1899) and *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*. In this latter work, Mr. Vladimir Ilyin, by the way, displays considerable eclecticism which shows that the theoretical conscience of a Marxist has not always been silent in him. [15*]

Notes

8*. Manilov – a character from Gogol's *Dead Souls* – a vain and fruitless dreamer.

9*. K. Marx, *Capital*, Vol.I, Moscow 1958, pp.748-49.

10*. K. Marx, *Capital*, Vol.I, Moscow 1958, p.470.

11*. John, Chap.13. Words of Jesus to Judas when the latter hesitated to give his treacherous signal to the Roman soldiers.

12*. In the article "Novelties in Economic Literature" (bibliography). V.V., *Destinies of Capitalism in Russia*, Petersburg 1882. (*Yuridichesky Vestnik* [The Legal Herald], January 1883, pp.89-110.)

13*. Quotation from Plekhanov's Note 8 to the pamphlet *What Do the Social-Democrats Want?*

14*. The reference is to M. Tugan-Baranovsky's book: *Industrial Crises. Essays on the Social History of England*, 2nd ed., St. Petersburg, 1900. There was an edition in 1923.

15*. Plekhanov's statements about Lenin referring to the year 1905 are absolutely untrue. Here one can plainly see the Menshevik Plekhanov's tendency to injure Bolshevism by representing Lenin's defence and substantiation of the Marxist theory of markets as a repetition of the theories of the vulgar economist J.-B. Say. It was precisely in his work *Note on the Theory of Markets* that Lenin criticised Smith's and Say's market theory.

Chapter III

Capitalism and Communal Land Tenure

1. Capitalism and Agriculture

But the principal and only basis of our public economy is agriculture, Mr. V.V. and Co. generally say. The development of capitalist economy in this field, the application to the land of “private business capital” is hindered by the village community, which has always been an impregnable buttress against capitalism. In our country large-scale agriculture, far from ousting small farming, is increasingly giving way to it. Big landowners and leaseholders are speculating only on a rise in land rent and are leaving agriculture to the peasant. But peasant economy, is bound to bring victory for the peasant, not capitalist, forms of economy.

Although throughout the whole of this argument error is closely interwoven with truth, the truth it contains is by no means convincing. Agriculture is nearly everywhere the most backward branch of national production, a branch which capitalism began to take over only after establishing itself firmly in industry proper: “Modern industry alone, and finally, supplies, in machinery, the lasting basis of capitalistic agriculture.” That is why it is not logical to conclude that bourgeois relations of production are inexistent or even absolutely impossible in a country on the

grounds that they have not yet spread to agriculture. Mr. Tikhomirov thinks, for example, that during the Great Revolution the French bourgeoisie was so strong that it was able to prevent the establishment of self-government by the people. [1] And yet right up to the Revolution, the application of “Private business capital” to the land was prevented by numerous survivals of feudal relations, agriculture was in an alarming state of decay, landowners preferred to live in towns and to rent out their lands either to sharecroppers or to bourgeois leaseholders; the latter, like our modern “Razuvayevs” [1*] gave not the slightest thought to the correct cultivation of the land but in their turn rented out to the peasants the land they had leased and were concerned only with the most profitable conditions for doing so. [2] Did that prevent the bourgeois from being victorious or capitalism from being triumphant in France? If not, why should it have not only a strong, but, as the Narodniks think, a decisive influence on all production relations in our country? It may be argued there were no longer any communes in France at that time. Very well. But in France, as in the whole of “Western Europe”, there was the feudal regime and there were at one time guilds which greatly hindered the development of capitalism and “cramped production instead of facilitating it”. These “fettters”, however, did not stop the course of social and economic development. The time came when “they had to be broken up and they were broken up”. What insures the Russian village community against the same fate?

Mr. Nikolai—on, who has a more thorough knowledge of our economy after the Reform than all the Russian revolutionary and conservative exceptionalists put together, will not hesitate to acknowledge that the very “Act ’ (on peasants freed from feudal dependence) was in our country the “swan song of the old production process” and that the legislative activity that followed it, and which was *aimed in the very opposite direction*, “had by its

results *more substantial influence* on the entire economic life of the people” than the peasant reform. In this author’s opinion, “the application of capital to the land, the fulfilment of its historic mission, is hindered in our country by the ‘Act’, which allotted the instruments of labour to the producers. But capitalist economy is promoted by the whole of the state’s post-Reform economic activity ... The capitalist tendency, however, is *apparently prevailing*. All data point to an increase in the number of producers expropriated: the decrease in the producer’s share of the product and the increase in the capitalist’s going on before our eyes compel an increasing number of the former to abandon the land, not to ‘dress’ it. Thus a very curious thing is going on in the village community itself: the *mir* is beginning to allot the poorest land to unenterprising peasants (they won’t cultivate it anyhow) and the periods between the redistributions of the land belonging to the enterprising householders are continuing to be extended, so that we are in presence of the transformation of communal exploitation to individual”. [3] Mr. Tikhomirov completely ignores the conclusions of Mr. Nikolai—on’s remarkable study and expressly maintains that in our country “the peasants still own 120,628,246 *dessiatines* of land”. [4] He forgets that the substance of the question is not the legal *standard*. but the economic *facts*. These facts show that in very many places the village community has been so distorted by unfavourable influences that from a means of protecting the producers against capitalist exploitation it is already becoming a powerful instrument of the latter. So as not to speak without proof, let us once more take the people “as they are” and examine the contemporary Russian situation from that point of view.

But first of all a few general remarks on the history of primitive agrarian communism.

2. *The Village Community*

Listening to our Narodniks one could really think that the Russian village community is an exceptionally enduring organisation. “Neither the internecine struggles during the period of the independent principalities, the Mongol yoke, the bloody period of Ivan the Terrible, nor the years of unrest during the interregnum, nor the reforms of Peter and Catherine which introduced into Russia the principles of West European culture, nothing shook or changed the cherished institution of peasant life,” says one of the most easily excitable Narodniks, Mr. K—n, in a book on “the forms of land tenure among the Russian people”; “the serfdom could not obliterate it, its abolition could not be brought about by the peasants leaving voluntarily for new lands or by forcible expulsions”, etc., etc., in a word,

*The ages went by, all strived to be happy,
In the world all repeatedly changed [3*],*

but the Russian village community remained unchanged and unchangeable. Unfortunately, this glorification, despite all its indisputable eloquence, proves nothing at all. The village communities display indubitable vitality as long as they do not emerge from the conditions of natural economy.

“The simplicity of the organisation for production in these self-sufficing communities that constantly reproduce themselves in the same form, and when accidentally destroyed, spring up again on the spot and with the same name – this simplicity supplies the key to the secret of the unchangeableness of Asiatic societies, an unchangeableness in such striking contrast with the constant dissolution and refounding of Asiatic states, and the never-ceasing changes of dynasty. The structure of the economical elements of society remains untouched by the storm-clouds of the political sky.” [5]

But that same basic element of the barbarian societies which stands firm against the storms of political revolutions turns out to be powerless and defenceless against the logic of economic evolution. The development of money economy and commodity production little by little undermines communal land tenure. [6] Added to this there is the destructive influence, of the state which is compelled by the very force of circumstances to support the principle of individualism. It is set on this road by the pressure of the higher estates, whose interests are hostile to the communal principle, as well as by its own ever-growing needs. The development of money economy, which in its turn is a consequence of the development of the productive forces, i.e., of the growth of the social wealth, brings into being new social functions, the maintenance of which would be unthinkable by means of the former system of taxes levied in kind. The need for money compels the government to support all the measures and principles of, social economy which increase the flow of money into the country and quicken the pulse of social and economic life. But these abstract principles of social economy do not exist of themselves, they are only the general expression of the real interests of a certain class, namely that of trade and industry. Having emerged partly from the former members of the village community and partly from other estates, this class is essentially interested in mobilising immovable property and its owners, since the latter are labour-power. The principle of communal land tenure is an obstacle to both of these aims. That is why it first arouses aversion, and then more or less resolute attacks on the part of the rising bourgeoisie. But neither do these blows destroy the village community at once. Its downfall is prepared by degrees. For a long time the outward relations of the members of the community apparently remain completely unchanged, whereas its inner character undergoes serious metamorphoses which result in its final disintegration. This process is sometimes a very lengthy one,

but once it reaches a certain degree of intensity it cannot be stopped by any “seizures of power” by any secret society. The only serious rebuff to a victorious individualism can be given by those social forces which are called to being by the very process of the disintegration of the village community. Its members, who were once equal as far as property, rights and obligations went, are divided, thanks to the process referred to, into two sections. Some are attracted towards the urban bourgeoisie and try to merge with it in a single class of exploiters. All the land of the village community is little by little concentrated in the hands of this privileged class. Others are partly expelled from the community and, being deprived of land, take their labour-power to market, while others again form a new category of community-pariahs whose exploitation is facilitated, among other things, by the conveniences afforded by the community organisation. Only where historical circumstances elaborate a new economic basis for the reorganisation of society in the interests of this lower class, only when this class begins to adopt a conscious attitude to the basic causes of its enslavement and to the essential conditions of its emancipation, only there and only then can one “expect” a new social revolution without falling into Manilovism. This new process also takes place gradually, but once it has started it will go on to its logical end in just the same way with the relentlessness of astronomic phenomena. In that case the social revolution does not rely on “possible” success of conspirators but on the certain and insuperable course of social evolution.

Mutato nomine de te fabula narratur, we may say addressing the Russian village community. It is precisely the recentness of the development of money economy in Russia that explains the stability which our village community has shown *until recently* and which *still* continues to move poor thinkers. Until the abolition of the serfdom nearly all the communal – and to a great

extent the state – economy of Russia was a natural economy, highly favourable to the maintenance of the village community. That is why the community could not be destroyed by the political events at the time of the principality and *veche* system and the Moscow centralisation, of Peter’s reforms and the “drum-beating enlightenment” of the Petersburg autocrats. No matter how grievous the effect of these events was on the national welfare, there is no doubt that in the final account they themselves were not forerunners of radical upheavals in the public economy, but only the consequence of the mutual relations existing between individual village communities. The Moscow despotism was based on the very “ancient foundations of the life of the people” that our Narodniks are so enthusiastic over. However, both the reactionary Baron von Haxthausen and the revolutionary agitator Bakunin understood this clearly. Were Russia isolated from the economic and political influences of West European life, it would be difficult to foresee when history would undermine at last the economic foundation of the Russian political set-up. But the influence of international relations accelerated the natural, though slow, process of development of money economy of commodity production. The Reform of February 19 was a necessary concession to the new economic trend and in turn it gave it new strength. The village community did not, and indeed could not, adapt itself to the new conditions. Its organism was overstrained, and one must be blind not to notice the signs of its disintegration now. Those are the facts.

3. Disintegration of Our Village Community

The process of disintegration of our village community affects even its outward appearance. “I stood for a long time on the edge of a graveyard looking at the outward appearance of villages (lying below at the foot of a hill),” says Mr. N. Zlatovratsky.

“What variety! On one side, a group of houses, apparently decrepit, having two windows and thatched roofs ... On the other side new houses with three windows each, roofs of planks and separated by a broad passage; between them I could see green iron roofs with weather-vanes on the chimneys. And then a third group, long and winding like a worm, where, side by side with the mansion of a well-to-do *kulak*, there was a structure something between a cabin and a hovel, hardly rising above the ground.” [7] Corresponding to this outwardly very picturesque variety we have a variety of figures expressing the budgets of different households. Mr. Zlatovratsky says that the village community which he selected for study displayed, “in spite of its small size, fairly extreme degrees of economic inequality, from those *sitting on a money bag* and munching nuts for days on end to the widow of a hussar, living in misery with a whole crowd of children; and this village was very clearly divided into the *sunny side* and the *cold side*.” And yet this community “was an example of the average *new* village of the type to which the Russian villages in general tend, while some have managed to go much farther in the same direction, i.e., in the direction of disorganising the foundations of the old village as the representative of the principle of labour and economic equality”. Mr. Zlatovratsky knows that such villages still exist and that “there are still many of them in which you can feel and see the strong, unshakable foundations” of the old community life. “But there *used to be* more of these villages than there are *now*.” [8] Now, indeed, what the author of *Everyday Life* calls the “atmosphere of village duplicity and double-facedness”, which is the inevitable consequence of the splitting of the village community into diverse sections with completely irreconcilable interests, is becoming more and more rooted in the countryside.

On the one side you see the “kind-hearted” *enterprising peasant* “who has no more than a one-person allotment and yet manages to cultivate three, four or even five allotments belonging to his associates who are unable to cope with them”; and on the other side you see before you those very “weak” householders, the “obscure”, the “poor”, etc., who “either work themselves as wage-labourers for their leaseholders or close up their houses altogether and go away, God knows where, and never return to their native village community”. And there are quite a lot of these poor people. No.2922 of *Novoye Vremya*, of April 18 this year, gave the following very significant report: “Here is a fact the authenticity of which is borne out officially. Out of the 9,079,024 households in the village communities in Russia (not counting the Vistula and Baltic regions), there are 2,437,555 which have not a single horse. This means that one out of every four peasant households has no horse. But a peasant who has no horse cannot farm on his own account. This means that one-quarter of the rural population of Russia should not be included in the number of agriculturists running their own economy.” [9] But the peasant who cannot run his economy independently is a candidate to the title of proletarian, a candidate who must be confirmed in that title in the very near future. Though he avoids for the present being exploited by the big capitalist employer, this peasant is already completely dependent on the small usurer’s capital of the village kulaks or even of the mere “clever masters”. How the “clever enterprising peasants” treat their impoverished community associates is seen from the already quoted Mr. Zlatovratsky’s book.

“But do those shut-up houses belong to the ‘airy’ people?” the author asks his interlocutors.

“Airy ... that’s what they are!” the interlocutor says with a smile, “for they fly, like birds! For a time they sit tight, try to settle down and make ends meet on their *dessiatine*, and then up they get and fly away. They

ask their neighbours to lease their plot so that their passports will not be delayed, *they invoke the name of God*, stand a treat of vodka, undertake to send money in addition, and all they ask for is that the neighbours should do them the favour of taking the land. And, of course, the neighbours do ... that suits us, the enterprising peasants ... what happens is that if these people come back and want to have their land again they have nothing to cultivate it with: they hire themselves out to the leaseholder as wage-labourers of their own land ... Each gets what the Lord sends him!"

Do you like the community of such "enterprising peasants", reader? If so, your taste hardly resembles that of the "airy people", who "invoke the name of God" to be freed from the land. And note that these "people" are quite right in their way. The difference between their sympathies and yours is determined by the very simple circumstance that the community which you like in no way resembles the one which the "airy people" have to deal with. In your imagination you picture the ideal village community which *may* appear after the revolution in the Narodnik or Narodovoltsi fashion. But the airy people have to do with the *real* village community in which their irreconcilable antagonist, "the enterprising, clever peasant" has already asserted himself and self-complacently repeats, "in our community the poor will not hold out, there is no air for them, and if it were not for *them*, would we be able to live? Were it not for these airy people, our life would be very cramped ... But now, if you release the airy people sufficiently from the *mir*, you will be more at ease". [10] The *mir* which releases the poor "from itself" is the *mir* of *kulaks* and exploiters. Having nothing to "breathe", the airy people flee it as they would a prison.

But the clever peasant does not always give the poor their freedom gratis. Joining "in a single allotment four" which belong to his ruined co-villagers, he even demands "money in addition" from them. Hence we get amazing contracts like the following, consigned to history by Mr. Orlov: "In the year 1874, on

November 13, I, the undersigned, of Moscow Gubernia, Volokolamsk *Uyezd*, village of Kurvina, hereby declare to my peasant community of the village of Kurvina that I, Grigoryev, give my land, and allotment for three persons, for the use of the community, *in return for which, I, Grigoryev, undertake to pay 21 rubles a year* and the said sum to be sent every year by the first of April, not counting the passports, for which I must pay separately, and also for their dispatch; which undertaking I pledge with my signature.” If we compare the payments exacted on peasants’ allotments with the rent for them, it is obvious that this was not the only such case. It has been concluded that the average size of the payments effected on peasants’ plots in twelve *uyezds* of Moscow Gubernia was 10 rubles 45 kopeks, while the average rent for a one-person plot was no higher than 3 rubles 60 kopeks. Thus the average additional payment made by the owner for a plot which he hired out amounted to 6 rubles 80 kopeks. “Of course one comes across cases in which the plot is rented at a price compensating for the payment exacted upon it,” says Mr. Orlov; “but such cases are extremely rare and can therefore be considered as exceptions, while the general rule is that there is a bigger or smaller additional payment besides the rent of the plot ... It is now understandable why the peasants, as they themselves put it, are not envious of community land.” [11] Anybody familiar with the famous studies made by Mr. Yanson on peasants’ plots and payments knows that the disparity noted by Mr. Orlov between the profitableness of allotments and the total payments exacted on them exists throughout the greater part of Russia. This disparity often reaches really terrifying proportions. In Novgorod Gubernia “payments on a *dessiatine* of land for isolated groups of payers amount to the following percentage of the normal income from the land:

On lands of state peasants	160%
On lands of peasant proprietors:	
of former appanage peasants	161%
of former landlords' peasants	180%
of temporarily-bound peasants [5*]	210%

But under unfavourable conditions, i.e., when the peasant proprietors had to effect extra payments, when the temporarily-bound peasants had only small plots and their general dues were high, these payments reached [12]:

for peasants having bought their liberty up to	275%
for temporarily-bound peasants up to	565%”

In general, comparing the data collected in Volume XXII of *The Works of the Taxation Commission* with the figures given in the report of the agricultural commission, Mr. Nikolai—on found that “the state independent peasants in 37 *gubernias*” (therefore not counting the western *gubernias*) “of the European part of Russia pay 92.75 per cent of the net income from the land they have, i.e., for all their needs they have 7.25 per cent of the income from the land left. But the payments demanded from former landlords’ peasants amount to 198.25 per cent of the net income from the land, i.e., these peasants are obliged not only to surrender the whole of their income from the land, but to pay as much again out of their outside earnings”. Hence it follows that the poor peasants “released by the *mir*” must in the majority of cases pay a certain sum every year for the right to give up their plot and be free to move around. This indisputable conclusion is confirmed by facts in every case in which the peasants’ economic relations have been studied with any attention. For example, in the sandy region of Yuryev *Uyezd*, Vladimir *Gubernia*, as Mr. V.S. Prugavin says, “the paltry, ungrateful plot of soil is a burden for the economy, the

land is a stepmother for the peasant. Here, far from the plot compensating for the payments imposed upon it, the one who rents out the land has moreover to pay out 8-10 rubles on each plot, since the average rent for a cheap plot in this region is 4-5 rubles a year per person". [13] Weighed down by the burden of taxation, ruined by "stepmother earth", the rural poor fall into the most desperate position. On the one hand, lack of resources prevents them from cultivating the land that they have, and on the other hand, the legislation in force forbids them to renounce ownership of the land, although it brings them nothing but loss. What does such a state of affairs lead to? The answer is quite clear. As Mr. Orlov says, those householders who have given up their land "detach themselves into a special group and are so to speak rejected and banned from the community; the latter divides into two parts, each of which enters into hostile relations towards the other; enterprising peasants consider those who have given it up as a heavy burden, having in the majority of cases to answer for them under the collective responsibility, and there is generally nothing they can get out of them; those, on the other hand, who have given up their land, being finally ruined and having ceased corn-growing, are compelled to go *elsewhere* with their families in order to earn; at the same time, although they do not make use of their plots, they have to pay all the taxes levied on them, for otherwise the *mir* does not give them their passports and, besides, 'scourges' them at the *volost* administration offices for failing to pay; *obviously, in the eyes of those who have given up the land the mir is a burden, a scourge, a hindrance.*" It is easy to understand that "the link between these two sections of the village community is purely exterior, artificial and fiscal; with the dissolution of this link *the final disintegration of the groups mentioned* must inevitably take place: the village community will consist only of corn-growers, while those who have given up their land, having no means of starting to farm again and gradually losing the habit of

agricultural work, will finally be transformed into landless people, which is what they are now in actual fact". [14]

At a certain stage in the disintegration of the village community there almost necessarily comes a time when the poorest of its members begin to revolt against this form of land tenure which for them has become "a scourge and a hindrance". At the end of the last century the poorest peasants in France, often demanded the "sharing out of the communal lands either because, not having any cattle, they made no use of them or because they hoped to set up their own independent farm; but in that case they *had against* them the farmers and the independent owners generally, who sent their cattle to graze on these lands". [15] It is true that the contrary sometimes took place, i.e., the poor wanted to keep their communal pastures and the rich seized them for their own exclusive use; but in any case there is no doubt that the rural commune was an arena of fierce struggle between material interests. Antagonism replaced the original solidarity. [16] The same antagonism is to be noticed now, as we saw, in the villages of Russia, the desire of the poor to withdraw from the village community being manifest at earlier stages of its disintegration. For instance, the ploughlands in Moscow *Gubernia* have not yet gone over to private ownership, but the oppression of state taxes is already making the poor section of the peasantry hostile to the village community. "In those communities where conditions are unfavourable ... to conduct agricultural economy ... the middle peasants are for the maintenance of communal tenure; but the peasants of the extreme sections, i.e., *the most and the least prosperous, incline towards the replacement of the communal system by a family and inheritance system.*" [17] The kulaks and those who have given up the land strive equally to break off their link with the village community.

How widespread is this striving? We already know that it is manifest where “conditions are unfavourable for all households to conduct agricultural economy”, and where “some of the households gradually become poor and weak and then lose their agricultural economy altogether, cease to engage in corn-growing, turn exclusively to outside employments and thus break off their immediate ties with the community lands”. Wherever such a state of affairs is observed, the striving of the poor to break away from the village community is so natural that it is an already existing fact or a matter of the very near future. Wherever the cause is to hand, the effect will not be long in becoming visible.

We also know that in the majority of our village communities conditions, far from being favourable, are simply impossible. Our economy, both as a state and as a specifically *popular* economy [6*], now rests on a most unreliable foundation. To destroy that foundation there is no need of either miracles or unexpected events: the strictest logic of things, the most natural exercise of the functions of our modern social and economic organism are leading us to it. The foundation is being destroyed simply by the weight and disproportion of the parts of the structure we have built on it.

How quickly the economy of the poorest section of the community loses its balance can be seen partly from the figures given above on the numbers of households which have no horses, and partly – and more clearly – from the following significant facts. In Podolsk *Uyezd*, “according to the 1869 census, 1,750 personal allotments out of 33,802, i.e., 5 per cent, were not cultivated; expressed in *dessiatines*, this means that out of 68,544 *dessiatines* of peasants’ ploughland 3,564 were abandoned. Exact data about the number of plots not cultivated in 1877 were collected only for three *volosts*, the finding being 22.7 per cent of ploughland abandoned. Not having any reason to consider those *volosts* as exceptions and, therefore, presuming that abandonment reigned to the same degree [18] in the rest of

the *uyezd*, we find that the area of uncultivated land rose from 3,500 *dessiatines* to 15,500, i.e., four- to fivefold. *And that in 8 years!* This approximate determination of the area of abandoned ploughland is corroborated by reports on the number of householders who did not cultivate their plots". [19] And indeed, whereas in 1869 the number was 6.9 per cent of those who received plots, *it increased to 18 per cent* by 1877. That is the mean figure for the whole of the *uyezd*. In some places the increase in the number of householders who did not engage in agriculture was much more rapid. In Klyonovo *Volost* the figure rose from 5.6 per cent in 1869 to 37.4 per cent in 1877. But even that is not the extreme. In eleven villages taken by the investigators as examples, we find that in the time lapse indicated cattle-rearing dropped 20.6 per cent and the area of abandoned land increased from 12.3 to 54.3 per cent, that is, "more than half the population was obliged in 1877 to seek earnings outside agriculture". In localities which had the most favourable conditions in that *uyezd*, in the villages where, as the investigators say, agriculture was "flourishing", the percentage of those who had given up the land more than doubled all the same, increasing from 4 per cent in 1869 to 8.7 per cent in 1877. Thus this relative "flourishing" only delays the peasants' break with the land but by no means does away with it. The general trend – fatal to the peasants – of our national economy remains unchanged.

But perhaps this *uyezd* is an exception to the general rule? Hardly. Other *uyezds* in Moscow *Gubernia* just as in others in the European part of Russia are in a similar condition. In Serpukhov *Uyezd* the number of householders not engaged in corn-growing attains 17 per cent, in Vereya *Uyezd*, 16 per cent. In Gzhatsk *Uyezd*, Smolensk *Gubernia*, "there are villages in which as much as half or even three-quarters of the land has been abandoned; ... peasant land cultivation on the whole in the *uyezd* has decreased by one-quarter". [20] Not multiplying figures and quotations, we can without fear apply to at least half of Russia

what Mr. Orlov said about Moscow *Gubernia*: “Sharp contrasts appear in the property situation of the peasant population: *an enormous percentage of the peasants are gradually losing all possibility of engaging in agriculture on their own account and are being changed into a landless and homeless class*, while a negligible percentage of the peasants are increasing their wealth in property year by year.” [21] This means that at least half of the village communities in Russia are a burden for their members.

The Narodniks themselves are well aware of the irrefutability of this conclusion. In the pamphlet *Socialism and the Political Struggle* we have already quoted Mr. N.Z., in whose opinion “the ill-fated village community is being discredited in the eyes of the people”. [22] Mr. Zlatovratsky too says somewhere that now the village community is dear only to old men in the country and intellectuals in the towns. Finally, Mr. V.V. himself admits that “the community is falling to pieces as a voluntary association and there remains only the ‘society’ in the administrative sense of the word, a group of persons forcibly bound together by collective responsibility, i.e., each one’s responsibility for the limitations of the powers of all the payers and the inability of the fiscal organs to understand this limitation. All the benefits that the village community once provided have disappeared and there remain only the disadvantages connected with the membership of the community.” [23] The so-called unshakable foundation of the life of the people is being shattered daily and hourly by the pressure of the state. Capitalism would perhaps not need to enter into active combat with this “invincible armada” [7*] which, even without that, will be wrecked on the reefs of land hunger and the burden of taxation.

But the Narodniks say “Bah!” to the present, *really existing* village community and do not cease to sing dithyrambs to the abstract community, the community *an und für sich*, the community which would be *possible* under certain favourable conditions. They maintain that the village community is being destroyed owing to

external circumstances which do not depend upon it, that its disintegration is *not spontaneous* and will cease with the removal of the present state oppression. It is to this side of their argument that we must now devote our attention.

Our Narodniks are really amazingly mild in the majority of cases. They willingly lay the care of delivering the village community from its modern “captivity in Egypt” on the very government whose efforts have reduced very nearly the whole of Russia to poverty. Shunning politics as being a “bourgeois” pastime, scorning all constitutional aspirations as being incompatible with the good of the people, our legal advocates of the village community try to persuade the government that it is in its own interests to support the ill-famed “foundations”. It goes without saying that their voice remains the voice of one crying in the wilderness. Vaska the Cat [8*] listens, eats, and now and then brings down his paw on the newspapers and journals which bore him really too much with their explanation of his “correctly understood interests”. The indisputable moral of the famous fable is an axiom in social and political life too.

The question of freeing peasant economy from the conditions which are unfavourable to it is thus reduced to that of Russia’s deliverance from the oppression of absolutism. We, for our part, think that the political emancipation of our native country will become possible only as a result of the redistribution of the national forces which without doubt will be caused, and is already being caused, by the disintegration of a certain section of our village communities. But we shall speak of that later. Now we shall make a concession to the Narodniks and forget about the *really existing* village community to speak of the *possible* one.

Author's Footnotes

1. **Vestnik Narodnoi Voli**, *What Can We Expect from the Revolution?*
2. Н. Кареев, «Крестьяне и крестьянский вопрос во Франции в последней четверти XVIII века», Москва 1879, гл. II, стр. 117 и след. [N. Kareyev, **The Peasants and the Peasant Question in France in the Last Quarter of the Eighteenth Century**, Moscow 1879, Chapter II, pp. 117 *et seq.*]
3. Nikolai—on, **Outlines**, pp. 132-36.
4. [Note to the 1905 edition.] When I wrote these lines, only the first part of Mr. N.—on's study had been printed. It did not appear in its final form until 1893 and was far from justifying the expectations I placed in it, and, as the reader will now see, placed by others. In the final account Mr. N.—on turned out to be just as much of a Utopian as Messrs. V.V., Prugavin, Tikhomirov and others. It is true that he had incomparably more data than they, but he treated them in an extremely one-sided way, using them only to corroborate preconceived Utopian ideas based on a completely incorrect understanding of Marx's theory of value. Mr. N.—on's work made a very unpleasant impression on Engels, although he was very well disposed towards it. In one of the letters he wrote to me, Engels says that he has lost all faith in the Russian generation to which Mr. N.—on belongs because no matter what subject they discuss they inevitably reduce the question to "Holy Russia", i.e. they display Slavophile prejudices. Engels' main reproach against Mr. N.—on was that he did not understand the revolutionary significance of economic upheaval Russia was passing through. [2*]
5. **Das Kapital**, 2. Aufl., S. 371. [4*]
6. The influence of money economy on the decline of primitive communism is wonderfully described by Mr. G. Ivanov (Uspensky) in the family community. "At present," says Mr. Ivanov (*From a Village Diary*, **Otechestvenniye Zapiski**, September 1880, pp. 38-39), "there is such an immense accumulation of insoluble and difficult tasks in the life of peasant families that if the big peasant families (I mean those near the towns) still stand fast, it is only, so to speak, by observing the exterior ritual; but there is already little interior truth. I fairly often come into contact with one of these big peasant families. It is headed by an old woman of about 70, a strong woman, intelligent and experienced in her way. But she derived all her experience under the serfdom and in an exclusively agricultural household, all of whose members contribute their labour, the whole income going to the old woman and she distributing it at her discretion and by general agreement. But then a high road was built and a barrel of cabbage sold to the carters began to bring in so much that it was more profitable than a whole year's labour on the ploughland of, say, one man. This is already a clear violation of the equality of labour and earnings. Then the machine came, calves began to get dearer and were needed in the capital. One of the sons became a coach-driver and in half a year he earned as much as the whole family in the country in a year. Another brother became a *dvornik* in Petersburg and got fifteen rubles a month more than he sometimes got in a whole year. But the youngest brother and the

sisters barked trees the whole spring and summer and did not earn a third of what the coachman earned in two months ... And thanks to this, although everything appears to be well in the family, and each one contributes “equally” by his labour, it is not really so: the *dvornik* concealed four red notes from his mother and the coach-driver still more. And how could they do otherwise? The girl worked her fingers raw with the tan the whole summer for five rubles while the coachman got twenty-five in a single night for driving gentlemen round Petersburg from midnight till dawn. Besides, the old woman’s authority would have still meant quite a lot if the family’s earnings had been only the result of agricultural labour. In this matter she is in fact an authority, but the question is: what does she know about a *dvornik*’s, a coachman’s or other new earnings and what a piece of advice can she give on the matter? Her authority is, therefore, purely fictitious and if it means anything it is only for the women who remain at home; but even the women know quite well that their husbands only appear to have a respectful and submissive attitude to the old woman; the women have a very detailed knowledge of their husbands’ earnings and know whether a lot is hidden from the old woman and by whom, and they themselves keep those secrets as close as possible. The authority of the head of the family is fictitious and so are all the family and communal relations; each one hides something from the old woman who is the representative of those relations, and keeps it for himself. If the old woman dies, the large family will not remain as much as two days in its present state. Each one will wish for more sincere relationship and this wish will inevitably lead to something else -the desire for each to live according to his income, to enjoy as much as he gets.”

7. Н. Златовратский, «Деревенские будни», С.-Петербург 1880, стр.9. [N. Zlatovratsky, **Everyday Life in the Villages**, St. Petersburg 1880, p.9.]

8. **Ibid.**, p.191.

9. The newspaper took this information from the book **Census of Horses in 1882**. The average conclusion drawn here is corroborated by the private studies in separate *gubernias* and *uyezds*. For instance, for Tambov *Gubernia*, which is more or less wealthy, we have the following figures:

	Spasskoye Temnikov		Morshansk	Borisoglebsk
	<i>Uyezd</i>	<i>Uyezd</i>	<i>Uyezd</i>	<i>Uyezd</i>
Households having				
no horses	21%	21.6%	21.6%	18%
Households with				
one horse	41%	42.9%	28.9%	28%
Households with				
2 or 3 horses	33%	31.3%		

(See Mr. Grigoryev's article *Zemstvo Statistic Research on Tambov Gubernia, Russkaya Mysl*, September 1884, p. 79.) In Pokrov Uyezd of Vladimir Gubernia (Kudykinsk District) "24 per cent of the householders have no horses. In Yuryev Uyezd of the same gubernia, the percentage of horseless householders is not particularly great but, on the other hand, we find many households with only one horse. And such families must indisputably be classed among the weak ones with only a small capacity for agriculture." However, there are some regions in the same uyezd (Nikul'skoye volost) where the horseless households make up from 19 (landlords' peasants) to 24 per cent (state peasants) of the total. In Spasskoye Volost only 73 per cent of the householders cultivate their soil themselves.

10. **Everyday Life in the Villages**, pp.203-04.

11. **Collection of Statistical Reports on Moscow Gubernia**, Section on Economic Statistics, Vol.IV, No.1, Moscow 1879, pp. 203-04.

12. **Report of the Imperial Commission for the Study of the Present Condition of Agriculture**, etc., Section 3, p. 6.

13. В.С. Пругавин, «Сельская община» и т.д., Юрьевского уезда, Владимирской губ., Москва 1884, гл.III, стр.93-95. [V.S. Prugavin, **The Village community, etc., in Yuryev Uyezd, Vladimir Gubernia**, Moscow 1884, Chapter III, pp. 93-95.]

14. Орлов, *Сборник статистич. свед.*, стр.55. [Orlov, **Collection of Statistical Reports**, p.55.]

15. Kareyev, **op. cit.**, p.132.

16. *Une commune est presque toujours divisee par la difference des esprits qui la gouvernent et qui opposent leurs vues particulieres au bien general* (quoted by Kareyev, p.135).

17. Orlov, pp.289-90.

18. The reader will immediately see that this assumption is completely justified.

19. *Moscow Gubernia in the Works of Its Zemstvo Statisticians*, **Otechestvenniye Zapiski**, 1880, Vol.5, p.22.

20. This information dates back to 1873. See **Report of the Agricultural Commission**, Supplement, article *Cultivation of the Land*, p.2.

21. Orlov, **op. cit.**, p.1.

22. See **Nedelya?** No.39, 1883, *In the Homeland*.

23. *The Economic Downfall of Russia*, **Otechestvenniye Zapiski**, 1881, Vol.9, p.149.

Notes

1*. *Razuvayev* – a character in several tales by Saltykov-Shchedrin (e.g. the **Poshekon Tales**). His name came to symbolise merchants, *kulaks* and other members of the rural bourgeoisie noted for their conservatism, vulgarity and tendency to brutal exploitation.

2*. Cf. **Correspondence of Marx and Engels with Russian Political Figures**, Gospolitizdat Publishing House, 1951, pp. 340–42.

3*. Inaccurate quotation from Nekrasov's poem *Father Frost, Red Nose*.

4*. K. Marx, **Capital**, Vol.I, Moscow 1958, p.358.

5*. *State peasants* – peasants who lived on the land belonging to the state to which they were obliged to pay feudal rent in addition to the state tax. Money dues of these peasants were extremely burdensome. However, their conditions were somewhat better than those of the landlords' serfs. The law gave them more rights in the use of the land, recognised them as free peasants (*selskiye obyvateli*) and allowed them to change their place of residence.

Appanage peasants – a category of peasants who were the personal serfs of the tsar and his family and lived on special plots provided for the maintenance of the tsarist court.

The conditions of these peasants hardly differed from those of the landlords' peasants.

Temporarily-bound peasants – former serfs released from personal dependence on the landlords. After the abolition of serfdom in 1861, the peasants received not the ownership but the use of land allotments, for which they were obliged to perform labour services and pay money to the landlords until they had paid the redemption fees, i.e., they were "temporarily bound". (See also Note 13*.)

6*. By popular economy as such Plekhanov understands peasant communal economy.

7*. *The Invincible Armada* – a Spanish fleet sent by Philip II of Spain against England in 1588. It was defeated by the English and Dutch fleets and destroyed by storms.

8*. *The Cat and the Cook* – from Krylov's fables. Here he represents the autocracy.

4. The Narodnik's Ideal Village Community

All our previous arguments were based on the assumption that the Russian village community will still for a long time be weighed down by unbearable taxation and land hunger. Let us now examine the matter from another aspect. Let us admit that thanks to some circumstances or others the village community will manage to get rid of that burden. The question is: will the disintegration of the community which has already set in then stop? And will not the community then rush to communist ideals with the speed and impetuosity of Gogol's troika? [9*]

At present the total of the payments exacted on the peasant allotments is, in the majority of cases, higher than the income from those allotments. Hence the quite natural desire of a certain section of the peasantry to detach themselves from land which only brings a negative rent. Let us now imagine the opposite case. Let us picture that there has been a serious reform in our taxation system and that the payments exacted on the peasant allotments have become considerably less than the income. This general case which we assume exists even now in the form of isolated exceptions. Even now there are village communities in which the land is not a burden for the peasant, communities in which, on the contrary, it brings him a definite, though not large, income. The tendencies observed in such communes ought to show us what the fate of the ancient form of our peasant land tenure should be in the event of *all* village communities being placed in such comparatively favourable conditions. Let us see what hopes, what expectations the examples of these privileged communities can awake in us.

In the *Collection of Statistical Reports on Moscow Gubernia* we find the following highly important indication: “General re-allotments of village community fields take place all the oftener according as the payments exacted on the community lands are *higher*, and as these (payments) are more out of proportion to the income from the land. If the sum of the payments is not higher than the income from the community land, re-allotments take place only after long intervals of from 15 to 20 or more years; if, on the contrary, the sum of the payments exceeds the income from the land, the intervals between re-allotments are shorter, the re-allotments being repeated all the more frequently according as the proportion between payments and the income from the land is greater, other conditions being equal.” [24] The same thing was noted by Mr. Lichkov in *Ryazan Gubernia*. It is easy to understand what this means: it shows us that a lowering of the payments exacted on the peasant’s land would arouse a tendency to lengthen the intervals between re-allotments. To be more exact, however, we should say that a lowering of the payments would only *increase* that tendency, since it already exists even at present. “A comparison of the mean figures expressing the periods between general re-allotments in single *uyezds* and the figures expressing the frequency of re-allotments reveals a tendency to lengthen the periods between re-allotments, and therefore to lower the number of re-allotments, i.e., to lengthen the duration of tenure.” [25] The same tendency is pointed out in the *Report* of the Agricultural Commission in regard to other *gubernias* in European Russia. Many of our Narodniks have great sympathy for that tendency. They think it will provide the possibility of removing or extenuating certain inconveniences in agriculture which are inseparable from radical re-allotments of community lands.

This is correct, but the misfortune is that the inconvenient consequences of the community principle will in this case be removed only by means leading to the undermining of that principle itself and which very much resemble curing a headache by cutting the head off. The lengthening of the period of the allotment is one of the signs of the imminent disintegration of the village community. In every place where this form of land tenure has disappeared under the influence of growing individualism, its disappearance has taken place by a fairly long process of adaptation of the *village community* to the rising needs for *individual* immovable property. Here, as everywhere, *factual* relations have anticipated *juridical* relations: land which was the property of the whole community remained longer and longer in the possession of a certain family which cultivated it until, in the end, the lengthening of the period of allotment prepared the ground for the complete abolition of the antiquated juridical standards. The cause of this is easy to understand and is easily revealed by any at all attentive study of the process by which immovable property becomes individual property.

The village community is no more than *one of the stages in the decline of primitive communism*. [26] Collective ownership of the land could not but arise in societies which did not know any other form of ownership. “The historian and ethnographer,” Mr. Kovalevsky rightly says, “will seek the oldest forms of common ownership not among the tribes that had already become settled, but among the nomads who hunted and fished, and he will see in *communal land tenure* of the former *no more than the transposition to immovable property of all the juridical ideas and institution*. which arose under the pressure of

necessity among individual tribes when the only means of subsistence were hunting and fishing.” [27] Thus the “juridical ideas and institutions” connected with *movable* property had a decisive influence on the character of *immovable* property. Far from weakening, this influence even grew still more when movable property assumed an individual character. But on the other hand, it now took the opposite direction. Formerly movable property tended to give a collective character to immovable property, because it belonged not to individuals but to the whole tribe. Now, on the contrary, it undermines *communal* immovable property because it does not belong to the whole village community but to individuals. And this indubitable influence of movable property on immovable was shown with particular force where, as in agriculture, the very essence of the economic undertaking demands simultaneous utilisation of articles of both private and collective property. The corn-grower needs first land available for his use only for a certain time, and second, fertilisers, seeds, draught animals and instruments of labour, which are his private property. It is in this point of contact of the two kinds of property that the disintegrating influence of individualism attains its peak and victory falls all the sooner on its side according as the objects of movable (private) property acquire greater influence in agriculture, i.e., as the given category of communal lands requires more labour, fertilisers and care. That is why kitchen gardens and lands attached to the house, being the object of more assiduous cultivation, become hereditary property of the household earlier than other lands, whereas common pastures and waste lands, which require only to be fenced in for the safety of the cattle grazing on them, remain communal property longer than other lands. Between these two extremes come the other

communal lands in ascending or descending order of the complication of their cultivation.

Thus the lengthening of the period of the allotment is the natural consequence of the increasing diligence with which the lands are cultivated.

The following examples will explain this.

In the Zaozyorye village community (Novgorod *Gubernia*) “all the ploughland is divided into two types: 1) *steady lands* and 2) ploughland”. The former pass from one householder to another only at radical re-allotments, which take place only at inspections; the second type of fields, *ploughland*, “are divided among the householders every year before the autumn”. This difference is determined by the fact that “*steady fields* are usually dunged” and the “peasants are satisfied with relatively long intervals from one re-allotment to the next”, because, as they themselves say, “one must get some profit out of the land, *or else why the devil should I work well on my strip if tomorrow I have to hand it over to somebody else?*” More careful cultivation leads to more prolonged ownership, and this in turn is naturally extended to other types of communal lands which for some reason are considered by the peasants to be of particular value, although their cultivation requires no particular expense. In the same Zaozyorye community the communal hayfields are divided just like the ploughlands into several categories; those of the first category, “large water meadows” along the river Khorinka, “are included only in the radical re-allotment”. [28]

The same phenomenon, only more pronounced, is to be found in the Torkhovo community, Tula *Gubernia*. *Those*

householders in this community “who fertilise their strips hold on to them and bring themselves to yield them to another householder only in exceptional circumstances”.

In Mikhailov *Uyezd*, Ryazan *Gubernia*, “the peasants do not divide the dunged fields”.

In Mtsensk *Uyezd*, Orel *Gubernia*, “at the re-allotment one strip of land is left undivided so that each can fertilise it. These strips are called dung strips. Each peasant has five *sazhen* [10*] of such dung strip, which is never reallocated.”

In Kurmysh *Uyezd*, Simbirsk *Gubernia*, “in recent years” – this was written in the early seventies – “allotments of land are made for longer periods, as a result of which agriculture is improving and it is becoming a general custom to dung the fields”. [29]

The connection between the lengthening of allotment periods and improved cultivation of the fields is obvious from the examples quoted. There is no longer any doubt that householders are very unwilling to part with land whose cultivation has demanded any particular expense. This tendency to hold for as long as possible strips once received in allotment would naturally become much weaker if all the members of the community had the material possibility to fertilise their fields to the same extent. “If all or at least a considerable majority of the households could grow corn with the same efficiency, there would not be any great difference between the strips, and general re-allotments of fields would not be burdensome to anybody,” said Moscow *Gubernia* peasants to Mr. Orlov. But such equality is of itself very unstable in a village community, in

which *economy is run by single households on the community land*, and each individual member cultivates at his own risk and peril the strip of land allotted to him. The number of animals, the quality of agricultural implements and the labour-power of the family are variable magnitudes which considerably diversify the income of individual households. The development of industry around or inside the village community opens up new means of earning and at the same time new sources of inequality. One household has no means at all of “earning outside”, while another earns a considerable part of its income in this way. One householder engaging in cottage industry becomes a “small master” and exploiter of the members of his own community, while the fate of another is to fall into the numerous category of exploited. All this, of course, affects the economic capacity of the various households. And finally, not all households bear the burden of state taxation with equal ease. In this way the village community is divided into the “sunny” side and the “cold” side – into a section of rich, “enterprising peasants” and section of poor ones, who little by little become “airy” people. Then re-allotments become extremely unprofitable for prosperous peasants. These are forced to “work not for themselves, but for their weaker and less prosperous neighbours”. It goes without saying that the well-to-do peasants try to avoid this necessity – unpleasant for them; they begin to adopt a very unfavourable attitude to re-allotments. We can therefore say that the *inequality which necessarily arises in the village community, also necessarily leads, at a more or less early period of the community’s existence, to a lengthening of the period of allotment.*

But the matter does not end there. With the lengthening of the periods between the re-allotments, the inequality among the members of the community, far from disappearing, is intensified still more. Householders who have the means of cultivating their allotments better now no longer fear that “tomorrow” their land will pass into somebody else’s hands. They cultivate it with great industry and do not stop at expense to improve it. Their troubles are naturally rewarded with better harvests. The well-cultivated strip of the prosperous householder brings in a greater income than the hardly ploughed allotments of the village poor. [30] As a result there is a repetition in the community of the old and yet ever new story told in the parable of the talents: the prosperous householder becomes still more “prosperous”, the poor one still poorer. The well-to-do householders form among themselves a defensive and offensive alliance against the poor, who still have a voice in deciding community business and may still demand re-allotments. Desiring at all costs to maintain their hold on the well-cultivated strips of community land, and being hesitant or unable to establish household possession by heredity, the well-to-do peasants resort to the following clever measure. They separate their lands into a special plot, from which allotments are made only to prosperous householders. “The community lands are divided into two unequal parts: one, comprising the better soil, is all allotted to the prosperous corn-growers and is cultivated by them; the other, which comprises the poorer soil, is allotted to the unenterprising households and lies waste.” [31] The poor are thus deprived of any hope of ever having at their disposal the well-cultivated land of their fortunate neighbours. The character of the community changes radically: from a buttress and bulwark for the poorer members it becomes the cause of their final ruin. *The*

lengthening of the periods between re-allotments, which appeared as a result of inequality among the community members, leads only to an accentuation of the inequality and the final undermining of the village community.

In their efforts to achieve the fulfilment of their demands, our reformers presume that they are working for the consolidation of the “traditional foundations which have withstood”, etc., etc., which, being translated from Narodnik into human language, means for the maintenance of communal land tenure. But life has some very unpleasant surprises in store for them. The increase in the allotments and the reduction of taxes result in the peasants “valuing” the land, and where they “value” it they do not like re-allotments and therefore endeavour to lengthen the periods between them; but where periods between re-allotments are lengthened inequality among the members of the community grows, and the peasants are gradually prepared by the very logic of things for hereditary household ownership. Briefly, the measure recommended as a means of maintaining the village community only increases the instability of its equilibrium which already amazes the impartial observer; this measure will be a real “gift of the Greeks” for the community. It must be conceded that only with the help of a very ardent imagination and a pretty big dose of ignorance can one base any plans of reform on the shaky foundations of a form of life which is in such a hopeless and contradictory condition.

The contradictions typical of the social form in question inevitably and fatally affect the way of thinking and the conduct of its supporters. Our legal Narodniks, who are so prolific of all kinds of recipes for supporting and

consolidating the “traditional foundations of the Russian people’s life”, do not notice that they are all, in fact, coming more and more to voice the interests of the section of the peasants representing the principle of individualism and *kulak* enrichment.

Talk about popular credits and tender emotion at the so-called “community” leases out of landlords’ estates can serve as new examples of a short-sighted attitude to the interests of the village community. In essence, neither the communal leases nor the petty credit on land by any means consolidate the “foundations” which are so dear to our Narodniks, they even directly undermine the community principle. We shall come back to this question, but first of all we consider it necessary to finish dealing with other causes of the disintegration of the village community upon which we have already touched.

We already know that the peasants favour the lengthening of the periods between re-allotments of the communal lands for the sake of their better cultivation. They do not want to “*work well*” on a strip which may soon go over to somebody else. Good cultivation of the land presupposes the expenditure not only of the worker’s living labour but also of the inanimate products of his past work, of those means of production which in bourgeois economy bear the name of capital.

These expenditures of “capital” are paid back over a more or less long period of time. Some are refunded to the owner completely in as little as one or a few years in the form of increased income from the land; others, on the contrary, require a considerable time to circulate. The first are called

circulating capital expenditures, the second, constant capital expenditures. It goes without saying that the more constant capital expenditures in peasant agriculture increase, the more the rich and well-to-do householders will intensify their striving to hold on to their allotments as long as possible. The manuring of the soil is not so great an expenditure, and yet we see that it is in itself enough to make a certain section of our peasantry hostile to re-allotments. "It is bad because I have three cows, whereas he has one cock," the peasants of Sengilevskoye *Volost* [12*], Yuryev *Uyezd*, say, commenting on re-allotment. [32]What, then, will the situation be when more rational management, intensive cultivation and many-field system are introduced? There can be no doubt that communal land tenure is a serious obstacle to their consolidation. This form of land tenure is already leading to abnormal phenomena such as refusal to fertilise ploughlands. In Kaluga *Gubernia* some "peasants take all the dung out to the hemp-close and fertilise their fields very little for fear that when there is a re-allotment the strip may go to another master". In Moscow *Gubernia* "the dunging of ploughfields is stopped three years before re-allotment". In Kineshma *Uyezd*, Kostroma *Gubernia*, "there are instances of well-to-do peasants selling the dung they have accumulated" because they cannot bring themselves to use it for the fields for the reasons already mentioned. In Tula *Gubernia* "the fields belonging to peasants who have not yet bought themselves free and are still obliged to pay quit-rent become exhausted year by year through not being fertilised, because for the last ten years dung has not been taken to the fields but has been kept in reserve until the re-allotment of the land". Finally in Syzran *Uyezd*, Simbirsk *Gubernia*, "it is obvious from many reports on rent prices that the lease rent under communal

land tenure (when whole allotments are leased out) is on the average only half that of land which is private property, owned by a household hereditarily. There can be no doubt about this fact, which can be easily authenticated from books, transactions and contracts in the *volost* administrative offices.

“The explanation for this is that the mere cultivation of the land, because of the negligible allotments falling to each householder, is a great inconvenience; this is a fact which is fully acknowledged by the better-off and developed section of the peasant population and it in turn gave rise to two things which must be recognised as the most characteristic in the definition of the present condition of peasant landownership. Firstly, in some villages (Kravkovo, Golovino, parts of Fedrino and Zagarino) the communities have decided to divide the communal land into household allotments. Secondly, in a large number of villages, individual householders redeem their allotments and demand that they be detached from the communal lands. Similar cases are encountered in the villages of Repyevka, Samoikino, Okulovka and many others; they would be far more frequent if there were more order in the peasant administration, but now, a certain obscurity in the law, which is also aggravated by defects in the peasant administration, willy-nilly holds up redemption cases.” [33]

But this does not exhaust the inconveniences of the communal land tenure. The obligatory rotation of crops connected with it also raises considerable obstacles to the improvement of agriculture.

Can there be radical improvements in agriculture, for example in the Torkhovo village community, Tula *Gubernia*, where “*it is not allowed either to fence in one’s field or to change the system of field crop cultivation*”, or in the Pogorelki community, Kostroma *Gubernia*, where “*a three-field system, obligatory for all, is in vigour*”? Such village communities are by no means exceptions; on the contrary,

the order prevailing in them can be acknowledged to be the general rule, based on the simple consideration that in the event of fields being fenced in or the system of cultivation changed by some member of the community, “for the sake of one everybody would have to bear restrictions on the admission of the cattle to fallow lands and stubble”. [34] The elder and the peasants of Tikhonov *Volost*, Kaluga *Uyezd*, stated that “no farm work can be done as the individual householder would like: he is not allowed treble fallow ploughing when the others do only double fallow ploughing, because the cattle are put out to graze on the fallow land; for the same reason he cannot sow winter rye earlier than the others; he must start mowing at the same time as the others because one is not allowed to mow before the hay meadows are shared out, and he cannot mow after the others because the cattle are driven from the fallow land; and thus in absolutely all kinds of work there are similar hindrances”. Not to mention the introduction of new crops. This is impossible if they are “sown later than our plants, after the harvesting of which the cattle in the community will trample everything flat”. [35] We can, therefore, say that a struggle between the community, on the one hand, and its members, who see their advantage in a change in the system of cultivation and *have the necessary* means, on the other, is inevitable. And it is not difficult to foretell on whose side victory will be: “the rich will always dominate the poor,” the peasants say; in the present case, the rich minority will “dominate” the poor by using the most terrible weapon which history ever created, i.e., improved means of production.

Much paper has been filled by our Narodniks to prove that the village community in itself, i.e., by the essence of the

principle on which it is based, is not hostile to any improvements in agriculture. All that is necessary is for all the members of a given community to set about such improvements, or, still better, to cultivate the land collectively, they said, and far from meeting difficulties, the matter will be considerably eased by the absence of private ownership of the land. That is right, of course, but then there are many *possibilities* whose conversion into *realities* can be thought of only under certain conditions which are *impossible*. at the time in question.

*“If only frost the flowers did not blight,
Flowers would bloom in winter all right!”*

the song says. And that is true, but can one prevent frost in our climate in winter? No? Well, flowers will not bloom in winter except in hot-houses. Our peasants *could* eat oysters with champagne, *if only ... if only* they had the means. The importunate question of the means has always been the cold water that cooled the fire of Manilov’s imagination. If *all* our peasants had the means not to cultivate their fields according to improved methods, but simply to keep up the traditional three-field farming, we would not have the agrarian question which Messrs, the Narodniks are working so hard and so unsuccessfully to solve. Reality tells us that an enormous proportion of our peasantry have no such means, and once they have not got them neither individual householders nor the whole state either desire or have any reason to put off the improvement of the cultivation of the land until the majority of the community members “recover”: has not our antediluvian wooden plough already played enough tricks on us in the fight for the market, if only

with the Americans, who do not postpone the use of the steam plough till the golden age of fraternity and equality?

Consequently we can say that *the introduction of improved methods of agriculture will be a new factor in the disintegration of our village community* unless by some miracle the inequality which already exists in our modern “reformed” countryside disappears. But we shall speak of miracles later.

But what is improved agriculture? Is it a negative condition of social development, the product of unfavourable influence surrounding the tiller of the soil, or is it, on the contrary, the result of the abolition of those unfavourable influences, the effect of a rise in the level of the peasants’ material welfare? It seems to us that the second assumption is more correct than the first. Now the majority of the peasants are very poor and the system of collective responsibility threatens even the well-to-do minority with ruin. It is easy to understand that they are not interested now in intensive cultivation of the soil. But place them in better conditions, remove the burden of taxation which is oppressing them, and even the collective responsibility system will cease to be a threat to the rich peasants: the fewer insolvent members of the community there are, the less responsibility the rich will have. Confident of their future, the better-off section of the peasantry will begin to think of serious -improvements in cultivating the soil. But then they will come into conflict with the community and will have to engage in a mortal struggle with it. The conclusion, therefore, again forces itself upon us that improvement in the material welfare of the peasantry will intensify the instability of communal land tenure and render more frequent the phenomena already observed in

Tambov *Gubernia*, for instance, where “peasants who become rich introduce ownership of plots, but as long as they are poor they adhere to communal ownership, with reallotment of the fields”. [36]Our patient is poorly, so poorly! He is now so exhausted that he is rotting alive and yet all the nutrition recommended by our legal Narodnik homeopaths as a means of restoring his strength can do nothing but hasten the process of disintegration that has already begun.

But is it not time to finish with the village community? Have we not already shown all the factors of its disintegration? By no means! There are many, very many such factors. All the principles of modern economy, all the springs of modern economic life are irreconcilably hostile to the village community. Consequently, to hope for its further independent “development” is as strange as to hope for a long life and further development of a fish that has been landed on the bank. The question is not what hook the fish has been caught with, but whether its respiratory organs are adapted to the surrounding atmosphere. And the atmosphere of modern money economy kills our archaic form of land tenure, undermines its very foundation. Do you want illustrations? Here are some.

We have already seen what a destructive effect money economy has on the family community. Let us now look for examples of its influence on the rural community, the village community proper.

5. *Redemption [13*]*

Here we have the redemption of lands, which is supposed to present Russia with a new estate of peasant landowners. Some village communities have already redeemed their lands. How has this affected their inner structure?

“As long ago as in the *Collection of Statistical Reports on Tambov Gubernia*” says Mr. L.S. Lichkov, [37] “it was pointed out, incidentally, by V.I. Orlov that the system of *redeeming lands had very great influence upon the abolition of land re-allotment among the peasants* for it maintained and spread among the peasantry the view that redeemed land was *their personal, inalienable property* ... My colleagues and I, in collecting statistical data, also had occasion to note the same thing in Ryazan *Uyezd*.”

It must be admitted that Mr. Lichkov was able to note a highly curious and instructive phenomenon. “In Ryazan *Uyezd*,” he says, “the peasants who have redeemed land *do not at all reallocate* their lands in village communities *where land is valued*, whereas those who are temporarily bound, especially the state peasants, do effect land re-allotments. The peasant landowners, on the other hand, reallocate the land only where land is not valued, i.e., where it is not really the land that has to be shared, but the burdens which it brings ... It is extremely characteristic that in all the redeemed communities where the land is divided out among the actual members this distribution is done *not after, but before or at the time* of the redemption (*generally with the intention of never dividing it any more*). But since the redemption *there is not a single community* – except those in which the land is poor and only a burden to the peasants – not a single one, I say, in which land was reallocated, notwithstanding the obvious inequality of its distribution. However annoying it may be, one must all the same admit this and other facts, *which are characteristic of peasant interests by no means favourable to the village*

community – one must admit this because one must look every fact in the face and not embellish it with phrases harmful to the cause.”

The tendency of the lands redeemed by the peasants to become private – or more correctly household – property is not observed only in Ryazan *Gubernia*, the same can be seen in other places.

In Krestsy *Uyezd*, Novgorod *Gubernia*, “after redeeming land approximately half the former landlords’ peasants resolved by decision of the village community to distribute all the land by allotments including strips in different fields according to the number of persons and to abolish re-allotments for ever”. Similar cases are noted in the *Report of the Agricultural Commission* for Kaluga *Gubernia* as well. In the village of Starukhino, Tula *Gubernia*, “communal lands have not been reallocated since the time of the Reform”. In the event of partial re-allotments the number of persons “who received shares at the Reform” serves as the standard for the allotment. Even “in the case of the division of a *family* the same persons are counted, *without any consideration for minors*. The plot belonging to the household is never divided and goes over to the family.” As we see, the community principle has made no few concessions to individualism in this village of peasant *proprietors*, notwithstanding that, as Mrs. Y. Yakushkina says, they see communal land tenure as “the only means of preventing people from becoming landless”. The objective logic of things proves stronger than the subjective logic of the peasant. But here there is still struggle and disagreement between these kinds of logic, while in Borok community (Pskov *Gubernia*), which redeemed its land in 1864, the subjective logic of the majority long ago closely allied with the objective logic of money economy. When the poor demanded a new re-allotment the answer

they were given was that “although those who now have extra allotments do not own them by law (according to the number of persons), all the same they have cleared those allotments of taxes (redemption payments) and it would therefore be unjust to deprive them of those allotments”. [38] In another village in the same district the following typical case occurred: “One of the peasants adopted a waif and asked the community to give an allotment from the common field; then the foster-father redeemed the plot for 100 rubles, i.e., *exempted it for ever from re-allotment.*” Here, too, the redemption of the land was hostile to communal land tenure.

This case leads us on to the redemption of the land not by the village community as a whole, but by individual members. Such a procedure is admitted by law and is not seldom practised. Sometimes peasants who have ultimately redeemed their allotments continue to hold them on the former community principle, but sometimes they oppose re-allotment and then the community is obliged to consider them as proprietors. In the village of Soroguzhino in Yuryev *Uyezd*, Vladimir *Gubernia*, “there are three houses of full proprietors who have ultimately redeemed their plots, two of them agreed unconditionally to radical re-allotment with all its consequences (change of site by lots, decrease in size of plots, etc.), while one demanded that his plot should be enlarged and the community gave him what he needed by adding strips of land to the edges of each field”. [39] In the villages of Khoroshovka and Nikolayevskoye, in the same *gubernia*, “there are full proprietors and the village communities intend to *allot* them, if only in separate strips, a *complete plot* equal to the one they redeemed”. [40] Sometimes, on the contrary, the community is opposed to owners leaving it, and then the redemption of the land itself is retarded. Thus, in Tambov *Gubernia* “many

peasants desire to redeem their plots individually, but the village communities do not allow such redemptions in order not to exempt the rich peasants from the collective responsibility system". Sometimes the village community gives householders who have redeemed their allotments the farthest and most inconvenient plots. That is why "peasants buy far more often land from others than they redeem their own" [41] in Kharkov *Gubernia*.

These facts suffice to show how unstable the equilibrium of communal relations is becoming owing to redemptions. It is true that the final juridical transition to hereditary ownership by household, far from being the necessary *direct* result of redemption, is, on the contrary, a comparatively rare thing. The peasant is conservative, but he is particularly so in his attitude to the land. But that does not change things. Only in name do the mutual relationships between those who have redeemed their land resemble the "*mir*" of the good old time – the time of natural economy, serfdom and the complete absence of means of communication. The basis of distribution of land is no longer the need of this or that householder, the quantity of labour-power in his family or, finally, even taxes or dues. New birds sing new songs. The peasant proprietors do not like re-allotments and are not embarrassed by the needs of their neighbours. The aged villagers moan and complain about the people being "spoilt", the intelligentsia sigh still more earnestly and when they see to their distress that the "deterioration of morals" is irrepressibly penetrating into the countryside, they hope only for the "revolution" which will put everything right, smooth out everything and restore to the village community the freshness it had in the time of Gostomysl. [14*] But what is surprising in this phenomenon, which so distresses the "old men" in the villages and the Narodniks in the capital? Nothing at all. "Morals" have not

deteriorated, they have only been given another economic basis. Formerly the land belonged to the tsar, to “God” or whoever you like, but it was not bought. It was enough for a peasant to succeed in being accepted into a village community and he received the right to use the land, restricted, sometimes, only by the limitations of his own labour-power. And the community was in general the master of the territory it occupied, it had authority everywhere its axe, its scythe and its wooden plough went. Serfdom fettered and debased the tiller but did not change his attitude to the land. “We belong to you and the soil belongs to us,” the peasants used to say to the landlords. And now the time has come when the peasants have ceased to belong to the masters, but on the other hand, the soil has also ceased to belong to the peasants. It has to be redeemed, to be paid for in money. What is money? It is first and foremost a commodity, and a commodity which has a very special character; a commodity which buys all other commodities, a commodity which is the measure and the expression of their value. Needless to say, this special commodity cannot be an exception to the general laws of commodity production and circulation. On the contrary, it is the vehicle of those laws, it extends their operation to every place where it happens to make its appearance, through the hazard of some exchange transaction. But what are the laws of commodity production? What is a commodity and where does it come from? Commodity production develops only in a society in which the means of production, and therefore the product, are the private property of the producer; without this condition no division of labour would be enough to give rise to commodity production. Hence, commodity production is the result of the development of *private property*. Money, which naturally grows out of commodity exchange, presupposes a *private owner* in exactly the same way as does, generally speaking, the entire process of commodity

production. Individual members of the village community can acquire money only in exchange for things that are their *private property*, although they are produced by cultivating *community* land. And it is this money that the peasant must now pay as the price of redemption.

But “money begets money” in the sense too, incidentally, that the means of production and the materials for manufacture which it buys are themselves *exchange value*, the equivalent of the sum of money paid for them and again transformable into money should the buyer wish. Consequently, objects bought by some person must become his private property. Such is the irrefutable logic of money economy. And it is that logic which is now taking up the struggle against the tradition of communal land tenure. The redemption of land introduces into the peasant *mir* a contradiction which can be solved only by the final disintegration of the village community. By force of habit and tradition, and partly also by conscious conviction, the *mir* endeavours to preserve the old *collective* principle of land *tenure* after the mode of *acquisition* of that land has become entirely based on the new, money, *individual* principle. It goes without saying that that endeavour cannot be fulfilled, that it is impossible to transfer to collective ownership of the *mir* objects which were acquired in exchange for the private property of individual householders.

“Although the *Statute on Redemption* stipulates that peasants’ allotments will be redeemed as communal property,” says Mr. Lichkov, “nevertheless, the payment of a redemption, customarily (i.e., by force of facts, which are always stronger than any juridical standards, and stronger again than any juridical contradictions), is effected in most communities by the *members* of the community, *according to the quantity* of land. The sum of the redemption payment decreases every year as payment proceeds. Here is what may happen as a result of this: having punctiliously

paid the redemption money for a period of as much as two or three decades, peasants may be deprived at a re-allotment of a considerable portion of the land they have redeemed; on the other hand, those who have not paid anything may get land for nothing. In other words, each further instalment on the redemption price, while apparently increasing the right of the one who pays it to the land redeemed, *by the very fact* brings him nearer to the time when he will be actually *deprived* at the first re-allotment of this right which he has earned by his sweat and blood. It is understandable that the peasant cannot fail to notice this practical contradiction.”

We have already seen that this contradiction can be solved only by the abolition of re-allotments and the confirmation in possession of the land of those who have paid for its redemption.

By January 1883, 20,353,327 *dessiatines* of land had been redeemed by the peasants. As the total land in use by the peasants is reckoned as 120,628,246 *dessiatines*, we can support what has been said above with the statement that the redemption of land has already managed to place *one-sixth* of the peasant lands in conditions which are incompatible with the principle of the village community.

The extent to which the communal land tenure principle is incompatible with the *redemption* of land, or purchase for money, is clear from the following. In Moscow *Gubernia* some peasant communities have, besides the land allotted to them, “gift land”, that is, land given *gratis* when they were granted freedom by their former landlords. With the exception of but a single village “gift land is everywhere owned by the communities”. But in cases when peasant communities *buy* land from the landlords “ownership of the portions falling to each household is always established by inheritance and by household, each household receiving the right freely to dispose of and alienate part or the whole of its portion by

sale, gift, etc. Thus the size of the portion belonging to each household taking part in the redemption of the land remains fixed.” [42]

It is exactly the same in Pskov *Gubernia*: in cases when peasants “acquire estates, examples of which are not rare”, tenure is settled as “non-communal”.

But that is not all. Mr. Nikolai—on justly remarks that “redemption forces the producer to turn more and more of the product of his labour into commodities and consequently to lay more and more firmly the foundations of capitalist economy”.

From what has been said it is clear how naive the Narodniks are when they see the development of small land credit as means of consolidating the village community and fighting capitalism. As is their rule, they recommend exactly those measures which can only hasten the triumph of the bourgeois relationships which they hate so much. On the one hand, “all projects aimed at improving the material condition of the producer and based on credit, far from being able to improve his position, on the contrary, better the condition of a few and worsen that of the majority”. On the other hand, often lands which have been redeemed, and always those which have been bought – and the better the land is, the more often this happens – become the personal property of the one acquiring them.

In the case of the lease of landlords’ or state lands, the peasant *mir* is also transformed into an association of shareholders responsible for one another, an association in which the distribution of the lands leased is effected proportionally to the amount of money contributed. Where, in this case, is the community, where are the “traditional foundations”?

Incidentally, the peaceful Narodniks are not the only ones who are moved by facts of more than doubtful significance. Even the terrorists can boast of such “delicacy”. Mr. Tikhomirov, for example, in his war against people who are convinced of the “inevitability of Russian capitalism”, points out that the “quantity of land belonging to the peasants is slowly but steadily increasing”. He apparently considers this fact so significant that he gives it without any comments whatsoever. But after all that has been said here about the significance of money economy in the history of the village community’s disintegration, we are entitled to consider the increase of the quantity of land owned by the peasants as a fact which is extremely ambiguous, to say the least. Reality fully justifies our scepticism.

In Moscow *Gubernia* the amount of land bought by the peasants “increased in 12 years from 17,680 *dessiatines* to 59,741”. So here we see that very “slow but steady increase” noted by Mr. Tikhomirov. Fine. But how is this new land distributed among the peasants? Out of 59,741 *dessiatines* “31,858 belong to *no more than 69 owners*, i.e., exceed the usual dimensions of peasant farming, and 10,428 *dessiatines* consist of plots *exceeding 100 dessiatines*.” [43] How are we to understand this kind of “peasant property”? Does it prove that the bourgeois system cannot exist in Russia? In that case we could say of Mr. Tikhomirov what Proudhon once said of Adam Smith: he sees and does not understand, he speaks and does not realise the meaning of what he is saying!

It is now time for us to finish with the problem of the village community. We have expounded our views on its history generally and its position in Russia in particular. We have supported what we have said with facts and examples and have often compelled the Narodniks themselves to speak in our favour. Our study has been necessarily brief and

superficial. Not only could we not list all the *phenomena* which confirm our thought and have already been noted by investigators, the limits of our work also prevented us even from pointing out all the tendencies which are now of great importance in the life of the tiller of the land and whose development is incompatible with community principles. But despite all that, we can say that our statements have not been unsubstantiated. The examples *cited* and the tendencies *indicated* perfectly suffice to defend our statements. No serious doubt is possible. Every impartial observer sees that our village community is passing through a grave crisis, and that this crisis itself is approaching its end, and that primitive agrarian communism is preparing to give way to individual or household ownership. The forms of this ownership are very diverse and it often penetrates into the countryside under the cover of the usual communal relationships. But the old form has not the power to change the new content: it will have to adapt itself to it or perish for ever. And this upheaval which is becoming more and more intense, this process of disintegration which is spreading daily in “width” and “depth” and affecting an ever-increasing area, is introducing radical changes in the peasants’ customs and outlook. While our Slavophile revolutionaries console themselves with the consideration that “three-quarters” of our factory workers are “not at all proletarians and half of them work in the factories only seasonally and accidentally” [44], the peasants themselves realise full well that the village community of today is far from being what it was formerly and that the links between the tiller of the land and the land itself are being increasingly severed. “The young, my dear friend, are running, running away from the land ... The town is attracting them,” the peasants say in Mr. Zlatovratsky’s *Everyday Life in the Villages*. And, indeed, the town is more and more subordinating the country to

itself, introducing into it its “civilisation”, its pursuit of wealth, its antagonism between the rich and the poor; it is elevating some and lowering others, creating the “educated” *kulak* and a whole army of “airy people”, ignoring the lamentations of the old peasants and pitilessly pulling the ground away from under the feet of our reformers and revolutionaries of the old, so to speak, physiocratic fashion. And here, in the attitude to this process of the radical recasting of our rural “foundations”, the absolute powerlessness of the outlook which Marx and Engels branded as *metaphysical* is clearly shown. “To the metaphysician, things and their mental reflexes, ideas, are isolated, are to be considered one after the other and apart from each other, are objects of investigation fixed, rigid, given once for all. He thinks in absolutely irreconcilable antitheses. ‘His communication is “yea, yea; nay, nay”; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.’ For him a thing either exists or does not exist; a thing cannot at the same time be itself and something else.” [15*] That is Mr. Tikhomirov’s type of outlook and method of thinking. For him “people” is a fixed and invariable concept given once and for all; for him the village community “either exists or does not exist”, for him the peasant who is a member of the community “cannot at the same time be himself and something else”, i.e., in the given case a representative of the principle of individualism, an unwilling, and yet irresistible destroyer of the community. Mr. Tikhomirov “thinks in absolutely irreconcilable antitheses”; he cannot understand how one can acknowledge the action of capitalism to be useful and at the same time organise the workers to fight it; how one can defend the principle of collectivism and at the same time see the triumph of progress in the disintegration of one of the concrete manifestations of that principle. As “a man who is consistent and can sacrifice himself” our metaphysician presumes that the only thing to do for the

people who are convinced of the “historical inevitability of Russian capitalism” is to enter the service of the “knights of primitive accumulation”. His reasoning can be taken as a classic example of metaphysical thought. “The worker capable of class “dictatorship hardly exists. Hence he cannot be given political power. Is it not far more advantageous to abandon socialism altogether for a while as a useless and harmful obstacle to the immediate and necessary aim? “ Mr. Tikhomirov does not understand that the worker who is incapable of class dictatorship can become more and more capable of it day after day and year after year, and that the growth of his ability depends to a great extent upon the influence of the people who understand the meaning of historical development. The way our author talks is “yea, yea; nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil”.

“At first sight this mode of thinking seems to us very luminous, because it is that of so-called sound common sense. Only sound common sense, respectable fellow that he is, in the homely realm of his own four walls, has very wonderful adventures directly he ventures out into the wide world of research.” [16*]

We already know what “wonderful adventures” Mr. Tikhomirov’s common sense went through during his peregrinations in the realm of suppositions: very often there was not the slightest trace of it left. But the history of that common sense is in the final account a dialectical history too. It does not exist and does exist at one and the same time. It comes to grief on the reefs of suppositions, and yet, like Rocambole resuscitated, it again appears in all its splendour on the more beaten track of reasoning.

We shall not, of course, forego the opportunity of once more meeting this merry companion. But now we must pause to remember the direction of the road we have already traversed on the initiative of Mr. Tikhomirov.

6. Small Landed Property

We have seen that in the field of processing industry large-scale capitalist production is now developing “without stopping” and that, armed with the power of capital and the might of modern technology, it is increasingly knocking the small producers out of their positions, defeating and subjugating them. We then said that the home market is entirely ready to serve large-scale production and that on the international market, too, by no means all accesses and exits are closed to it. From this we concluded that in this sphere not only the immediate future, but the present too belongs to capitalism. But we recalled that the Narodniks see the village community as an impregnable bulwark against capitalism in our country, where the bulk of the people’s labour still goes to cultivate the land. Then we turned to the community and tried to study its position today. This study brought us to the conclusion that the community is being crushed under the burden of taxes and disintegrating under the influence of money economy and of the inequality which has arisen in it, and that in many places in Russia, far from having its former calling of preserving and defending the interests of all its members without exception, it is being transformed into a community of kulaks, the destruction of which would bring nothing but profit to the village poor whom it has enslaved. Not satisfied with these results, we tried to determine what would be the significance of the reforms upon which our friends of the people rely so much. We came to the conviction that these reforms would only intensify the disintegration which has set in in the village community, and that the latter could not in any case be the bulwark against those conditions of production which have already inflicted upon it so many incurable wounds. It now

remains for us to say a few words on small peasant agriculture and then we shall be in a position to draw our final conclusion about capitalism.

It would be a great mistake to think that what is called the “abolition of large-scale agriculture” will save us from capitalism. First of all this “abolition” can only prove to be a temporary and transient phenomenon, and secondly, even small-scale agriculture strives to adopt a bourgeois character. That very American competition that our big landowners fear will leave its mark on the peasant too. Transforming our corn-growing into production of a corn *commodity* it will subordinate all the tillers of the soil to the implacable laws of commodity production. The result of those implacable laws will be that at a certain stage in its development commodity production will lead to the exploitation of the producer, will give birth to the capitalist employer and the proletarian worker. Thus, the question of small-scale or large-scale agriculture in Russia only boils down to the question of victory for the big or for the small bourgeoisie. The traditional foundations of peasant economy, far from being consolidated by the “abolition of large-scale agriculture”, will suffer much more owing to the complete transposition into the peasantry of all the contradictions of commodity production. And all the sooner will the peasant estate divide into two hostile camps – the exploiting minority and the toiling majority.

7. Conclusion

If, after all we have said, we ask ourselves once more: Will Russia go through the school of capitalism? we shall answer without any hesitation: Why should she not finish the school she has *already entered*?

All the newest, and therefore most influential, trends of social life, all the more remarkable facts in the fields of production and exchange have one meaning which can be neither doubted nor disputed: not only are they clearing the road for capitalism, they themselves are necessary and highly important moments in its development. *Capitalism is favoured* by the whole dynamics of our social life, all the forces that develop with the movement of the social machine and in their turn determine the direction and speed of that movement. *Against capitalism* are only the more or less doubtful interest of a certain portion of the peasantry and also that force of inertia which occasionally is felt so painfully by educated people in every backward, agrarian country. But the peasants are not strong enough to defend their real interests; on the other hand, they are often not interested enough to defend with energy the old principles of communal life. The main stream of Russian capitalism is as yet not great; there are still not many places in Russia where the relations of the hirer of labour to the labourer correspond entirely to the generally current idea of the relations between labour and capital in capitalist society; but towards this stream are converging from all directions such a number of rivers, big and small, of rivulets and streamlets, that the total volume of water flowing towards it is enormous, and there can be no doubt that the stream will grow quickly and vigorously. For it cannot be stopped, and

still less can it be dried up; all that remains possible is to regulate its flow if we do not want it to bring us nothing but harm and if we are not abandoning hope of submitting at least partly the elemental force of nature to the rational activity of man.

But what must we Russian socialists do in this case, we who are accustomed to thinking that our country has some charter of exceptionalism granted to it by history for services which nobody, however, is aware of?

It is not difficult to answer that question.

All laws of social development which are not understood work with the irresistible force and blind harshness of laws of nature. But to discover this or that law of nature or of social development means, firstly, to be able to avoid clashing with it and, consequently, expending one's efforts in vain, and, secondly, to be able to regulate its application in such a manner as to draw profit from it. This general idea applies entirely to the particular case we are interested in. We must utilise the social and economic upheaval which is proceeding in Russia for the benefit of the revolution and the working population. The highly important circumstance that the socialist movement in our country began when capitalism was only in the embryo must not be lost on us. This peculiarity of Russian social development was not invented by the Slavophiles or the pro-Slavophile revolutionaries. It is an indisputable fact which we are all aware of and which will be of great benefit to the cause of our working class on the condition that the Russian socialists do not waste their energy building castles in the air after the style of the principality and *veche* epoch.

Author's Footnotes

24. **Collection of Statistical Reports**, Vol.IV, p.200.
25. **Ibid.**, p.158.
26. [*Note to the 1905 edition.*] I repeat that the fiscal origin of our village community has already been proved.
27. **Communal Land Tenure, the Causes, Course and Consequences of Its Disintegration**, p.27.
28. See **Collection of Material for the Study of the Village community**, published by Free Economic and Russian Geographical Societies, St. Petersburg 1880, pp.257-65.
29. **Report of the Agricultural Commission**, Appendix I, Section I, Chapter 2, *Communal and Allotment Use of the Land*.
30. In Spasskoye Volost, Yuryev Uyezd, Vladimir Gubernia, "if 12 *meras* [11*] of rye per person are sown, six hundred sheaves are harvested and five *meras* are threshed from one hundred sheaves". Such is the average harvest. It varies for peasants of various degrees of prosperity. The "well-to-do peasants" have the best harvest – "ten hundred sheaves per person, and they thresh six *meras per hundred sheaves*." "The land-poor single woman peasants" have the poorest harvests – "200-300 sheaves, each giving 3-4 *meras*." Prugavin, **The Village community, etc.**, p.15.
31. Орлов, «Формы крестьянского землевладения», стр.55. [Orlov, **Form of Peasant Land Tenure**, p.55.]
32. Prugavin, **The Village community**, pp.40-41.
33. **Report of the Agricultural Commission**, Appendix I, Section I, Chapter 2, *Conditions of Peasant Agriculture*.
34. **Collection of Material for the Study of the Village community**, pp.161
35. **Report**, *Conditions of Peasant Agriculture*.
36. **Report of the Agricultural Commission**, Appendix I, Section II, p. 178.
37. See his article *Redemption as the Destroyer of the Village Community*, **Delo** No.11, 1881.
38. See the **Collection** quoted above, article by Mr. P. Zinovyev, p.308.
39. Prugavin, **The Village community**, p.19.
40. **Ibid.**, p.48.
41. **Report of the Agricultural Commission**, Section II.

42. Orlov, **Forms of Peasant Land Tenure in Moscow Gubernia**.
43. V.V., **The Destinies of Capitalism**, p.136.
44. *What Can We Expect from the Revolution?*, pp.228 and 236, **Vestnik Narodnoi Voli** No.2.

Notes

9*. At the end of the second volume of his poem *Dead Souls*, Gogol gave a symbolical figure of Russia in the form of a troika rushing forward while “other peoples and states give way to it”.

10*. *Sazhen* – an old Russian measure of length = 2.25 yds.

11*. *Mera* – an old Russian measure of weight = 144 lbs.

12*. This is apparently a mistake. On page 40 of Prugavin’s book, from where the quotation is taken, the following *volosts* of Yuryev *Uyezd* are mentioned: Spasskoye, Esiplevo, Davydovo, Petrovskoye, Gorkino and Simskaya.

13*. *Redemption* – a step taken by the tsarist government after the abolition of serfdom. The Reform of 1861 provided that the temporarily-bound peasants were to redeem their allotments. On concluding the redemption deal, the temporarily-bound peasants became property owners and were freed from former obligatory services to their landlords.

14*. *Gostomysl* – first prince or *posadnik* of Novgorod according to some of the later chronicles.

15*. F. Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, Moscow 1959, *Introduction*, p.34.

16*. F. Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, Moscow 1959, p.31.

Chapter IV

Capitalism and Our Tasks

1. Character of the Impending Revolution

What was said at the end of the last chapter needs to be explained. The least ambiguous views are erroneously interpreted when the purpose of the interpretation is to defend somebody's "programme". We must dot our *i*'s, because if our opponents do not see the dots they may by "misunderstanding" take the *i*'s for some other letter. It is always better to draw the conclusions from one's premises oneself than to rely on the good will of others. Besides, Russian programmatic questions have been adapted so exclusively to our "exceptionalism" that it cannot be considered as a waste of time to examine them from the standpoint from which *exceptionalism* appears as nothing else but Slavophilism, either "devoted without flattery" [1*] or rebellious and going over to the revolutionary camp. Whether that standpoint is correct or not, whether they who adhere to it argue rightly or wrongly, there can be no doubt, at any rate, that it would be unjust to reproach them with repeating "theories" with which everybody has long been acquainted and many have been bored.

What, then, must a "certain section of the socialists" do once they are convinced of the "historical inevitability of Russian capitalism"? What real profit for the cause of the Russian

working class can be drawn from the circumstance that the beginning of the socialist movement in our country almost coincided with the fall of the economic system of the good old times? Those are questions which we are bound to answer.

We shall not forget that obligation. But for the time being it is not our turn to speak, but, as you will remember, Mr. Tikhomirov's, and he must make use of it in accordance with all laws, both divine and human. We have acquainted ourselves fairly briefly and with great profit with the general principles of his philosophical-historical and socio-political theory. In order to enlighten those who do not understand and to beat "dissenters" Mr. Tikhomirov paraded before us old woman history with her "unbelievable roads", Western Europe with its capitalism, and finally Mother Russia with her Chinese immobility and her land community. He made both the past and the present clear for us. But can we content ourselves with that? Will we refuse to look into the future?

What does that future hold out for Russia?

It seemed to us that first and foremost it held out the triumph of the bourgeoisie and the beginning of the political and economic emancipation of the working class. This outcome seemed to us to be the most probable in view of many, many facts. We investigated the present condition of our national economy and came to the conclusion that no reforms whatsoever would save its ancient foundations. But in so reasoning we were forgetting that "at times the history of humanity proceeds by the most unbelievable roads". Mr. Tikhomirov firmly recalls that basic proposition in his philosophical-historical theory, and, therefore, in his excursions into the realm of the future, he is not embarrassed by the incredibility of the picture he draws. Let

us follow him and see whether Narodnaya Volya's revolution will not be more effective than Narodnik reforms.

The first thing that awaits us on our road is very pleasant news. A revolution is impending in Russia, "we are going towards a catastrophe". That is very pleasant, although, to tell the truth, one experiences a feeling of fear when Mr. Tikhomirov begins to explain the meaning of this already menacing picture in the highflown style of old Derzhavin. The government's attempts to retard the revolutionary movement in the country are "only hastening the dawn of the terrible and solemn moment when Russia will enter at high speed" (!) "into the period of revolutionary destruction like a rushing river", etc. Mr. Tikhomirov writes splendidly! But you cannot feed a nightingale with fables, even if they are written by grandfather Krylov. There is no arguing: "the period of revolutionary destruction" would be a happy period in the history of our country, but we should like to know all the same what the revolution can bring Russia, "what awaits us beyond that mysterious line where the waves of the historic stream seethe and foam".

"The foundation of the socialist organisation," Mr. Tikhomirov answers, contrary to the opinion of "some" who presume that it is the "reign of capitalism" that awaits us.

How can one fathom the whims of fortune! Yes, history is really an incredible old woman! It was she who led the "West" through the incredible experience of her "roads", and yet she has still not freed it from capitalist production; as for us, she has left us in peace, without urging us on for whole centuries, and now she wants to move us straight up to the highest class in her school. What virtues is that a reward for? Perhaps for having sat quiet all that time and not having importuned her with those indiscreet questions at which the "free-tongued" West is such a master?

However, we are beginning to fall into impermissible “freedom of tongue” ourselves. Our scepticism is completely out of place if we consider that history loves occasionally to follow improbable roads just as Khlestakov sometimes loved to “read something amusing”. *Credo, quia absurdum*. [2*]

Acknowledging as entirely probable the most improbable caprices of the whimsical old woman, we nevertheless permit ourselves a question: What has history at its disposal to fulfil the promise made by Mr. Tikhomirov in its name? Through which countries does the road leading us to the “foundation of socialist organisation” lie?

How will our author answer that question? What will **Vestnik**, whose editor he is, say?

We ask our readers not to forget that the programme of **Vestnik Narodnoi Voli** “embraces elements which are to a certain extent not identical with one another”. Each of these elements defends its own existence, each aspires to live and develop, not always without damage to its antagonist. Hence the contradictions and the impossibility of forming a clear idea of this journal’s programme. One thing is obvious: Mr. Tikhomirov does not consider himself bound either by what his co-editor says, or even by what he says himself in cases when the solo gives place to a duet and the honourable P.L. Lavrov joins his voice to Mr. Tikhomirov’s. For instance, according to what Mr. Lavrov says, the Narodnaya Volya party “directs *all its energies*” [1] (our italics) “against the chief enemy who hinders any at all rational approach to the fulfilment of the task” [3*] formulated by one of the members of our group [2] as follows: “to help our working class to develop into a conscious social force, to make up to some extent for the gaps in its historical experience and to fight with it for the emancipation of the entire working population of Russia”. If the reality corresponds to what the honourable author of **Historical Letters** says, the actual

task of the Narodnaya Volya party boils down to clearing the way for Russian Social-Democracy of the future. At the same time, that party's role seems to be entirely negative. It prepares no elements for the organisation of the Russian workers' party, but "directs *all its energies against the chief enemy*" who hinders not only the solution but even an approach to the solution of such a question. Which enemy does Mr. Lavrov mean? Everybody will agree that the only such enemy at present can be absolutism, which fetters all the vital forces in Russia; all the more should Narodovoltsi admit this as they have repeatedly expressed in the press the thought that in our country it is not the political structure that is based on a definite kind of economic relations but on the contrary the latter are indebted to absolutism for their existence. But if that is the case, then the Narodnaya Volya party is fighting for no more and no less than the political emancipation of its country, and the "foundation of the socialist organisation of Russia" is naturally put off until such times as the Russian working class forms at last into a conscious social force. In other words, the Narodnaya Volya party is first of all, and mainly, if not solely, a *constitutional* party because it now "directs all its energies" towards the destruction of absolutism. Does it not seem so? Or perhaps the Narodnaya Volya party is not noted for any "partiality for a constitution"? But then how are we to understand activity which boils down to the struggle against absolutism for the "possible implementation" of the social-democratic tasks in the future? Some Narodnaya Volya writers are not indeed noted for a great partiality for the word *constitution*. they assert that their party strives for "government by the people". But the difference between government by the people and a democratic constitution is just as great as that between galoshes and rubber shoes – it is no more than the replacement of the awkward Russian word by the current foreign one. And besides, in every

civilised society, democracy, or, if you like, government by the people, presupposes a certain political education in the people, unless, of course, “government by the people” means government by a group of persons who speculate on the *will of the people*. It means that a democratic constitution is an aim which is not yet so near and can be attained only by rallying the class of producers in a democratic party of its own. But in Russia the “chief enemy” hinders even “any at all rational approach” to the fulfilment of the social and political tasks of the working class. So down with the “enemy”! Long live “partiality” for political freedom, and consequently for a constitution! The activity of the Narodnaya Volya party thus acquires a clear and definite meaning.

Such are the logical conclusions we come to when we read P.L. Lavrov’s bibliographical note. Everything here is clear, although perhaps not everything attracts the sympathy of this or that reader. Unfortunately bibliographical notes are not enough to make clear the trend of a “social-political” journal, and the only reason we here refer to Mr. Lavrov’s note is that it contains a direct answer to our group. The leading articles themselves and the outright statements by the editorial board of **Vestnik** only confuse the question of the actual trend of the paper. Take the *Announcement* of its publication and read the lines on the method of achieving the general aims of socialism and you will think you are dealing with “convinced” Social-Democrats. “These aims, which are common to all socialists,” say Messrs, the Editors, “can be attained *only in one way*” (note, reader!): “the working class – in town and country – must *gradually rally and organise* into a social force united by common interests and striving for common aims; this force must, in the process of rallying, *gradually undermine* the existing economic and political system, consolidating its own

organisation as a result of its very struggle and growing in might until it finally succeeds in overthrowing the existing system.” The authors of the *Announcement* even add that “socialist-revolutionaries in *all countries* are at one in their awareness of the necessity of this way”. One could think in view of this that “Russian socialism as expressed in the Narodnaya Volya party” is neither more nor less than Russian Social-Democracy. The *Announcement* obviously explains the tasks of the Narodnaya Volya party still more clearly than P.L. Lavrov’s bibliographical note did and comes even closer than the latter to the views of “thinking socialists” in all civilised countries. We know, however, that Russians often have two measures, two criteria, to appraise social phenomena – one for the “West” and another for domestic use. Never refusing to sympathise with the most progressive ideals of “Europe”, the Russian often contrives to add to his profession of human faith a “but” so full of meaning that the ideals that are so dear to him are transformed into something quite unrecognisable. Needless to say, the *Announcement* which now claims our attention does not dispense with such a “but”, and nothing definite can be said about **Vestnik**’s programme until it completes its difficult passage from West to East. Let us look at the *Announcement* from this dangerous side, and rather more attentively too, for its authors are Russians and probably nothing that is Russian is alien to them. “But the programme of Russian socialism,” we read on the same page V of the *Announcement*, “cannot limit itself to these general aspirations of socialism at *present* and in the *given* conditions. History has set before every social group in our time these same tasks in a different form, according to the economic, juridical and cultural conditions surrounding it. The Narodnaya Volya party is convinced that these tasks are now inevitably set before the subjects of the Russian Empire in the form of the *necessity of changing the*

political structure of Russia to make possible the further healthy development of every progressive party, *including* (our italics) “the socialist party” ... That is why “side by side with socialist aims, which form the essence of the Russian socialist party’s programme, this programme includes an immediate task – to prepare for and hasten a change in Russia’s political structure”.

It must be admitted that this first “but” accompanying the setting forth of the “general socialist aims of the Russian socialist party” is enough to make them particularly vague and indefinite. A real equation with many unknowns! The reader is left completely in the dark as to what the editors understand by “a change in Russia’s political structure”. Is it the “government by the people” mentioned by Messrs. Tikhomirov and K.T. [5*] or the overthrow of the “chief enemy”, etc., i.e., simply the fall of absolutism? And why does this “immediate task” stand “*side by side* with the general socialist aims” and not follow from them by way of logical consequence? We can only guess at all this. Many of our guesses will be probable, but not one will be indisputable. And in fact, the editors say that the “change” that is desirable to them must make “possible the further healthy development of every progressive party, including the socialist party”. Which, then, are the *other* “progressive parties”? Apparently the bourgeois ones. But the “healthy development” of the bourgeois parties in the field of politics is unthinkable without a corresponding “further healthy development” in the economic field. Does that mean that bourgeois development will be progressive for Russia? That is what apparently follows from the editors’ works. As for us, we are prepared, with some, very substantial, it is true, reservations, to agree with that opinion. However, it is not a question of us but of one of the authors of the *Announcement*, Mr. Tikhomirov, who, as we know,

recommends that his readers should “not idolise private business capital”. From what he says about what exactly “such capital will be able to do for Russia” it follows that the “further healthy development” of the bourgeois parties will perhaps be a net loss for Russia. And besides, the *Announcement* hastens to state that the socialist party (like all the other parties, we will note in passing) considers itself to be the “representative of pure and the only possible progress”. Does that mean that there are no other progressive parties? But then why speak of their “further healthy development”?

If, in the opinion of the Russian socialist party, the “change in Russia’s political structure” must take place in the interests of the progressive parties, and if, at the same time, there are no other progressive parties but the socialist party, the “change” referred to will take place exclusively in the interests of the latter. In other works, the impending revolution must lead at least to the victory of the “government by the people” mentioned above, i.e., to the political domination of the “working class in town and country”. But “socialist-revolutionaries in all countries are at one in their awareness” of the truth that the working class can only “gradually undermine the existing economic and *political* system”, and, therefore, also “gradually” bring nearer the time of its domination. In exactly the same way, “socialist-revolutionaries in all countries” agree, as the editors say, that the socialist revolution can be attained “only in one way” – by gradually rallying and organising the working class into a “social force”, etc. Perhaps **Vestnik Narodnoi Voli** sees such organisation as the chief task of the Russian socialists? But we already know that in present-day Russia, according to Mr. Lavrov, there is a certain “chief enemy” who hinders “any at all rational approach to the fulfilment of such a task”. And as long as this task is not

fulfilled, the socialist revolution is impossible – and so is government by the people. So this is not what the editors mean when they speak of a “change in Russia’s political structure”? But what do they mean, then, by this mysterious change? Not that same constitution “partiality” for which is “somewhat incomprehensible” to Mr. Tikhomirov? For which progressive parties is the Narodnaya Volya party making “possible the further healthy development”? Not the party of “private business capital”?

How clear everything was in the “West”, and how dark everything has become in the East! And all this darkening is due to a single “but” accompanying the setting forth of the “general aims of socialism”. What a mysterious power does that small work have?

The matter is quite simple.

It is precisely from the point we are interested in that the process begins thanks to which the component elements of **Vestnik**’s programme prove to be “to a certain” (even rather significant) “extent not identical with one another”. The East enters into a struggle with the West as soon as the setting forth of the “general aims of socialism” and the *only* way leading to their fulfilment is ended. And this struggle, smouldering and hidden at the beginning, rages in full fury in the article *What Can We Expect from the Revolution?* In it “doubts are expressed” over the West. On the occasion of its history Mr. Tikhomirov goes into long and rather “hazardous” arguments on the “hazardous” and “unbelievable roads” of history in general, and finally *the only* way to the victory of socialism which the *Announcement* points out is transformed into a stereotyped edition of the late **Nabat**’s programme merely supplemented with a few illustrations of Mr. Tikhomirov’s exceptionalism. Everything is changed beyond recognition, everything is transformed into its opposite on this side of the

small “but” which separates the western territory of the editorial world outlook from the eastern or, to be more exact, the views in communal ownership by Messrs, the Editors from those which are Mr. Tikhomirov’s private property. And all this transsubstantiation is effected by means of a few more “buts” picked out of articles by P.N. Tkachov. Needless to say, an argument which is not convincing on the lips of *Nabat*’s editor will not become any more convincing on the pages of *Vestnik Narodnoi Voli*. But it is always pleasant to meet old acquaintances, and if only for that reason we could not resist the temptation to draw the reader’s attention to Mr. Tikhomirov’s arguments.

Like a true follower of Blanqui, or rather of Tkachov, when Mr. Tikhomirov sets out to discuss some revolutionary question he first of all tries to substitute his own will for historical development, to replace the initiative of the *class* by that of a *committee* and to change the cause of the whole working population of the country into the cause of a secret organisation. It is not easy to perform such tricks before the eyes of people at all acquainted with the propaganda of modern socialism or even only half convinced that “the emancipation of the workers must be conquered by the workers themselves”. That is why our author tries to prove that the cause of the Executive Committee will be the cause of the whole people, not only as *interests* go but also as far as *will* and *consciousness* are concerned. Forced to admit that *historical development* has so far but little promoted the elaboration of socialist consciousness and *revolutionary* (not merely *rebellious*) tendencies in the Russian people, he endeavours with all the more zeal to convince us of the stability and unshakability of the *prehistoric forms* of the Russian way of life and outlook.

The economic revolution which the West is approaching after a long and difficult movement proves to be very close to

us because of our centuries of stagnation. But as a certain knowledge of history can arouse doubts about that closeness, the reader is reminded that the ways of history “have sometimes been too crooked and the most hazardous that could be imagined”. The peculiarity of our Bakuninists’ favourite scheme of Russian social development thus becomes a manner of guarantee for its probability. And in a similar way, the necessity of giving a *class character* to the struggle for the economic emancipation of the workers is also avoided.

Here too, all difficulties are successfully overcome by contrasting Russia to the West. In the West, there are classes which are sharply divided economically, and powerful and united politically. There the state itself is the result of the class struggle and its weapon in the hands of the victors. That is why the only way in which it is possible to win state power there is to oppose one class to another and to vanquish the victors. In our country it is different. Here the attitude of society to the state is the direct opposite of what it is in Western Europe. Here it is not the class struggle that gives rise to the given state structure, but, on the contrary, that structure itself brings into existence the different classes with their struggle and antagonism. If the state decided to change its policy, the upper classes, deprived of its support, would be condemned to perish, and the popular foundations of primitive collectivism would be given the possibility of “further healthy development”. But the government of the Romanovs is neither willing nor able to renounce its landlord-bourgeois traditions, whereas we are both willing and able to do so, being inspired by the ideals of economic equality and “government by the people”. So down with the Romanovs and long live our *Committees* is the invariable line of argument of the Russian Jacobins, whether in the original, i.e., in the *Letter to Frederick Engels*, or in the

“copy”, i.e., in the article *What Can We Expect from the Revolution?*

We have already said that the basic premises of Tkachov’s programme are borrowed from the same source that the Russian anarchists derived their political wisdom from. Bakuninist theories lay at the basis of both groups’ teachings. But we know that Bakunin’s influence did not end there. He had pupils in the “West” too, i.e., in the very countries which he so readily contrasted with Russia. And it is remarkable that the Western followers of the author of *Statehood and Anarchy* attribute to the state the same overwhelming role in the history of the relations of their “West European” classes as Messrs. Tkachov and Tikhomirov ascribe to it in Russia alone, “as distinct”, so to speak, from other countries. “Suppress government dictatorship”, says Arthur Arnould to the French workers, “and there will be facing one another only men of the same kind, only economic forces whose balance would be immediately established by a simple law of statics ... It is, therefore, the state, and the state alone, that is the cause of your weakness and your misery, just as it is the cause of the strength and the impertinent presumption of the others.” [3] In this case the Western anarchists reason with greater courage and logic than the Russian Bakuninists and Tkachovists. In the history of every country without exception they reduce to nil the significance of the economic factor which their Russian “partners” hold to be condemned to inactivity only in Russia. The distinctive feature of Russian exceptionalism is thus turned into a cosmopolitan spectre of anarchist ignorance. The objective condition for the development of one country proves to be a subjective defect, a logical blunder of “a certain section of the socialists” in all civilised peoples.

Losing, as a result of this, a considerable portion of their exceptionalism, the arguments of the Russian Jacobins are not, however, lacking in a certain instructiveness. Not saying anything new about *how we must* consider our reality, they show perfectly well by their own example *how we must not* consider it, *how we must not* interpret its characteristic aspects.

In the Russian Jacobins' usual way Mr. Tikhomirov tries to prove to his readers that, as Tkachov once put it, "the time we are passing through is particularly favourable for the social revolution". He analyses the present-day balance of all the social forces under conditions prevailing in Russia and comes to the conclusion that nothing can come of the impending revolution but "the foundation of the socialist organisation of Russia". He did not need to go far for proofs. The *Letter to Frederick Engels* is a concentrate of Russian Jacobin arguments which has preserved for a whole decade all the charm of freshness and novelty for many, many readers. This concentrate has only to be dissolved in hot water of eloquence and it gives forth all the "expectations from the revolution" typical of Mr. Tikhomirov. Let us take a closer look at this simplified way of preparing a "new" programme. We shall start with the political "factor".

What do we find in the Tkachov preserves on this point?

The reader will naturally remember the extensive excerpts made above from the *Open Letter to Frederick Engels*. He will not have forgotten Tkachov's conviction that although "we have no urban proletariat, but, on the other hand, we have no bourgeoisie at all. Between the suffering people and the state which oppresses them we have no intermediate estate." And it is this absence of a bourgeoisie that Mr. Tikhomirov takes as the foundation of all his political arguments.

According to him our bourgeoisie is negligible economically and powerless politically. As for the people, they have “certain points on which they cannot be divided into groups but, on the contrary, always appear unanimous” (p.251). The first of these points turns out to be their “idea of the supreme power”. The fact is that the “supreme power in the view of the people is the representative of the whole people, certainly not of classes. Only the unshatterable firmness of this conviction provided support for the power of the tsars themselves.” And it is this conviction that our supreme power represents the whole people that strengthens Mr. Tikhomirov’s faith in the not distant triumph of government by the people. The transition to the latter from the autocracy of the tsars “is nothing original [?]. The French people went in exactly the same way without any difficulty [?!] from the idea of the autocracy of a king who could say ‘*l’etat c’est moi*’ to the idea of the *peuple souverain*. The domination of the self-governing people could not be set up in fact there because of the power of the bourgeoisie”; but we have no bourgeoisie and therefore nothing prevents the triumph of government by the people in our country “provided the autocracy does not maintain itself long enough to give the bourgeoisie time to acquire the strength necessary to organise our entire production on capitalist principles”. But “in its present chaotic condition Russia can hardly wait until the bourgeoisie becomes so constituted that it can put any order, even bourgeois, in that chaos” ... Therefore, “if we live to see the destruction of the present system before this, the bourgeoisie has none of the requisites for seizing political power”.

Hence we see that the “time we are passing through” is indeed very favourable for the social revolution; on the one hand, “Russia can hardly wait”, and, on the other, there is absolutely nobody but the people, and perhaps the

revolutionary party, who can seize power. P.N. Tkachov was perfectly right when he said that the social revolution would be “now, or in a very remote future, perhaps never”. But in that case P.L. Lavrov was wrong when he qualified this assurance as speculation on the ignorance of Russian readers.

We also see that on the question of the “political factor” it did not cost Mr. Tikhomirov much trouble to warm up Tkachov’s arguments. He only had to complete P.N. Tkachov’s general arguments on the power of the Western and the powerlessness of the Russian bourgeoisie with a particular example. This example was provided for him by the great revolution thanks to which, in all probability, the French people would have become self-governing had they not been prevented by the power of the bourgeoisie.

“Happy are those who have an *absolute principle*,” said N.G. Chernyshevsky. “They need neither to observe facts nor to think, they have a ready-made medicine for every disease, and the same medicine for every one, like the famous doctor who said to every patient: *purgare et clystirizare* ... Many people have such talisman For the ‘man of importance’ to whom Akaky Akakiyevich [6*] applied about the theft of his overcoat, the talisman was a ‘good scolding’. For the economists of the backward school that talisman is the charming motto: ‘*non-intervention of the state*’.” Finally, we shall add on our part, for the “Russian socialists” of a no less backward school the talisman is the “ bourgeoisie”. References to the weakness or complete absence of the bourgeoisie give the answer to all the most difficult questions of the past, present and future. Mr. Tikhomirov is not the last among the happy possessors of this philosophic stone. Why was not “ government by the people” set up in France? Because it was prevented by the “power of the bourgeoisie”. Why will it be set up in our country when the

people “become disappointed in the autocracy of the tsars”? Because our bourgeoisie is weak. Why is it that in the West the only way of putting into effect the “aims common to all socialists” is the slow and gradual road of organising the working class in town and country into a “conscious social force”, whereas in our country “it is sometimes said” that the “seizure of power by the revolutionaries” may provide the “starting-point of the revolution”, which, in turn, will be the starting-point of the “socialist organisation of Russia”? Once again because in our country the bourgeoisie is very weak and in the West it is very strong. *Purgare et clystirizare* – how the theory of medicine is simplified, how easy practice is made by this talisman! Unfortunately social questions are a little more complicated than those of medicine, and, therefore, publicists who resemble Molière’s physician should have provided themselves with more ingenious talismans. You can bet that the key which the “Russian socialists” have will not open for them the door of many historical questions. Why did not the Spanish people, when they became disappointed in the “autocracy of the emperors” pass “without difficulty” to the idea of self-government of the people? It is true that Spain is one of the most “Western” countries in Europe; but even Mr. Tikhomirov would not dare to attribute great strength to the Spanish bourgeoisie, particularly at the beginning of the present century. And what is more, even the “principles of communal land tenure” were, and still are, far more widespread in Spain than in any other heretical land, as is proved by the recent investigations of Mr. Luchitsky. [7*] Try as you like, but you will not open this door with Mr. Tikhomirov’s key!

We take the liberty of coming to the help of the “Russian socialists” in these difficult circumstances. If two heads are better than one, we are just as much entitled to say that two

talismans are also better than one, even if it is a good one. Why, then, not add to the “bourgeoisie” another no less magic word, for instance Catholicism, protestantism or non-orthodox confession generally. It is true this talisman is not new and has been rather worn out by the conservative Slavophiles, all the same, it is hardly less universal than the “bourgeoisie”. For it is still very doubtful, whether it is true that there is no bourgeoisie in our country, and if there is, whether it is “weaker” than the bourgeoisie in all the Western countries and in all the times of “disappointment of the people in the autocracy of the tsars”; but orthodoxy is beyond doubt a “truly and strongly Russian” feature, quite alien to the European West. It should be easy to decide by means of orthodoxy what hindered the “setting up in fact of the domination of the self-governing people” in Spain in the twenties, although there was no strong bourgeoisie there. It would be sufficient to point to catholicism. Really, you should try, gentlemen!

However, far be it from us to think of belittling the importance of Mr. Tikhomirov’s talisman; not only do we know its worth, we even want to try and apply it ourselves. Why do “thinking” socialists in the West know what they are talking about and not carry Mr. Tikhomirov’s confusion into the questions they analyse? Is it not because the bourgeoisie in the West is stronger than ours? It seems very much so! Where the bourgeoisie is strong the economic development of the country is great and all social relations are clear and well defined. And where social relations are clear there is no room for fantastic solutions of political questions; that is why in the “West” only people who are hopeless from the intellectual point of view are characterised by the “anarchy of thinking” which is often a feature even of the “convinced and thinking socialists” in Russia. So if Mr. Tikhomirov writes bad publicistic articles it is not he but the weakness of

our bourgeoisie that is to blame. The reader will see that our author's favourite little key occasionally opens very complicated little caskets.

Although Mr. Tikhomirov's arguments have no "originality" about them, they are amazing none the less for their "hazardous" character. Where did he get the conclusion that supreme power, in the idea of the people, is "*representation*". So far we have had the impression that the present "idea of the people of the supreme power" is explained by the fact that the people have no idea at all about representation. The subjects of the Shah of Persia, the Khedive of Egypt or the Emperor of China have absurd prejudices about supreme power in their countries similar to those of the Russian peasants. Does it follow from this that the Persians, Egyptians and Chinese will pass with the same ease to the "idea of the *peuple souverain*"? If so, the farther eastward we go the closer we get to the triumph of government by the people. Further, why does Mr. Tikhomirov think that "having become disappointed in the autocracy of the tsars" our people cannot be anything but supporters of their own autocracy? Did an erroneous conception of the substance of absolutism ever guarantee any individual or whole people against erroneous conceptions of the substance of a limited monarchy or a bourgeois republic? "The millions of the people," Mr. Tikhomirov says, "will rise like one man against the class state if only that character becomes at all noticeable." But the fact of the matter is precisely that the people's awareness of the shortcomings of the present is not enough to supply the correct conception of the future. Was not the absolute monarchy a "class state" in our country just as everywhere else? Even Mr. Tikhomirov admits in our history "the existence of the nobility *as the real ruling estate*" at least since the *Ukase o Volnosti*. [8*] And did not the people give

precisely the influence and even a direct conspiracy of the nobles and officials as an explanation of all our legislation's decrees which were unfavourable to the people and all the measures of tyranny and oppression taken by the administration? That being the case, the class character of our monarchy was very noticeable. We think that the protest against the class state is conspicuous in the whole of our history. It is true that "millions rose" against it, although, unfortunately, far from "like one man" as Mr. Tikhomirov prophesies in regard to the future. But what came of those protests? Did they abolish the "class state" or lead the people to the conviction that the existing "supreme power" did not correspond to their political ideals? If not, what guarantee have we against the continuation of such a sad history under constitutional monarchy too? The people's disappointment in the "autocracy of the tsars"? But what will that save the people from? What will it prevent? For the weak side of the people's political outlook consists, Mr. Tikhomirov says, in the conclusions, not the premises. If we are to believe our author, the Russian people know quite well what the supreme power *should be*; they demand that it be "representative of the whole people" and get confused only in cases when they have to determine whether a given form of state conforms to their ideals. After noticing one error they can fall into another no less unfortunate or gross. They may not know under what conditions their own supreme rights will cease to be vain and hypocritical works, a mask hiding the political domination of the upper classes. Does Mr. Tikhomirov admit that the Russian people *can* really not know those conditions? For our part, we shall have no hesitation in answering that question in the affirmative: not only is it possible, it is even probable that they do not know. And if they do not know, they will make mistakes; and if they make mistakes – and inasmuch as they make mistakes – the ideals Mr. Tikhomirov attributes to them will not be put into

effect, i.e., the people will not become self-governing. Mr. Tikhomirov thinks that such political failures by the people are possible only in the “West”, but are unthinkable in his beloved East, in countries which the care of history has saved from the ulcer of capitalism. It would be reasonable and consoling if the people’s political notions were not so closely connected with their economic development. Unfortunately, there is not the slightest doubt about that connection and the people are disappointed in the “autocracy of the tsars” only when the economic relations lose their primitive character and become more or less bourgeois; but simultaneously with this the bourgeoisie begins to gain strength, i.e., the immediate transition to self-government of the people becomes impossible. It is true that Mr. Tikhomirov consoles us with considerations about Russia’s exceptional development. But firstly, no historical peculiarities of our country will free it from the action of universal social laws, and secondly, we already know that the economic reality in present-day Russia by no means corroborates the political paradoxes of the editor of *Vestnik Narodnoi Voli*. The people’s disappointment in the autocracy of the tsars is only beginning to appear *probable*, while the growing disintegration of the village community and the penetration of bourgeois principles into the people’s life is already an indubitable and indisputable fact. What if such a parallel is maintained in the future? By the time the people break completely with tsarism the bourgeoisie may have become almighty. Where shall we then get “government by the people” from?

We would draw Mr. Tikhomirov’s attention to the fact that we oppose self-government of the people to the supremacy of the bourgeoisie only because he himself found it convenient to do so. In substance, however, we think that such opposition can have a meaning only in exceptional

cases. Political self-government of the people does not in any way guarantee them against economic enslavement and does not preclude the possibility of capitalism developing in the country. The canton of Zurich is one of the most democratic and at the same time one of the most bourgeois in Switzerland. A democratic constitution becomes an instrument for the social emancipation of the people only when the natural course of the development of economic relationships makes it impossible for the upper classes to continue to dominate. Thus, in the advanced countries production is becoming more and more collectivised, whereas the private appropriation of its products by employers gives rise to a whole series of morbid convulsions in the entire social and economic organism. The people are beginning to understand the cause of these convulsions and therefore will in all probability sooner or later make use of political power for their economic emancipation. But let us imagine another phase in social development; let us picture to ourselves a country in which large-scale industry is as yet only aspiring to supremacy while commodity production has already become the basis of the economy; in other words, let us transport ourselves into a petty-bourgeois country. What economic tasks will face the "self-governing people in that case"? Primarily, and exclusively, the task of guaranteeing the interests of the small individual producers, since that is the class which forms the majority of the people. But following that path you cannot avoid either capitalism or the domination of the big bourgeoisie, for the objective logic of commodity production itself will take care to transform the small individual producers into wage-labourers on the one side and bourgeois employers on the other. When that transformation has taken place, the working class will of course use all political means in a deadly fight against the bourgeoisie. But then the mutual relations of the classes in society will become sharply defined, the working class will

take the place of “the people” and self-government of the people will change into the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Hence it follows that the degree to which a particular people is prepared for true and genuine democracy is determined by the degree of its economic development. Sharply defined economic relations determine no less sharply defined political groupings, the antagonism between labour and capital gives rise to the struggle between the workers’ and the bourgeois parties. And the development of the productive forces brings this struggle closer to its end and guarantees the victory of the proletariat. So it has been and still is in all the “Western” countries.

But Messrs, the Slavophile revolutionaries are not pleased that it should be exactly so with Russia. Just as the Russian peasant does not like written laws and strives to do everything as he wishes, “according to his taste”, so the Russian intellectual is afraid of historical laws and appeals to exceptionalism, to the “subjective method in sociology” and the like, i.e., in substance to the same “taste”. Considered from the standpoint of “taste” history receives a very peculiar colouring. It appears as nothing but a series of intrigues of the wicked against the good, the advent of the “kingdom of God” upon earth being hindered only by the strength of the wicked and the weakness of the good. Needless to say, as a result of their corruption the wicked cannot establish a firm and lasting alliance among themselves. They fight not only against the good, but among themselves too, forming groups and factions and wrenching the “helm of government” from one another. This internecine war in the camp of the wicked is, of course, all to the profit of the good, for whom the “time” when one group of the wicked is no longer strong enough to retain power, while the others are not yet strong enough to seize it, is especially favourable. Then happiness becomes possible and

close, and only slight efforts on the part of the good are needed to establish at least “government by the people”. Kind and sensitive in substance, “Russian socialism as expressed” in the articles of P.N. Tkachov and Mr. Tikhomirov likes to flatter itself with the hope that at the “time we are passing through” Russia is precisely in this period of interregnum of the wicked and the vicious, of the exhaustion of absolutism and the powerlessness of the bourgeoisie.

We went to no small pains in the foregoing pages to destroy this naively optimistic aspect of the Russian revolutionary outlook. But as Mr. Tikhomirov will all the same be inclined to agree with his teacher P.N. Tkachov more than with us, his political opponents, we oppose to the authority of the editor of *Nabat* that of a colleague of our author on the editorial board of *Vestnik Narodnoi Voli*. Mr. Lavrov will probably not refuse to stand by the thoughts expressed in the leading article of *Vperyod* No.27. The author of this splendid article maintains that “in Russia the capitalist system is growing luxuriantly and rapidly with all its consequences”; that “this is not denied by the champions of the present system any more than by its opponents”, and finally that the socialists see in these phenomena but a “fatal process for which there is only one cure: *the development of the capitalist system itself must give rise to* and prepare for the upheaval that will sweep that system away”. Mr. Lavrov is completely justified in asking Mr. Tikhomirov where Russian capitalism and the Russian bourgeoisie, which certainly existed during the time of the London *Fortnightly Review*, have disappeared. And if he manages to convince his colleague that capitalism is not a needle and that it could not have got lost in the bustle of Russian life, Mr. Tikhomirov himself will see from which side danger threatens Russian “government by the people”, which was

supposed to succeed directly tsarist autocracy. Where “the capitalist system develops luxuriantly and rapidly with all its consequences” the bourgeoisie can always be strong enough to prevent – as was the case in France, according to Mr. Tikhomirov – the actual establishment of the “domination of the self-governing people”.

If the author of the article we quoted from No.27 of *Vperyod* was right when he spoke of the rapid development of capitalism in Russia, Mr. Tikhomirov is wrong when he supposes that precisely the present-day economic relations are highly favourable for laying the “foundation of the socialist organisation in our country”. In this case, too, his arguments are nothing but slight variations on themes of Tkachov and Bakunin.

P.N. Tkachov, we know, wrote to Engels: “Our people are ignorant – that is a fact ... But on the other hand, the immense majority of them are imbued with the principles of communal land tenure; they are, if we may put it that way, communist by instinct, by tradition!”

Faithfully echoing Tkachov, Mr. Tikhomirov assures us that “there are enough factors in the people’s concepts and usages for the successful organisation of their forces. The peasant is capable of arranging his self-government, he is capable of taking communal possession of the land and disposing of it in a social manner.” [4] From the fact that communal land tenure exists in Russia the editor of *Nabat* concludes that despite their ignorance our people are far nearer to socialism than the peoples of the West. The editor of *Vestnik Narodnoi Voli* could not bring himself to follow his teacher to such extreme conclusions, but he naturally did not fail to remind his readers that “our peasants are just as clearly conscious of the people’s right to the land and of the social character of this instrument of labour as the European proletarian is conscious of his right

to the factory of the proprietor". With his poor knowledge of the historical philosophy of modern socialism Mr. Tikhomirov cannot for the life of him understand the simple truth that the "European proletarian's consciousness of his right to the factory of the proprietor" is not the only important thing for the socialist revolution. There was a time when the Roman proletarians also had a fairly clear consciousness of "their right" to the latifundia of the rich, the origin of which was the seizure of state lands and the expropriation of the small landowners; but even had they been able to put their right into effect, it would by no means have resulted in socialism. The socialist revolution is prepared and made easier not by this or that mode of *ownership*, but by the development of the productive forces and the *organisation of production*. It is precisely in giving this organisation social character that the historical preparatory significance of capitalism consists, a significance which Mr. Tikhomirov reduces, in the words of Mr. V.V., to the "mechanical union of the workers". Neither P.N. Tkachov, nor Mr. V.V. nor Mr. Tikhomirov, and finally none of the Narodniks or Bakuninists have put themselves out to prove to us that the Russian people just as "clearly understands" the necessity for *the social organisation of production* as the "European proletarian". And yet that is the whole point. Mr. Tikhomirov should remember once and for all that it is not the organisation of production that is determined by juridical standards but juridical standards by the organisation of production. This is vouched for by the whole social history of all peoples, not excluding the least civilised and most exceptionalist. If that is so, and if there is no room for capitalism in Russia, then, when we compare Russia with the West, we must proceed not from the effect, but from the cause, not from the dominant type of land *tenure*, but from the dominant character of land *cultivation*, its organisation and the impending changes

in it, for it is on these changes that the fate of the forms of land tenure themselves depends. Let Mr. Tikhomirov try and prove to us that the same tendency now predominates in our agriculture as in the modern mechanised industry of the capitalist countries, i.e., the tendency to planned organisation within the limits of the state at least. If he succeeds in doing so, the economic aspect of what he expects from the revolution will acquire quite considerable importance. In the opposite event all his economic and political considerations and contrasts boil down to the worn-out method of solving all our social problems, so to speak, by excluding the bourgeoisie; as for the foundation of the “socialist organisation of Russia”, it loses all connection with the “not very distant time” of the “catastrophe” awaiting us and is again postponed to a more or less hazy future.

Have we said enough? If not we shall again resort to the assistance of our dear P.L. Lavrov. “For the overwhelming majority of the Russian people,” says that excellent article in No.27 of *Vperyod*, “the inherited feeling of solidarity of the village community or the *artel* in its different forms is confined to the narrowest limits, beyond which begins the field of rivalry and struggle for existence between starving groups hemmed in on all sides. In this majority the ancient tradition that the land belongs to him who cultivates it, the ancient hatred for immediate exploiters of the people’s labour ... could not grow into awareness of the necessity for economic communism; this majority cannot be clear as to the enormous difference there would be in future society if in a successful popular outbreak the economic upheaval were limited to a *redistribution* of property” (he should have said of the means of production), “and not the unconditional recognition of its social character.” The author of these words correctly supposes that “a redistribution of property, instead of its social character, would inevitably lead to the

elaboration of a new division of the classes, to a new system of exploitation, and consequently to the restoration of bourgeois society in a new form". Indeed, "the right of all the people to the land" is by no means a condition for the social character of the movable means of production, and, therefore, admits of inequality in their distribution and of the exploitation of the poor by the rich. Precisely the disintegrating influence of movable private property led to the decay of the primitive forms of collectivism.

What will the former editor of *Vperyod* say to that? Will he continue to admit the correctness of the argument just advanced, or has he "accomplished" such a "considerable evolution in his socio-political convictions" that he now shares the views of P.N. Tkachov and Mr. Tikhomirov, which are incompatible with that argument?

A straightforward and categorical answer to this question would be of very considerable importance. Indeed, if the people's awareness of their "right to the land" cannot be a sufficiently firm basis on which to lay the "foundation of the socialist organisation of Russia", all Mr. Tikhomirov's practical conclusions lose their entire meaning and significance. If the people are not clearly aware of the most essential conditions for their economic emancipation, that emancipation itself is unthinkable and consequently the seizure of power by the revolutionaries cannot "provide the starting-point" for the anti-bourgeois revolution which Mr. Tikhomirov expects. Which means that we must speak not of "what we can *expect* from the revolution" but of what we must *do* for it, how we must make the people clearly understand the tasks of the revolution; how we must prevent the victory of the bourgeoisie or turn it to the advantage of the people, how we must make sure that the "development of the capitalist system itself will give rise to and prepare for the upheaval that will sweep away that system".

“A certain section of the socialists” advised our “revolutionary youth” to engage in propaganda among the industrial workers. Mr. Tikhomirov availed himself of all the mistakes and all the ignorance of our police statisticians to prove that this advice was not practicable. In his opinion the numbers of the working class in our industrial centres are too small for any social-revolutionary hopes to be founded on that section of our working population. From what he says about this it could be concluded that our author holds the old Narodnik view which ignores the town and exalts the country. But such a guess would be only partly correct. Mr. Tikhomirov does indeed exalt the country but any attentive reader will immediately understand that the country cannot “be better off for such praise”. Indeed, there are various kinds of idealisation and they entail different practical conclusions. The Narodniks of the recent past idealised the people partly in order to incite themselves and all our intelligentsia to revolutionary work among them. Intensify this idealisation one degree more and you will come to the conviction that thanks to their communal tendencies our people need not be influenced by the socialist intelligentsia. In that case the role of the latter becomes purely destructive. It is reduced to the removal of the exterior obstacles which hinder the realisation of the people’s ideals. That is the kind of idealisation of the people we find in Mr. Tikhomirov’s article. “At a revolutionary moment our people will not be split when the basic principle of state power is in question,” our author decides. “In just the same way they will prove to be completely united economically on the land question ... In order to gather the masses as a great force around these two points *no special propaganda is needed* : all that is needed is that the people know what the matter is about.” Reduced to its extreme expression, the idealisation of the people deprives the Narodniks’ work of all meaning and import. But, on the other hand, the significance of the conspiracy

becomes all the greater. The social revolution, the conspirator argues, is delayed because of the influence of the present-day government. Do away with its influence and the necessary result of your destructive work must be “the foundation of the socialist organisation of Russia”. In the political struggle “the power belongs to him who is able at any moment to deploy the greatest quantity of human forces in defence of his own cause”. There is no need to inquire which class those forces proceed from. They “can be obtained at one’s disposal by various means”. One can even “buy one’s fighters or drive them out to defend one by means of economic pressure”. [5] All the more can they be recruited from any classes of society. Success depends only upon skill in directing the forces “obtained” in accordance with the aims of the conspirators. That is why Mr. Tikhomirov “sometimes speaks” of the seizure of power by the revolutionaries as the “starting-point of the revolution”. This conclusion follows logically from all of our author’s premises.

The whole trouble is that Mr. Tikhomirov’s premises cannot stand criticism, that not all is well with the people even as far as the “two main points” are concerned, and that there are also other points ignorance of which can bring the revolutionaries nothing but grave disappointment. And with the premises, the conclusions so dear to Mr. Tikhomirov but so unfavourable for the success of the socialist movement in Russia, naturally fall away. The sentimental haze of false and affected idealisation of the people disappears and reality looms before us with its urgent demands. We see that there is no hope of a successful outcome of the Russian revolutionary movement without “special propaganda” among the people. We come to the conclusion that our revolutionaries cannot be content with Tkachov’s programme and that they would do well to

remember *Vperyod's* programme. But we have still not come to any decision as to the extent to which their break with the traditions of our Blanquism is desirable. In this very difficult case it would be interesting to know for certain the authoritative opinion of Mr. Lavrov.

2. "Seizure of Power"

Incidentally, we can partly guess what his opinion will be. The honourable editor probably does not approve of the circumstance that Mr. Tikhomirov "sometimes speaks of the seizure of power by the revolutionaries as the starting-point of the revolution". P.N. Tkachov was also accustomed to "speak sometimes" of such a seizure of power and thus courted severe censure from Mr. Lavrov. The editor of **Vperyod** even thought it necessary to warn our revolutionary youth against an alliance with *false friends*. "There are revolutionary groups," he wrote, "who say that they wish the good of the people, that they intend to achieve that good by a revolution, but not a popular one." For such groups all the philosophy of the revolution is naturally limited to seizing power. "Others wish the dictatorship to be only temporary, merely in order to disband the army, to *remove* the uppermost section of their opponents and disappear from the stage, leaving the people to decide their own future. Others again dream of handing over this dictatorship, when they have accomplished their business, to a *Zemsky Sobor* consisting of representatives of the people or to local assemblies, and so on and so forth. What is common to all revolutionaries of this kind is a revolution carried out by a minority, with a more or less lasting dictatorship of that minority." In his capacity as editor Mr. Lavrov stated that his journal "would never consider it possible to allow the theory of the revolutionary dictatorship of a minority – the so-called Jacobin dictatorship – being

voiced in it *without objecting*.” The theory mentioned was ostracised for the following fairly valid reasons.

“History has shown, and psychology convinces us, that any unlimited power, any dictatorship, spoils even the best people and that even men of genius who wished to confer blessings on the people by means of decrees could not do so. Every dictatorship must surround itself with coercive force, blindly obedient tools; every dictatorship has had to suppress by force not only reactionaries, but also people who simply did not agree with its methods; every dictatorship seized by force has had to spend more time, efforts and energy fighting its rivals for power than carrying out its programme by means of that power. *But dreams of the termination of a dictatorship seized violently by any party*” (i.e., a dictatorship serving only as “the starting-point of the revolution”, you mean, do you not, dear Editor?) “*can be entertained only before the seizure; in the parties’ struggle for power, in the agitation of overt and covert intrigues, every minute brings new necessity for maintaining power and reveals new impossibility of abandoning it. The dictatorship can be wrenched from the hands of the dictators only by a new revolution ...*” “Does our revolutionary youth indeed agree to be the base of the throne of a few dictators who, even *with most selfless intentions, can be only new sources of social calamities*, and who, most probably, will not even be selfless fanatics, but men of passionate ambition thirsting for power for power’s sake, craving for power for themselves? ...”

“If, indeed, a section of our youth favour a dictatorship, the seizure of power by a minority,” the honourable editor continues, “*Vperyod* will never be the organ of *that* section ... let the Russian Jacobins fight the government, we will not hinder them, but the party of the popular social revolution will always become their enemy, directly one of them reaches out for power, which belongs to the people and nobody else.” [6]

P.L. Lavrov's prophecy was fulfilled to the letter. The journal **Vperyod** "was never" the organ of the Russian Jacobins. It is true that P.L. Lavrov himself became editor of the organ of "that section of youth". But that is a different matter with which we are not concerned here.

Our interest at present is in the following considerations. The author of **Historical Letters** has nowhere stated that he has changed his views on the seizure of power; hence we can say with assurance that one of the editors of **Vestnik Narodnoi Voli** has an extremely negative attitude to such a seizure. We are glad of that assurance, it is pleasant to agree in opinion with a well-known and respected writer and we can say that we completely share his opinion on the seizure of power, although we arrived at our conviction by a somewhat different path. We have always tried to direct our main attention not to the subjective, but the objective side of the matter, not to the thoughts and feelings of individual personalities – even if they had the title of dictator – but to the social conditions which they have to take account of, to the inner meaning of the social problems which they undertake to solve. We speak against the seizure of power not because "any dictatorship spoils even the best people", for that question has hardly been finally settled by "history and psychology". But we think that if "the emancipation of the workers must be conquered by the workers themselves", there is nothing any dictatorship can do when the working class "in town and country" has not been prepared for the socialist revolution. And that preparation generally proceeds parallel to the development of the productive forces and of the organisation of production corresponding to them. That is why we posed the question to what extent contemporary economic relations in Russia justify the programme of those who aim at seizing power and who promise to work, by means of that power, a whole series of social and political

miracles. Have these people any greater physical possibility to fulfil their promises than a tomtit has to set the sea on fire? [9*] The answer we arrived at was negative. In the pamphlet **Socialism and the Political Struggle** we explained in detail why we considered such an answer the only possible one at present. Without directly analysing our arguments, Mr. Tikhomirov also touched on this question in the article we are analysing, and in doing so he flung at “a certain section of the socialists” a number of expressions used by us. But, as usual, our author’s line of argument is not very convincing; he does not even always aim at being convincing. Sometimes he almost stops proving altogether and simply states, decrees, so to speak, some propositions or others, as though he had already “seized power” over the minds of his readers. Thus, shouting to those who consider the seizure of power by the present revolutionary party as physically impossible and accusing them of “confusing concepts” he opposes their arguments with the following ... statement: “It cannot be doubted that the question of the seizure of power by any revolutionary force is determined first and foremost by whether the existing government is sufficiently disorganised, shaken and unpopular; and if all these conditions are to hand a state upheaval is by no means impossible or even particularly difficult.” [7] Without dwelling any more on this interesting question, he immediately goes on to discuss our revolutionaries’ chances of “holding power”. Willy-nilly, all “dissenters” will have to be reconciled to the author’s not quite customary laconicism. Let us be reconciled to it too, all the more as the truth of some of his propositions really “cannot be doubted” this time. But even so it will be quite opposite to ask: Who is “confusing concepts” – Mr. Tikhomirov or his opponents? Firstly, a “state upheaval” is far from being the same thing as “the seizure of power by any revolutionary force”. Where “the existing government is disorganised, shaken and

unpopular” a state upheaval is not only “by no means impossible”, it is simply almost inevitable and consequently it is naturally not “particularly” difficult. But that still does not mean that “any revolutionary force” can take the place of the overthrown government and seize the power lost by that government. A state upheaval can be effected by the aggregate actions of many “forces” which, though hostile to one another, are nevertheless revolutionary in their attitude to the existing system. Then “power”, too, will go not to one of those forces, but to the resultant of them all, which will be embodied in a new provisional or permanent government. But for each of them singly “the question of the seizure of power” far from being solved will be still more complicated by such an outcome; they will have to fight for power not against a weak and unpopular adversary, but against fresh, hale and hearty rivals who have not yet been exhausted by struggle and have the support of a certain section of the nation. All that is as clear as daylight. And if that is the case, can we make the question of the seizure of power by the “Narodnaya Volya party” in which we are interested depend exclusively on the instability of the existing government and on the probability of a state upheaval? Can one thus confuse concepts which differ entirely in meaning and content?

But, we may be told, you impute to the “state upheaval” quite a different meaning from the one in which Mr. Tikhomirov uses it. By it he understands not only the fall of the existing government and the organisation of a new one; he presumes that the whole of this revolution will take place by a successful conspiracy within a certain definite revolutionary party which has his sympathy. A conspiracy is a secret undertaking which begins without the knowledge of any of those who could enter into rivalry with the conspirators after the state upheaval. When Little Napoleon thought out his “*coup d’etat*”, it did not occur to him to

reveal his intentions to the Orleanists or the Legitimists; still less would he have brought himself to ask for their help and collaboration. The success which the Bonapartists achieved by their own efforts alone remained wholly and entirely theirs; all that was left for their rivals was to bear malice and to be sorry that they had not thought of or undertaken that daring action. What the infamous nephew did sincere revolutionaries can do too. Or is success a privilege of evil? Will an instrument which has proved its worth in the hands of political adventurers refuse to serve people sincerely devoted to the good of their country?

If Mr. Tikhomirov does understand a “state upheaval” in this last sense, he is resorting to a still grosser “confusion of concepts” than we formerly thought. What right has he so unexpectedly and unscrupulously to replace a general, abstract possibility by a particular, concrete actuality? Does not that which is *possible* in a general sense prove in many and many an instance to be impossible as regards some particular case? And, therefore, is it permissible, when recommending to the Russian revolutionary party the path of conspiracy, to confine oneself to general phrases about it not being “particularly difficult” to organise a successful conspiracy where the government is disorganised and unpopular? Are the Russian revolutionaries conspirators in the abstract, without flesh or bones, not coming within the pale of all the conditions which make what is possible for some fantastic and impossible for others? Are not the chances of success for a conspiracy determined by the qualities of that section of society to which its members belong, and do not the qualities of that section influence the desires and aims of the conspirators? One has only to cast a glance at our revolutionary section from this point of view for general phrases about a successful conspiracy not being “particularly difficult” to lose all meaning.

To what class, to what strata of society have the overwhelming majority of our revolutionaries belonged so far and do they still belong? To what is called the thinking proletariat. We already spoke in detail of the political qualities of this strata in *Socialism and the Political Struggle* and we greatly regret that Mr. Tikhomirov did not consider it necessary to refute our ideas.

“Our thinking proletariat,” we wrote, “has already done much for the emancipation of its motherland. It has shaken absolutism, aroused political interest among society, sown the seed of socialist propaganda among our working class. It is intermediary between the higher classes of society and the lower, having the education of the former and the democratic instincts of the latter. This position has eased for it the diversified work of propaganda and agitation. But this same position gives it very little hope of success in a conspiracy to seize power. For such a conspiracy talent, energy and education are not enough: the conspirators need connections, wealth and an influential position in society. And that is what our revolutionary intelligentsia lacks. It can make good these deficiencies only by allying itself with other dissatisfied elements of Russian society. Let us suppose that its plans actually meet with the sympathy of those elements, that rich landowners, officials, staff and senior officers join in the conspiracy. There will then be more probability of the conspiracy being a success, although that probability will still be very small – just remember the outcome of most of the famous conspiracies in history. But the main danger to the socialist conspiracy will come not from the existing government, but from the members of the conspiracy itself. The influential and high-placed personages who have joined it may be sincere socialists only by a ‘fortunate coincidence’. But as regards the majority of them, there can be no guarantee that they will not wish to use the power they have seized for purposes having nothing in common with the interests of the working class ... Thus, *the more sympathy a conspiracy of the socialist intelligentsia to seize power in the immediate future meets among influential spheres, i.e., the greater the probability of its outward success, the more open to doubt its results will be*; contrariwise, the more such a conspiracy is confined to our socialist intelligentsia, i.e., the less the probability of its success, the less doubt there will be about its results, as far as the conspirators’ intentions are concerned.” [10*]

Is that comprehensible? Were we right when we said that our nihilist renegade, though very useful as a revolutionary ferment in the social sphere, will not seize power because he will be prevented from doing so by his social position? Bonaparte was not a nihilist, but for his coup d'état he, too, needed at first to become no more and no less than the head of the executive authority in the republic. Further. Is it probable that if the nihilist does draw over to his side a sufficient number of persons having influence and a high position, and if he is followed by all sorts of "white generals", he will not profit by their social position but they will avail themselves of his self-abnegation and transform the conspiracy into an instrument for their personal aims? Perhaps we will be told that a high situation in society does not always irremediably spoil man and that a heart full of devotion to its people can beat even under a general's uniform. We perfectly concede that, but still continue to fear the Greeks. [11*] What guarantees will the revolutionaries have of the loyalty and sincerity of high-placed members of the conspiracy? The central committee's personal knowledge of those gentlemen? But how will the committee assure us of the infallibility of its choice? Can one be satisfied with such guarantees in a matter as important as the fate of the working class of a whole country? It is here that the difference between the standpoints of the Social-Democrats on one side and of the Blanquists on the other is revealed. The former demand objective guarantees of success for their cause, guarantees which they see in the development of consciousness, initiative and organisation in the working class; the latter are satisfied with guarantees of a purely subjective nature; they abandon the cause of the working class to individuals and committees, they make the triumph of the ideas they hold dear depend on faith in the personal

qualities of some or other members of the conspiracy. If the conspirators are honest, brave and experienced, socialism will triumph; if they are not resolute or capable enough, the victory of socialism will be postponed, perhaps for a short time if new and more capable conspirators are found, but for an infinitely long time if there are no such conspirators. All is here reduced to hazard, to the intelligence, ability and will of individuals. [8]

Let it not be said that the Russian Blanquists of today do not deny the importance of preparatory work among the working class. No doubt whatsoever is possible on this score after **Kalendar Narodnoi Voli** has declared that the working population in the towns is of “particularly great importance *for* the revolution” (p.130). But is there even a single party in the world which does not acknowledge that the working class can greatly help it to achieve its aims? The present-day policy of the Iron Chancellor clearly shows that even the Prussian junkers do not lack such awareness. Now all appeal to the workers, but they do not all speak to them in the same tone; they do not all allot them the same role in their political programmes. This difference is noticeable even among the socialists. For the democrat Jacobi the foundation of one workers’ union was of more importance socially and historically than the Battle of Sadowa. [12*] The Blanquist will of course perfectly agree with that opinion. But he will agree only because it is not battles but revolutionary conspiracies that he sees as the main motive forces of progress. If you were to suggest that he choose between a workers’ union and a “repentant nobleman” [13*] in the person of some divisional general, he would prefer the latter to the former almost without thinking. And that is understandable. No matter how

important the workers are “for the revolution”, high-placed conspirators are still more important, for not a step can be made without them and the whole outcome of the conspiracy can often depend on the conduct of some “Excellency”. [9] From the standpoint of the Social-Democrat a true revolutionary movement at the present time is possible only among the working class; from the standpoint of the Blanquist the revolution relies only partly upon the workers, who have an “important” but not the main significance in it. The former assumes that the *revolution* is of “particular importance” *for the workers*, while in the opinion of the latter the *workers*, as we know, are of particular importance *for the revolution*. The Social-Democrat wants the worker *himself to make* his revolution; the Blanquist demands that the worker should *support* the revolution which has been begun and led for him and in his name by others, for instance by officers if we imagine something in the nature of the Decembrists’ conspiracy. Accordingly the character of the activity and the distribution of forces also vary. Some appeal mainly to the workers, others deal with them only incidentally and when they are not prevented from doing so by numerous complicated and unpredictable ever-growing needs of the conspiracy which has begun without the workers. This difference is of immense practical importance and it is precisely what explains the hostile attitude of the Social-Democrats to the conspiratorial fantasies of the Blanquists.

Author's Footnotes

1. See **Vestnik Narodnoi Voli** No.2, Section II, p.67.
2. V.Z. [4*] in the *Foreword* to the translation of Engels' **Development of Scientific Socialism**, p.IX.
3. **L'État et la revolution**, p.65.
4. **Vestnik Narodnoi Voli** No.2, p.255.
5. **Vestnik Narodnoi Voli** No.2, *What Can We Expect from the Revolution?*, p.250.
6. **Russian Social-Revolutionary Youth**, by the editor of **Vperyod**, London 1874, pp.40-43.
7. **Vestnik Narodnoi Voli** No.2, p.255.

8. Incidentally, this is not quite the case. Objective conditions of success appear sometimes to the conspirators as some kind of physical or meteorological happening. For instance, one of the issues of **Nabat** contains an article on the conspiracy of General Malet. From this article we see that in 1812 the revolution did not take place in France merely because of sudden, inopportune, heavy rains on the night of October 22–23. You find that hard to believe, reader? Read the following excerpt and judge for yourself. “When everything was finished, Malet intended to hurry to the nearest barracks, but rain poured down and the conspirators took it into their heads to wait till it was over. They had to wait till 3 a.m. and that was a fatal mistake. During the night the conspiracy had all chances of succeeding, for the civil and military authorities would not have had time to confer. The conspirators let the favourable time slip” and as a result of this and this alone, the conspiracy itself was a failure.

Whatever be the attitude to such explanations of the historical destiny of peoples, it is obvious at any rate that they do not avail us of making any sound forecast of social phenomena; in other words, they preclude any attempt to discuss programme questions seriously.

Tikhomirov's “foundation of the socialist organisation of Russia”, with which we are already familiar, will also apparently be cancelled in case of bad weather. In general heavy rain is all the more dangerous for the victory of socialism the more the cause of the latter is made to depend on the success of this or that committee in disregard of the degree of social and political development of the working class in the country in question.

9. The report of General Malet's conspiracy in **Nabat** explains in detail the “importance for the revolution” of the commanders of “units” or even of mere officers. “In order to carry out the plan he had thought out, Malet

needed to enlist the assistance of at least two officers who were capable, clever, and inspired, like him, with hatred of the emperor”, etc.

Notes

1*. “*Devoted without flattery*” – motto on the crest of Arakcheyev, bestowed on him by Paul I. Thanks to Pushkin’s epigram it became a symbol of servility towards influential personages.

2*. *Credo, quia absurdum* – a saying attributed to the Christian writer Tertullian (3rd cent. A.D.).

3*. Quotation from P.L. Lavrov’s review of Plekhanov’s *Socialism and the Political Struggle*, published in *Vestnik Narodnoi Voli*, No.2, Section 2, 1884, pp.64–67.

4*. Plekhanov here means Vera Ivanovna Zaslulich.

5*. K.T. – K. Tarasov. Plekhanov refers to his review of E. Laverdays’ book, *Les assemblées parlantes. Critique du gouvernement représentatif*, Paris 1883. Cf. *Vestnik Narodnoi Voli*, No.2, Section 2, 1884, pp.67-85.

6*. *Akaky Akakiyevich* – a minor official in Gogol’s tale *The Coat*.

7*. Reference to an article by I. Luchitsky, *The Land Commune in the Pyrenees*, *Otechestvenniye Zapiski*, No.9, 1883, pp.57-78.

8*. The edict, which was issued by the Emperor Peter III on February 18, 1762, freed the gentry from compulsory military or state service.

9*. From Krylov’s fable *The Tomtit*. The tomtit attained fame but did not set the sea on fire.

10*. The words italicised here are not so in the pamphlet *Socialism and the Political Struggle*.

11*. The expression “*fear the Greeks*” – “*timeo danaos et dona ferentes*” (“I fear the Greeks even when they bring gifts”) – is connected with the legend of the Trojan Laocoön who tried to convince his fellow citizens not to bring into the city the wooden horse left by the Greeks. His fears came true – the soldiers hidden in the horse helped to capture Troy.

12*. *The Battle of Sadowa*, in July 1866, ended the Austro-Prussian War and determined Prussia’s leading role in the unification of Germany.

13*. The “*repentant nobleman*” is an expression introduced into literature by N.K. Mikhailovsky and characterising the type of man who regards himself as owing a debt he cannot pay to his people for the sins of his fathers and the horrors of serfdom.

3. Probable Consequences of a “Popular” Revolution

But let us be tractable. Let us concede the improbable – that “power” is actually in the hands of our contemporary revolutionaries. What will such success lead them to?

Let us listen to our author.

“The immediate and prime task of the victorious provisional government consists in coming to the assistance of the popular revolution. The state power which has been seized must be used in order everywhere to revolutionise the popular masses and to organise their power; this is a task in the fulfilment of which the revolutionaries stand on firm ground. There the provisional government does not create anything but only frees the forces which exist in the people and are even in a state of very high tension ... In this the provisional government does not need either to use coercion on the popular masses or even to teach them. It only gives them purely external help.” [10]

That is what Mr. Tikhomirov says when he discusses the role of the “provisional government which is forced to seize power”.

He is convinced that this “purely external” help for the people will lead to the “foundation of the socialist organisation of Russia”. If we recall his ancestry we will see that such an assurance is by no means surprising on his part and that it was handed down to him by the laws of heredity. Bakunin “begot” Tkachov, and Tkachov begot Tikhomirov and his brothers. And if the nearest literary forbears of our author were of the conviction that “the people is always ready” for the social revolution, it is quite natural that their descendant should believe in such readiness of the people at least at “the time we are passing through”. We must be surprised not at Mr. Tikhomirov, who, ashamed to acknowledge his extraction openly, nevertheless piously

keeps the traditions of his spiritual fathers. It is those readers we must be surprised at, who, having renounced the theories of Bakunin and Tkachov, imagine that Mr. Tikhomirov is presenting them with something newer, more serious and practicable. For such readers criticism is but an empty word and consistency an absolutely empty concept!

People, who have really and irrevocably broken with the fantasies of Bakunin and Tkachov, will see Mr. Tikhomirov's confidence as absolutely unjustified. They will understand that the socialist revolution presupposes a whole series of measures for the socialist organisation of production. And that reason alone is enough to prevent the "purely external" help of the revolutionary government from being considered sufficient to guarantee a successful outcome of such a revolution. Besides, the socialist organisation of production presupposes two conditions without the "presence" of which it cannot be undertaken. The first of these conditions is objective and lies in the economic relations in the country. The other is purely subjective and concerns the producers themselves: the objective economic possibility of the transition to socialism is not enough by itself, the working class must understand and be aware of that possibility. These two conditions are closely connected with one another. Economic relations influence people's economic concepts. These concepts influence people's mode of activity, the social and, consequently, the economic relations. And since we now "do not believe" in any "hand of God" or in inborn ideas, it only remains for us to assume that "the order of ideas is determined by the order of things" and that people's views of economic circumstances are determined by the qualities of those circumstances. These qualities also determine the tendencies of the various classes – conservative in one period of history, revolutionary in another. A certain class rises against the reality surrounding

it, enters into antagonism with it only in the event of reality being “divided against itself”, of some contradictions being revealed in it. The character, the course and the outcome of the struggle which has started against that reality is determined by the character of these contradictions. In the capitalist countries, one of the chief economic contradictions is the antagonism between the social character of production, on the one hand, and the individual appropriation by the employers of its instruments, means, and consequently its products, on the other. As it is absolutely impossible to renounce the social organisation of production, the only means of solving this contradiction is to bring juridical standards into conformity with economic facts, to hand over the instruments and objects of labour to the ownership of society, for the latter to distribute the products according to the requirements of the working people. This contradiction, as also the urgent need for its solution, increasingly impresses itself upon the consciousness of the people who suffer from it. The working class becomes more and more inclined to and ready for the socialist revolution. We have already repeated time and again the truth proved by Marx that the antagonism referred to above inevitably arises at a definite stage in the development of commodity production. But commodity production, like everything else in the world, has not only an end, but a beginning, too. It not only prepares for a new social system thanks to its inherent contradictions, but there was a time when it was new itself, it arose out of antagonisms in its predecessor. We know that commodity production was preceded by natural economy and primitive collectivism. The principal cause leading to antagonism in the primitive communities was their inherent limitation which did not permit the application of communist principle to the relations between communities. These relations led to the development of *exchange*, the products of social labour

became commodities and in this new quality they exerted a disintegrating influence on the interior organisation of the community itself. The stage in the disintegration of primitive collectivism which is known as the village community is characterised, as we know, by the contradiction that in it corn-growing on *communal land* is carried out by *individual householders*. This leads to the development of private property, to a new intensification of commodity production and at the same time to the birth of the contradictions inherent in this kind of production, i.e., to the exploitation of labour by capital. Thus commodity production nears its end because of the contradiction between the social organisation of production and the individual mode of appropriation. It develops, on the contrary, because of the contradiction between the individual character of the economy and the social character of the appropriation of one of the chief means of production – the land. We now ask Mr. Tikhomirov: which stage in the development of commodity production is Russia now passing through? Which of the contradictions we have pointed out is typical of her economic relations now? If the first, then there is no sense in contrasting Russia with the West, and, therefore, in emphasising the peculiar features of the Russian “social-revolutionary” programmes. If the second, by what means will the revolutionary government prevent commodity production from developing further? By what means will it solve the contradictions inherent in our village community?

The seizure of power by the revolutionaries may have two outcomes.

Either the provisional government will in fact confine itself to “purely external” help to the people and, not teaching them anything, not coercing them to anything, will allow them to set up their own economic relations.

Or, not relying on the wisdom of the people, it will keep in its hands the power it has seized and itself set about organising socialist production.

In the pamphlet **Socialism and the Political Struggle**, we have already spoken of each of these outcomes. All we need to do now is to repeat and elaborate the thoughts we expressed then.

Mr. Tikhomirov has freed us from the necessity of discussing in detail the second of the cases assumed. He does not even wish to hear of “the despotism of a communist government”. He demands that the provisional government should give the people “purely external help”, that it should “organise the people temporarily and only inasmuch as their” (the people’s) “self-government can be realised in those conditions”. Obscure as this last phrase is, if it has any sense it means a resolute renunciation of any attempt to implant socialism by means of decrees of the secret society which has “seized power”. Finally, our author declares outright that the provisional government must use power, “of course, not to create a socialist system”. That, of course, is another big piece of nonsense, for it is ridiculous for a socialist government – even if only a provisional one – not to use its power to create a socialist system. However that may be, it is obvious that Mr. Tikhomirov is seriously convinced that the provisional government will not need to “create anything but only to free the forces which already exist in the people”. Let us see what such “freeing” can lead to.

Our author did not explain how long this period will last during which the provisional government will “organise the power of the popular masses”. Neither did he tell us what this organisation means when translated from his party’s mystic “way of speaking” into literary Russian. He did not say a word about the way in which, after seizing power, the “Narodnaya Volya party” government will be replaced by a

government “elected by the people, controlled by them and replaceable”. Hence it remains for us to choose the most probable of all possible guesses. The Eastern countries have distinguished themselves so far only by court revolutions or popular movements in which there were very few conscious political actions. To have any at all graphical idea of the probable course of the Russian revolution, we must willy-nilly presume that, despite all its exceptionalism, it will nevertheless take place at least partly after the manner of the West. But in the West it generally developed as follows. The provisional government placed in power by the coup d’etat continued to support the revolution against the efforts of reaction, convened a constituent assembly and placed the country’s future in its hands. Having drawn up the new constitution, the constituent assembly set up a permanent government conforming to the most compelling demands of the whole country or certain of the classes. It goes without saying that the new government was *permanent* only until there was a new revolution or a new reshaping of the country’s constitutional structure.

Let us now imagine that after seizing power the “Narodnaya Volya party” will remain faithful to Mr. Tikhomirov’s promises and, not coercing the Russian people to anything, will convene a constituent assembly of representatives of the people. Let us assume that the elections will take place in the most favourable conditions for the revolutionaries, and only after “providing the guarantee of the people’s economic independence”, i.e., after the expropriation of the big landowners and employers. Let us even assume that the provisional government will institute electoral qualifications according to estate and class and grant political franchise only to peasants, artisans and proletarians working by hand or brain. Finally, let us suppose that the provisional government will manage to maintain, and the constituent

assembly to consolidate, the people's "political independence". This will be all the more difficult the sooner the revolutionary situation foretold by Mr. Tikhomirov arises; from Mr. Tikhomirov, too, we learn that even with a powerless bourgeoisie self-government by the people is possible only if the people are sufficiently disappointed in the autocracy of the tsars. Hence it follows that if by the time of the revolutionary outbreak this disappointment is not intense enough, there will not be any self-government by the people and the revolution which has taken place may lead to a political monster similar to the ancient Chinese or Peruvian empires, i.e., to a renewal of tsarist despotism with a communist lining. But refraining from pessimism, we will take into consideration the fact that Russia "can hardly wait" and assume that in view of such urgency our country will hasten to put an end to autocracy. We are so accommodating that we are ready to admit the best possible outcome to be the most probable one and to concede that the purest kind of "government by the people", i.e., direct popular legislation, will be established in our country. All we ask is whether it can be "expected" that the self-governing people will immediately lay the "foundation of the socialist organisation of Russia".

We have long known that

... *Wo die Begriffe fehlen,*
Da stellt ein Wort zur rechten Zeit sich ein[14*],

but we ask our reader to ponder the meaning of the words *socialist organisation of production* and, in order to make it more palpable, to imagine the decisions that the self-governing Russian people will probably come to on this matter.

The representative assembly will be obliged to appeal to the judgement of the people on all important legislative questions.

It will ask the people whether they approve and endorse the expropriation of big proprietors which the provisional government has carried out. And of course the people will answer in the affirmative. The land, the mines, the works and the factories will be declared state property.

But a change in the owner does not mean a change in the organisation of production. The question of *expropriation* will lead to that of the *exploitation* of the confiscated properties.

The self-governing people will have to organise on a new basis the whole of their economy, the production and the distribution of all their products.

What form of organisation will the people deem necessary? Will the majority of our peasantry pronounce in favour of communism?

Even Mr. Tikhomirov does not “expect” that. Being in or not far from their present stage of development, the people would not wish or even be able to establish a communist economy.

Even as far as corn-growing is concerned, the people would probably maintain the present organisation of production. After socialisation, the land would still be cultivated by individual households. We already know what that contradiction leads to. It creates inequality, promotes the development of commodity production and consequently of the new contradictions inseparable from it. The history of the disintegration of the village community and of the appearance of the various social classes would be repeated in a new form and on a wider scale. Our Narodniks and Narodnaya Volya members generally see the cause of the

disintegration of the community in the hostile attitude adopted to it by the estate and “class” state. But after all that has been said on this subject in the preceding chapter, we need not stop to refute, or rather to explain the real meaning of that conclusion. Modern science leaves not the slightest doubt as to inequality arising in primitive communities before those communities themselves organise into a state. Far from being the *original cause* for inequality appearing, the state itself is historically its *product*. Subsequently the state naturally begins to influence economic relations, to destroy primitive communism. But he who wishes to strike at the root of inequality (and without that desire one cannot be a socialist) must direct his attention mainly to its radical, not its derivative cause. It would be very inconsistent on the part of such a one to wish to do away with the kind of state which *intensified* inequality and to leave untouched the economic relations which *create* the inequality itself and the “class” state, too. And that would be the very kind of inconsistency that a provisional socialist government would suffer from which did not set itself the aim either of “teaching” the people, or of “coercing it” to adopt socialist organisation. By leaving that organisation to producers who are absolutely unprepared for it and confining itself to giving the people “purely external” help it would at best be chopping down the trunk and leaving untouched the roots which support it. The former members of such a government would display great naivete if they showed astonishment at a new healthier and stronger trunk growing in the place of the old rotten one.

We repeat, if government by the people were really established in our country, when asked whether they needed land and whether it should be confiscated from the landlords, the self-governing people would answer that they did need it and that it should be confiscated. But if

asked whether they needed the “foundation of the socialist organisation”, they would first answer that they did not understand the meaning of that question, and then, having understood it with great difficulty, they would answer: No, we don’t need that. And as the expropriation of the big landowners is by no means equivalent to the “foundation of the socialist organisation”, there would not be any socialism as a result of the seizure of power by the revolutionaries. [11] The outcome would be what Mr. Tikhomirov involuntarily prophesied when he said that the provisional government would use its power “by no means to create a socialist system”. We would be faced with the same village community as now. The total difference would be that, having about three times as much land as at present, the community would perhaps disintegrate more slowly and consequently more slowly clear the ground for higher forms of social life.

What about the further independent development of the village community? Well, its development consists in disintegrating! Whoever disputes, this must prove the opposite; he must show us, if not historical examples of a village community becoming a communist one, at least of the tendency to such a transition, existing not in the heads of our Narodniks but in the very organisation of the community and in all the dynamics of its agricultural economy. We know where, how and why the primitive communist communes were changed into communities of individual householders. But we do not know why and how our Russian village community will accomplish the transition into a communist one. Liking an occasional conversation with the Narodniks, we naturally could not remain unaware that two or three of our communities had organised collective cultivation of the fields. The village of Grekovka, which has distinguished itself by this good action,

was once spoken of by absolutely all the “friends of the people” and its example was thought to solve the whole social problem in Russia. But if the peasants in that famous village were ever persecuted for communist tendencies it would not be difficult for their counsel to prove that the prosecutor knew nothing at all about communist doctrines. Collective cultivation of the soil is only a little nearer to communism than collective work in the form of *corvée* or the “collective ploughing” introduced under Nicholas I with the help of bayonets and birch-rods. However stupid the “unforgettable” tsar was, even he never thought that collective ploughing could give rise to an independent movement towards communism in the village communities. The main stress in this question is not on the manner in which the householders work – individually or collectively – but on the fact whether there are separate household economies and whether they tend to unite in one communist whole. The village of Grekovka has shown no such tendency. Its householders continue to be owners of their products, which they turn into commodities. And once they do not abolish the commodity quality of their products, it can be mathematically proved that the strongest tendency in this community is towards capitalism and by no means towards communism.

Collective cultivation of the soil is a very good and useful thing; but it would be strange to think that it can be the main road from the present village community to the ideals of communism. It can play, if anything, only the role of a small “by-road” leading on to a main road which goes in a completely different direction. It would have rendered great service in the West, where its role would have amounted to giving the peasants the habit of collective work and thus decreasing their resistance to the communist revolution, in which the initiative would have fallen to the proletariat in

town and country. But that would have exhausted its advantages. In every historical, as well as mechanical movement, part of the motive force is expended in overcoming resistance. To decrease the resistance means to free a corresponding portion of the force tied down by it and to accelerate the movement. If you pave a main street, if you lubricate an engine, you decrease the labour of the horse drawing a cart and cut down fuel consumption. But not a single mechanic will imagine that the engine will be set in motion just because you have decreased the friction in its parts, no carter will ever dream of unharnessing his horse as soon as he reaches a well-paved road. Any man who imagined or did any such thing would be declared insane by everybody. And there would not be the slightest mistake in the verdict. In order to cause movement we need an active, not a passive force, positive, not negative conditions. The same with the village community. Collective tilling of the soil is good provided there is an active force which causes and accelerates its transition to a higher form of social life. In the West the proletariat would play that role, beginning the communist revolution in a completely different sphere, the sphere of large-scale production and agriculture, in works and factories and on big farms. The force of the proletariat would be created and directed by absolutely definite economic relations existing outside and independently of the community. But where would we get that force from here in our peasant state, set up by the revolution of the Narodnaya Volya party? From among the peasants themselves? It seems to "Mr. Tikhomirov, we know, that history has some kind of independent "movement towards socialism". He may think that such an independent "movement" will appear among the peasants as well. But we will leave Mr. Tikhomirov and talk to less credulous readers. They will agree, at least, that the *economic* tendencies of every class are determined by the character of the economic conditions in which it lives.

Our peasants live in conditions of commodity production, and in commodity production the product dominates the producer and dictates its laws to him. And the laws of commodity production are such that they promote first and foremost the development of capitalism and capitalist, by no means communist, tendencies. Where, then, will our peasant get a tendency towards communism from?

Is that clear? No? Let us go from discussion to comparison. The Don Cossacks now have as much land as our peasants would have after the popular (of the Narodnaya Volya party) revolution. They have about thirty *dessiatines* per person. This land belongs not to individuals, not even to individual communities, but to the whole of the “glorious troop”. The question is: Do the Don Cossacks show any tendency to introduce communist economy? As far as I know, not communist, but bourgeois tendencies are becoming stronger and stronger among them. Perhaps this will be put down to the “corrupting influence of the state”? But there was a time when that influence was almost non-existent; why did they not then accomplish the transition to communism? Perhaps, their military way of life prevented them? Just imagine the Cossacks, freed altogether from military service, devoting themselves entirely to peaceful occupations. What would happen in such a case? We will tell you: an intense disintegration of the remaining traces of primitive communism among the Cossacks would set in, then the reign of the Cossack bourgeoisie would be nearer ...

Abundance of land did not save the Cossacks from the appearance of inequality and the resulting exploitation of the poor by the rich. Quite the contrary, abundance of land in itself encouraged the appearance of inequality. [12] The late Professor Belyayev, despite his pronounced Slavophile tendency, perfectly understood the significance of abundance of land in the history of the rise of the classes.

“Naturally, there was plenty of land in ancient Russia, far more than was needed at the time, and anybody who wished could occupy without any hindrance enormous expanses of wild fields and woods which belonged to nobody, *naturally, all those who could afford it did so.*” [13] But not everybody had equal means, and that is why not all occupied the same quantity of land; some did not even occupy any at all, having no means whatsoever to clear and cultivate it. Hence, inequality in income and dependence of the poor upon the rich. Neither is there any doubt that in some cases “the free occupation and cultivation of the land was not long in leading to the concept of landed property”. This side of the matter has been well set forth by M. Kovalevsky in his book on communal land tenure. [15*] Until recent times the right freely to occupy untilled lands existed in the region of the Don Cossacks – and perhaps still exists today in the Kuban territory; that was precisely what allowed the rich to become richer, that is what sowed into that virgin soil the first seeds of the class struggle.

But the state, transformed by the revolution, would prevent such a turn of affairs in our country, another reader will say.

It is difficult to say beforehand what a people’s state would do in one particular case or another, but, having an idea of the economic conditions under which the majority of citizens live, it is not difficult to foresee the general direction that the economic policy of such a state would take. According to Mr. Tikhomirov’s own “expectations” the revolutionary state established would be mainly a state of peasants. Being both unwilling and unable to lay “the foundation of the socialist organisation” in his own community, the peasant would also be both unable and unwilling to set up such an organisation within the broader limits of the state. The economic policy of the people’s state would be just as little communist as that of the individual

peasant communities out of which it would be formed. It goes without saying that the state would endeavour to eliminate abuses which could arise as a result of the distribution of social lands to individual persons or groups for cultivation. But it would never bring itself to take away stocks and instruments belonging to the better-off householders. Similarly, it would consider as perfectly just and natural to limit the right of landed property only by the owner's labour and *means*, which, naturally, would be his private property. If in fact the peasant has any definite ideals for the social structure, there is no doubt that the freedom by which everybody can occupy free land wherever his "axe, plough, and scythe can go" has a great part in them. The "popular revolution" would provide, at least partly, the possibility to put those ideals into practice; but that would lead, as we know, to inequality between the agriculturists. Once that impulse given, the inequality could, of course, reach its natural extreme and reduce to nil" all the results of the "popular revolution".

Further. The peasant state would naturally leave untouched not only trade, but also, to a great extent, industrial capital. Mr. Tikhomirov himself apparently admits this when he presumes that the people's revolution would only *render powerless* "the already weak nobility and bourgeoisie". "To render powerless" does not mean to destroy. Need we say what results the existence of trade and industrial capital would lead to? Mr. Tikhomirov assumes that these results would be prevented by that same people's government. But we will draw his attention to the fact that not all that seems dangerous to the socialist is so in the eyes of the peasant, and consequently of a peasant government. Whereas Mr. Tikhomirov and we are opposed generally to "private business capital", the peasant waxes indignant only over certain applications of the capitalist principle, he has no

objection to its substance. He fully acknowledges the possibility of *private* business enrichment. That being the case, the “people’s” government will not have any objection to it either. Its radicalism will at best engage in the struggle against the big capital of the manufacturer, but the government will not even think of setting a limit to exploitation by the “master” in general. Hence this is already a second factor leading to the disappearance of the “relative equality” established by the revolution. Mr. Tikhomirov thinks that this factor will be rendered powerless by the “removal of the land from the domain of exploitation”. But we already know that the land will not be altogether “removed” from it; the people’s government will tolerate both inequality in the distribution of land and the possibility of hiring a labourer from among the ruined householders. *Peasant* “ideals” are easily reconciled with *hired labour*. Besides, anybody who understands the matter knows that only so-called petty-bourgeois socialism hopes to help the people by “rendering powerless” the bourgeoisie or “removing from the domain of exploitation” this or that particular means of production. And the only reason why it hopes to do so is because the “people” in whom it is interested are the petty bourgeoisie, who stand only to gain if the big bourgeoisie is “rendered powerless”. It is a distinctive feature of petty-bourgeois socialism that its reform plans leave commodity production untouched. This is the origin of its complete theoretical and practical powerlessness. The truly revolutionary working-class movement of the present has nothing in common with the cowardly fantasies of the petty bourgeoisie. Unfortunately, “Russian socialism as expressed” ... in Mr. Tikhomirov’s article is much nearer in this case to the socialism of the petty bourgeoisie than to that of the working class. Like the former, it does not carry its revolutionary projects as far as the elimination of commodity production. It leaves that care

to the future, post-revolution “history of the Russian state”. Completely ignoring the significance of economic evolution in the analysis of its revolutionary premises, it places exaggerated hopes in it as soon as it is concerned with results of the upheaval which it recommends. It calls for *revolution*, where it is unthinkable without preliminary *evolution* and appeals to *evolution* where it is impossible without a radical *economic revolution*. It wants to be mainly revolutionary but it falls into half-measures and inconsistency as far as the substance is concerned. [14] We will soon see where it borrowed this typical trait, which reduces to nil all its revolutionary phrases.

In his efforts to convince his readers that a people’s government will be able to paralyse the harmful consequences of the impending half-measure economic revolution, Mr. Tikhomirov represents the probable course of Russia’s future social development as follows:

“The government, responsible for the course of affairs in the country, has an interest in the country’s prosperity, for its own popularity depends upon it, and the government will no doubt be obliged to take measures to increase labour productivity and, among other things, to organise large-scale production ... Large-scale production is too obviously advantageous and necessary, in many cases it is even inevitable. The popular masses can understand that easily. Moreover” (and this is particularly interesting, we will remark), “private undertaking, slowed down in the domain of capitalist production, will try in all respects” (just imagine, what an idyll!) “to make clear to the people the advantage and convenience of social production ... We will not even mention the socialist intelligentsia’s influence on the people ... Why can there not thus be gradually effected a transition of the village community into an association, *an organisation of exchange among the communities and*

associations of communities, an association of several communities for some production or other, until the socialist system, developing little by little and increasingly ousting private economy, finally extends to all the functions of the country.” Then, “the advent of the socialist revolution, in some countries of Europe if not in the whole of it,... will place Russia in the almost unconditional necessity to organise her international exchange on the same” (i.e., socialist) “principles and hence will almost impose upon us *socialist organisation* in the sphere of *home exchange*” (pp.258-59). That is how this question “is viewed” by Mr. Tikhomirov. Before examining its substance we shall make two incidental remarks.

Our author pins great hopes on the influence of the Russian socialist intelligentsia and the West European working-class revolution. We also recognise the significance of that influence but think that it cannot be unconditional. First of all, where did Mr. Tikhomirov get the idea that after the peasant revolution not only a socialist intelligentsia, but any “intelligentsia” at all in the present sense of the word will “be born unhindered”? At present, our socialist intelligentsia, like any other, come mainly from among the official, landlord, merchant and ecclesiastical walks of life, that is, from the higher sections of society, who see education as a means for making a career. While producing careerists, our universities also, by the way, create revolutionaries. But both careerists and revolutionaries are a product of the existence of the bureaucratic state and the higher classes. This is so far beyond doubt that the consciousness of their “bourgeois” origin impelled our revolutionaries, on the one hand, to speak of their “duty to the people” and, on the other, systematically to contrast themselves with the people. The “socialist intelligentsia” are conscious that they form nothing more than one of the branches of the common trunk of the

official-ridden “class” state. Mr. Tikhomirov wants to fell that trunk but at the same time he hopes that the branch which is dear to him, far from withering, will be born “unhindered”. That reminds one of the well-known anecdote about the Ukrainian who, having chopped down the bough he was sitting on, was surprised at his own fall. Or perhaps Mr. Tikhomirov thinks that after the “popular revolution” the socialist intelligentsia will be “born unhindered” from the peasantry itself? In that case we fear he is mistaken.

What does the meaning of the revolution he is “expecting” amount to? To an agrarian upheaval, to the expropriation of the big landowners, to the possibility to give the peasants allotments three times as large as the present ones, to the abolition of oppressing taxation. Does Mr. Tikhomirov presume that such an increase in allotments will convince the peasants that higher education is a necessity, that it will compel *them, themselves*, to send their children to university and *their government* to support and institute higher educational establishments?

The large quantity of land *will* so much *simplify* the peasant’s position, will so greatly increase the importance of extra working hands in his family that the peasantry will see neither the necessity nor any possibility of spending much money and time on higher education.

Universities are necessary for a state of officials, of bourgeoisie and of gentry, and they will eventually be necessary for the proletariat, who, without higher scientific education, will be unable to cope with the productive forces which will have come under their command; but in the reign of the peasant communities universities will be a luxury having little attraction for practical-minded householders. But let us grant that the peasants can “easily understand” the significance of higher education. Let us remember, besides, that after the “popular revolution” both the

bourgeoisie and the gentry will remain; let us assume that both of them will be “rendered powerless” to the extent necessary for them to be able to send their children to higher schools without harming the people economically. Why does Mr. Tikhomirov think that those schools will be nurseries of *socialist* intelligentsia? In Switzerland we happen to see, on the one hand, a well-to-do peasantry and, on the other, a fairly “powerless”, i.e., petty, bourgeoisie. Do many socialists come from the Swiss schools, where, in fact, the number of peasants’ children is not at all negligible?

Yet isn’t it “easy” for the Swiss peasants “to understand” the advantage of the socialist organisation of production?

Of course it is, but still they don’t understand it! They don’t want to hear of socialism and this is not helped by their survivals of communal land tenure and their famous collective dairies!

The advantages of socialist way of life are so apparent that they would seem “easy to understand” for everybody. But only the socialists of the Utopian period could fail to know that understanding of socialism can be achieved only combined with actual economic necessity. And in a peasant state such a necessity can be present only as a rare coincidence.

And what about the present intelligentsia? the reader will ask. Can they not, when they experience the people’s revolution, devote their energies “to the service of the people and to organising their labour and their social relations”?

Are there many such “intellectuals”? Do they – excuse me for asking – understand much themselves? What will they do against the inexorable logic of commodity production?

Will their exertions be aided by the West European revolution? It is that revolution we want to talk about now.

The West European revolution will be mighty, but not almighty. To have a decisive influence on other countries, the socialist countries of the West will need some kind of vehicle for that influence. "International exchange" is a powerful vehicle, but it is not almighty either. The Europeans have brisk trade with China, but one can hardly be confident that the working-class revolution in the West will very soon "impose" "socialist organisation in the sphere of home exchange" on China. Why? Because China's "social structure" seriously hinders European ideas and institutions in having decisive influence on it. The same can be said of Turkey, Persia, and so on. But what is the "social structure" of the Sublime Porte? First and foremost a peasant state in which there is still not only the village community, but also the *zadruga*, which, according to our Narodniks' scheme, is much closer to socialism. And despite this, despite all the "popular" revolutions in the Turkish Empire, there can be no thought of the European proletariat succeeding without any difficulty in "imposing" socialism on Turkish citizens, even those of Slav origin. Here again a distinction must be made between the active force of circumstances *impelling* the people towards socialism and the negative conditions which *only ease* the transition to socialism. The objective logic of the relations inside peasant states by no means "imposes" upon them a "socialist organisation in the sphere of home exchange"; and what is imposed upon them purely from outside cannot be crowned with success. No doubt the European working-class revolution will have a very powerful influence on those countries in which at least some strata of the citizens resemble the European working class by their economic situation, their political education and their habits of thought. Its influence will be rather weak, on the contrary, where there are no such strata. The February Revolution had an echo in nearly all countries which resembled France by their "social structure". But the wave which it raised' broke

on the threshold of peasant Europe. Beware lest the same happens, too, with the future revolution of the proletariat!

“The meaning of this fable is” that West is West and Russia is Russia, or, in other words, don’t count on eating somebody else’s loaf, but yourself get up early and start baking your own. However powerful the possible influence of the European revolution may be, we must bother about providing the conditions which would render that influence effective. As for Mr. Tikhomirov’s half-measure peasant and petty-bourgeois revolution, far from creating those conditions, it will destroy even those which actually exist at present.

In this case, as in all others, all Mr. Tikhomirov’s “expectations” are full of contradictions. The influence of the West on Russia appears possible to him thanks to “international exchange”. From this it follows that the brisker that exchange is, the sooner the West will “impose” upon us a “socialist organisation in the sphere of home exchange”. But the development of our international trade relations presupposes the development of trade, commodity production in our country. And the more commodity production develops, the more the “relative economic equality” resulting from the people’s revolution will be upset, and the more difficult will be “socialist organisation in the sphere of home exchange”, at least for the time being, i.e., until the development of commodity production reaches its logical end. But in that case the “popular revolution” which has been carried out will lose all its meaning.

Thus, if after the “upheaval” we return to natural economy, we shall have “relative equality”, but then the West will be unable to influence us because of the weakness of international exchange. On the other hand, if commodity production develops in our country, it will be difficult for the West to influence us because our “relative equality” will be

seriously upset and Russia will be transformed into a country of petty bourgeoisie. That is the vicious circle in which Mr. Tikhomirov's expectations from the West are fated to go round and round. That is what it means to be a metaphysician, that is what it means to consider things "one after the other and apart from each other"! [16*]

*Mein theuerer Freund, ich rath'euch drum
Zuerst Collegium logicum.* [17*]

These are the contradictory hopes pinned on the West by those who suspect the whole of modern European history of being "hazardous" and "unbelievable"! Really, *collegium logicum* would be very useful for Mr. Tikhomirov!

Having concluded these remarks, let us now go on to the main content of the excerpt quoted above.

4. L. Tikhomirov Wavers Between Blanquism and Bakuninism

In his projects for the socialist organisation of Russia Mr. Tikhomirov is a Bakuninist of the first water. It is true, he does *not* abolish the state, but his state helps the process of this organisation purely from outside; it does not *create* the elements of that process, but "only supports them". P.N. Tkachov, who is Mr. Tikhomirov's immediate ancestor, presumed that having seized power, the minority must "impose" socialism on the majority. Mr. Tikhomirov's government *eases* for the people the organisation of social production "without any violence", "coming to the help of *only such a movement which cannot but arise independently in the country*". In his arguments on the present, Mr. Tikhomirov was Tkachov's true disciple. His "expectations" from the future are an instance of atavism in

ideas, of a return to the theories of a more distant spiritual ancestor.

The anarchist Arthur Arnoult, as we know, wrote: abolish the state, and the economic forces will come into equilibrium as a result of the simple law of statics. [18*] Mr. Tikhomirov says: abolish the *modern* state, expropriate the big landowners, and the economic forces of Russia will begin “independently” to come into equilibrium. The former appeals to a “law of statics”, the latter to “popular concepts and habits”, i.e., to the same “ideal of the people” with which we are familiar from the works of M.A. Bakunin. Arthur Arnoult aims at the “state” and does not notice that his “criticism” applies only to the modern state, the state of bourgeois centralism. Mr. Tikhomirov wishes to set up a “people’s” state, and he devises a new form of petty-bourgeois state, a state which, without definitely abandoning the principle of *laissez faire, laissez passer*, i.e., “without creating anything”, manages, all the same, to “support” the independent “movement of history” in our country towards the socialist system.

Bakuninism is not a system, it is a series of contradictions which Messrs, the Bakuninists and the anarchists share in conformity with the general aggregate of “concepts and habits” of each.

Our author has chosen the peculiar variety of Bakuninism that degenerated into P.N. Tkachov’s “programme”. But he has not remained faithful to that programme to the end. The exhortations of his “first teacher” are too fresh in his mind, he has not forgotten that although “our people are most obviously in need of help”, at the same time “one must be an unmitigated blockhead” to “attempt to teach the people anything or to endeavour to give their life a new direction”. And so he has made up his mind to devise a revolutionary government which would give the people “purely external”

help, which, without any desire to “use coercion on the popular masses or even to teach them”, would nevertheless guide the matter to a successful end.

We asked Mr. Tikhomirov in what way the socio-political philosophy of his article differs from the philosophy of the “Open Letter to Frederick Engels”. Now it will not be difficult for us to answer that question ourselves. It differs by its pallor and timidity of thought, its desire to reconcile the irreconcilable. What can one say about the pale copy if the original itself, as Engels said, could attract only “green gymnasium pupils”?

M.A. Bakunin professed irreconcilable hatred for any form of state and advised our revolutionaries not to seize power, because all power is of the devil. P.N. Tkachov was of the opinion that they should seize power and hold it for a long time. Mr. Tikhomirov has chosen the golden mean. He thinks that the seizure of power “can easily prove to be useful and necessary”, but at the same time he assumes that the revolutionaries should not strive to *keep* power indefinitely, but only *hold* it until the popular revolution begins.

From this awkward position between two stools there can be only two ways out. Our author can seat himself on Bakunin’s or on Tkachov’s stool: he can become an anarchist or a consistent follower (not only a secret pupil) of P.N. Tkachov. But he will hardly succeed in breathing into the “Narodnaya Volya programme” a really new content; he will hardly manage to prove that this or that new idea found “recognition only with the appearance of the Narodnaya Volya trend”. Never yet did empty eclecticism give birth to new mighty theories, never yet did timid hesitation between two old “programmes” open a new epoch in the history of revolutionary ideas in any country!

And so Mr. Tikhomirov will be a follower of Tkachov in the “first day of the revolution” and change into a Bakunist immediately its honeymoon expires.

But what is Bakuninism when applied to the “*lendemain de la revolution*”? We repeat, Bakuninism is not a system. It is a mixture of the socialist theories of the “Latin countries” and Russian peasant “ideals”, of Proudhon’s popular bank and the rural community, of Fourier and Stenka Razin.

That mixture is characteristic of the “kind of process of socialisation of labour” recommended to our country by Mr. Tikhomirov and which not only “never existed anywhere” but never can either.

Without any exaggeration one can apply to this “process” Famusov’s words:

Everything is there, provided there’s no deception!

There we have the village community, we have the “transition of the village community into an association”, we have also “an organisation of *exchange* among the communities and associations of communities”, and besides all that we also have “an association of *several* communities for *some production or other*”; in brief, we have here the notorious Bakunist-anarchist “organisation of the producers from bottom to top”. If the reader has any idea of this “organisation”, he needs no further proof of Tikhomirov’s Bakuninism. But if he has not had the opportunity to become acquainted with the theories of anarchism (which, of course, is no great loss) we recommend that he should read a little pamphlet by a certain once well-known Guillaume called **Idées sur l’organisation sociale**. Once acquainted with the “process of socialisation of labour” suggested in the pamphlet, he will see that the revolutionary theories of Russian exceptionalists are very closely related to the theories of the European anarchists.

It is difficult for an intelligent Russian to get away from the influence of the “West”. By declaring the most advanced theories of Europe to be “inapplicable” to his own country, the Russian social figure does not save his exceptionalism, but only transfers his sympathy from a serious model to a caricature. Mr. V.V. turns out to be a full brother of the imperial and royal “state socialists” and Mr. Tikhomirov an anarchist standing on his head.

But a position so awkward for our author does not very much promote consistency in his thinking. That is why he does not reach the conclusions at which M.A. Bakunin arrived in his time. Even Mr. Tikhomirov’s most daring outbreaks of “revolutionary fantasy” do not extend to abolishing the *businessman’s profit*. In the organisation of “social” production, “the businessman, as an undertaker and an able manager” (Bastiat himself would not repudiate such a motive) “still acquires some advantages, fewer, of course, than at present, but the only advantages accessible to him at that time”. [15] This part of the project of the “socialist organisation of Russia” somehow reminds one, on the one hand, of the petty-bourgeois socialist’s jealous attitude to the enormous “profits” of the big businessman and, on the other, of the distribution of the income between labour, capital and talent recommended by Fourier. Not without reason did we say that some varieties of “Russian socialism” are nothing more than a mixture of Fourier and Stenka Razin.

However, in all this, the reader will think, there is at least no deception.

Granted, there is no *deception*, but there is *self-deception*. There is not even the slightest ill intent, but there is an enormous dose of naiveté. And it consists in nothing else than the talk about the “*socialist organisation of exchange*”. For anybody who understands the matter, this is an

absurdity, stuff and nonsense. Only petty-bourgeois followers of the petty-bourgeois Proudhon could take this absurdity for anything possible or desirable. But on the other hand it was said of Proudhon that he understood as much about dialectics as a woodcutter about botany. The social structure created by the proletariat can have nothing in common with *exchange* and will know only distribution of the products according to the *requirements* of the working people. Some inconsistent Communists find a distribution more convenient if it is proportional to the share the worker has in production. It would not be difficult to find weak sides in such a demand. [16] Nevertheless, even those who put forward that demand have always understood the impossibility of “exchange” in a socialist state.

Whenever you say “exchange” you imply “commodity”, and if you retain commodities, you presuppose all the contradictions inherent in the commodity. And once more, only anarchists could think, to quote Proudhon, that there is a philosopher’s stone which makes it possible to remove from “socialist exchange” all the “bourgeois” contradictions contained in ordinary exchange.

There is not and cannot be any such stone, because *exchange* is a basic and inseparable attribute of bourgeois production, and bourgeois production is a necessary consequence of *exchange*. As recently as the late fifties Karl Marx splendidly explained this side of the matter and thus left far behind the present-day scientific progress the petty-bourgeois theories of the anarchists and Bakuninists of all colours and shades. [19*] One must be ignorant of the very ABC of revolutionary socialism to base one’s expectations “from the revolution” on the socialist organisation of exchange.

We have already had occasion to speak of this question in another place [17] but it is so interesting that it will do no

harm to repeat what we have said. To make it more comprehensible, this time we shall leave aside the abstract formulae of science and confine ourselves to simple and vivid examples.

Socialist exchange is exchange without money, the direct exchange of product for product according to the quantity of labour expended in their production. It was in that form that the idea emerged from the head of Proudhon, who, by the way, repeated on this occasion a mistake made long before him.

Let us now imagine that “on the day after the revolution” our Bakuninists have succeeded in convincing the Torkhovo community in Tula Gubernia, which we have already mentioned, of the advantages of the socialist organisation of exchange. The members of the community have decided to “lay the foundation” of such an organisation and published their decision in some kind of **Narodniye Vedomosti**. Their call is answered by the Arkhangelsk fishers, the Novgorod nail-makers, the Kimry shoemakers, the Tula samovar-makers and the Moscow tailors, all members of workers’ associations or village communities. They also have been imbued with the new principles of exchange under the influence of the Bakuninists who “are born unhindered”. No sooner said than done: an “agreement” is concluded and it only remains to put it in practice. After the corn harvest our Proudhonist peasants get down to exchange. They send a certain quantity of corn to Arkhangelsk and receive fish from there; they dispatch a few loads of potatoes to Kimry and bring back boots. They offer the tailors millet, nail-makers goats and the like. All these things are sent not as signs of good will, but in accordance with the conditions previously agreed upon. They will all have to be transported over long distances and with great trouble and it would probably have been more profitable to dispose of them on the neighbouring

market; but our peasants are people of principle and are ready to defend the new principle of exchange even if, as they say, it costs more than it is worth. And so the exchange is carried out, our village community members have nails, fish, shoes, samovars and ready-made clothing. But the point is that far from all the peasants' requirements are satisfied by these articles. They need other articles of consumption, agricultural implements, fertilisers, cattle and so on. Those who produce all these things do not wish to enter into socialist exchange, perhaps because they have read Marx and laugh at Proudhon's economic "discoveries", or perhaps because they have not reached the stage of development needed to understand Proudhon's wisdom and are still ordinary commodity producers. For even Mr. Tikhomirov presumes that the "socialist" system which he recommends will develop only "little by little". What then must our Torkhovo Proudhonists do in such a case? How will they satisfy the numerous requirements not covered by means of "socialist" exchange? They have only one way out: to *but* what they have not got. This will also be the case for the tailors, who naturally cannot live on millet alone, and for the nail-makers, who cannot subsist only on groats. In short, side by side with "fair", socialist exchange the old, so to speak heathen, form of exchange for money will continue to exist. This "cursed money" (*maudit argent*) will have to be resorted to even in dealings between the proselytes of Proudhonism. If the Kimry shoemakers need only a quantity of potatoes which embodies x days' work, whereas the Torkhovo people need a number of pairs of boots requiring twice as many days to make, the difference will have to be made up in money, if the Kimry people do not want oats, hay or straw, or any other agricultural products. This can easily be the case if Mr. Prugavin's prophecy comes true and the Kimry shoemakers again take to agriculture with "the improvement in its conditions". What will happen then?

Becoming organised only “little by little”, the Proudhonist producers will have against them the enormous mass of producers of the old economic “faith”, and the negligible “progress” made with the help of the “socialist organisation of exchange” will always be outbalanced by the regression in “relative equality” which will result inevitably from commodity production and ordinary “bourgeois” exchange. Vice will outweigh virtue, bourgeois relationships will take the upper hand over Proudhonist socialism. Surrounded by the petty-bourgeois majority, the Proudhonists themselves will begin to be “perverted”, all the more as their own wealth will be largely in money of the old “exploiters” kind. Tempted by enrichment, the Kimry people can send the Torkhovo people boots with cardboard soles, for which the Torkhovo people will not fail to pay them back with half-rotten “taties”. “The enemy is strong” in general, but in the present case his strength will lean on the invincible logic of commodity production, which will dominate even in the village communities after they have entered into “socialist exchange”. The associations which were set up with difficulty will disintegrate, the Proudhonists will turn into ordinary petty-bourgeois producers and the intelligentsia who have been brought up on Bakuninism will need repeatedly to set about the ungrateful work of spreading the new economic principles. It is the tale of the white bullock, Sisyphean labours! And that is the toil which Mr. Tikhomirov imposes on the Russian socialists merely to bring the reign of socialism as near as possible, so as not to approach it by the slow and difficult road of capitalism. It is a case of haste making waste.

On the question of “socialist organisation in the sphere of home exchange” as on that of international trade, one must have in mind this alternative: either the popular revolution will bring us back to natural economy and then “socialist

exchange” will develop slowly in our country, because exchange generally will be very weak; or else the revolution will preserve the present tendency towards greater and greater division of labour, towards the complete separation of agriculture from industry, and then the socialist organisation of exchange will be an extremely difficult task because of the great intricacy of the country’s productive mechanism. And yet the slow development of the socialist organisation of exchange robs it even of the sense which its supporters see in it. To cut off at least *one village community* from the disintegrating influence of money economy, that community must manage to organise socialist exchange with *all the producers* whose products correspond to its various requirements. In the contrary event, its monstrous money-socialist organism would choke in its own contradictions. But one single community cannot supply agricultural produce to *all the producers* of *all the consumer goods* it requires. Those producers will either have to buy part of the raw material they require, and in turn to have a monstrous money-moneyless economy, which will cause their socialist plans to flounder; or they will have to wait for the blessed time when the number of Proudhonist rural communities attains the sufficient and necessary level. With the advent of that blessed time it will be possible to organise the first minimum production and exchange organisation. But what is one such organisation in the immense economic organism of the Russian state? It will be stifled in the surrounding atmosphere of competition. It will be like a drop of honey in a barrel of pitch. Alongside it and against it there will be all the heathen producers; the “nobility and the bourgeoisie”, who, though “rendered powerless”, have not been destroyed by the “popular” revolution, will try to trip it up at every step. What do you think, reader: will the “socialist system finally extend to all the functions of the country” under such conditions? We think that it at best will

take a very, very long time. And yet, we repeat, Mr. Tikhomirov indicates “such a process of socialisation of labour” only because of its rapid assault on history. The road that Social-Democracy in all civilised countries has chosen seems to him too “moderate and painstaking”. Our author has chosen the “straight path” and has got stuck in the quagmire of petty-bourgeois reforms which display no consistency, originality or daring at all.

But let us not digress. Suppose the socialist organisation of exchange is rapid and successful. Let us see what the practical application of its principles will lead to.

The Torkhovo village community has entered into a union with the association of the Kimry shoemakers. Their products are exchanged on the basis of “constituted value”, the yardstick of which is labour and labour alone. Proudhon has triumphed. But the practical and “prosperous” Torkhovo “householders” raise the question, which kind of labour must serve as the measure of value? The more ideally inclined Kimry people (shoemakers are always philosophers to some extent) have no difficulty in giving the answer. They say that the measure of value must be labour in general, abstract human labour. But the “free corn-growers” are not browbeaten. They say they do not know any such kind of labour and that although it may exist “scientifically”, they have to do with the concrete and definite labour of the shoemakers Pyotr, Ivan and Fyodor or a whole association of Pyotrs, Ivans and Fyodors. They are a prey to “bourgeois” doubts and they suppose that to give the Kimry people all the more bread the more time they take to make the boots means to institute a prize for inability, slowness and clumsiness. Exasperated by the lack of understanding displayed by the peasants the shoemakers leave Proudhon aside and appeal, they think, to Marx himself. They say that the measure of the value of their products must be “the

socially necessary labour”, the average labour necessary to make boots under the present development of technique. But even that argument does not overcome the obstinacy of the Torkhovo peasants. They do not understand how one can determine the exact quantity of socially necessary labour contained in the work of the importunate shoemakers. Then the latter seek salvation in Rodbertus and triumphantly bring along his pamphlet **Der Normalarbeitstag** and his correspondence with the Schwerin architect Peters. The Pomeranian economist proves that it is always possible to determine exactly how much the average workman can and must do in a particular branch of production. That average productive labour must be reckoned as socially necessary labour. He who can exceed that norm will receive more, he who cannot reach it, less; the question seems finally exhausted. But just a minute, exclaim the Torkhovo peasants, who were on the point of yielding. Suppose the average productivity of your labour and ours can be determined. We hope that the matter will be taken in hand by the state which “promotes” the socialist organisation of exchange. Suppose it takes two days’ labour to make a pair of boots. But there are many other shoemakers besides your association. They produce for the market, and you, who have sent us thirty pairs of boots, put thousands of pairs on the market. Imagine that the supply of boots exceeds the demand. Then their exchange value drops too, because each pair of boots will represent only one and a half or three-quarters of a day’s socially necessary labour. Do you think we will give you the same amount of corn as before? That would be very unprofitable for us, and charity begins at home, you know. If, on the contrary, not enough boots are made, it will not pay *you* to sell them at the former “fair” socialist price. In general, it seems to us that the basis of fairness is the utilitarian principle and that no bargain can be considered as “fair” which causes detriment to one party

or the other. But with the present fluctuation of prices on commodities it is absolutely impossible to balance our mutual interests, since the relation of the individual labour of separate producers or the aggregate labour of a whole association of producers to the *socially necessary labour* is determined only by those fluctuations. So as long as the commodity market dictates to us the conditions for our socialist exchange, the whole of our “agreement” will be nothing but vain beating of the air. It will bring us just as much profit as if we agreed to write our bills in Roman instead of Arabic figures. You shoemakers have long been noted not only for drunkenness, but for a great inclination to fantasy as well, whereas we peasants are reasonable and have no intention of wasting our time on nonsense.

But don't you see that the inconveniences of socialist exchange will exist only until all producers agree to join in, the shoemakers will answer. When that time comes nothing will prevent socialist exchange from extending to all the functions of the country.

Yes, but that is coming at a snail's pace, the corn-growers will object. If everybody agrees to that, we, of course, will not go against the village community. But until then it doesn't suit us.

The implementation of the “agreement” is thus postponed indefinitely, and meanwhile commodity production takes its normal course and undermines the “relative equality”.

It follows from all this that the time of the “socialist organisation in the sphere of home exchange” will not come until it is possible to remove all the contradictions that have been pointed out. And that will be possible only when the *labour of each individual person assumes a social character*. That can be the case only when the whole of the social production mechanism constitutes a single planned

entity. But then the “organisation of exchange” will be the fifth wheel to a cart, because any exchange has sense only as long as the production mechanism in society consists of separate parts not organically linked, i.e., as long as the labour of the producers has an individual, not a social character. Neither the tribal nor the family community knew any “home exchange” or needed to organise it, for the simple reason that they were based on *organised production*: if they needed anything it was only some kind of *distribution quota*. But with the present development of the productive forces even those quotas can be based on a single principle – that of human requirements. After our excursion along the road of “socialist organisation of exchange” we again come back to our starting-point. We arrive back again at the question: how will the *socialist organisation of production* make its appearance in Russia? We have seen that it will not be introduced by either a provisional or a permanent people’s government; we have also seen that neither communal land tenure nor communal cultivation of the soil will lead to it. Moreover, we are now convinced that “socialist organisation in the sphere of home exchange” will not lead to it either. And yet Mr. Tikhomirov prophesied to us the “foundation of the socialist organisation of Russia”; that was the whole idea of his Narodnaya Volya revolution. How, then, will his prophecy come true?

One must have faith, Mr. Tikhomirov exclaims. Faith “in the people, in one’s own strength, in the revolution”.

“I believe, Lord, help me in my lack of faith! “ We know that faith is a beautiful thing; that “it is faith that guides the navigator when, trusting to fate his frail bark, he prefers the fickle movement of the waves to the more solid element, the land”. But the same divinely inspired father who makes this apology of faith could also tell us in what unstable equilibrium faith finds itself when it enters into

contradiction with reason. And Mr. Tikhomirov's "faith" suffers greatly from that gross defect. He has faith in *his own*, semi-Bakuninist, semi-Tkachovist revolution only because his reason is perfectly satisfied with the Tkachov-Bakunin philosophy. But as soon as his reason becomes more exacting not a trace of *this* faith of his will be left. He will then understand that he was cruelly mistaken when he considered it permissible to talk about the economic revolution knowing nothing at all about the ABC of economics, i.e., having no idea of money, commodity and exchange.

For the rest, we shall not make any special reproach to our author on these last grounds. We will say: his faith has saved him. He has been mistaken only because he "had faith" in Tkachov and Bakunin; not he is to blame, but those who "tempted" him.

The important thing for us is the conclusion from all that has been said. And we can formulate it as follows: *all Mr. Tikhomirov's expectations "from the revolution" are nothing but a continual misunderstanding and a return of advanced Russian thought to the beaten track of Bakuninism.* But "what was is overgrown with the past, and what will be will not be in the old way, but in a new way", as the popular song says. Discredited in the seventies, Bakuninism will not be revived in the eighties. It will not be resuscitated even by men either more eloquent or more noisy than Mr. Tikhomirov.

Those of our readers to whom this conclusion seems convincing can raise a new and last objection. They can say that our arguments are founded on the supposition that Mr. Tikhomirov will only *take* power, but will not *hold* it for any length of time. What will happen if the revolutionaries, instead of following Mr. Tikhomirov's directions, follow those of Tkachov, if they justify the opinion of P.L. Lavrov

who, as much as ten years ago, said that “the dictatorship can be wrenched from the hands of the dictators only by a new revolution”?

5. Probable Consequences of the Seizure of Power by the Socialists

What will happen then? Oh, then there will be a most disgraceful fiasco for the Russian socialist party! It will be obliged to undertake an “organisation” for which it has neither the necessary strength nor the requisite understanding. Everything will combine to defeat it: its own unpreparedness, the hostility of the higher estates and the rural bourgeoisie, the people’s indifference to its *organisational* plans and the underdeveloped state of our economic relations in general. The Russian socialist party will provide but a new historical example corroborating the thought expressed by Engels in connection with the Peasant War in Germany

“The worst thing that can befall a leader of an extreme party is to be compelled to take over a government in an epoch when the movement is not yet ripe for the domination of the class which he represents, and for the realisation of the measures which that domination implies. What he *can* do depends not upon his will but upon the degree of contradiction between the various classes, and upon the level of development of the material means of existence, of the conditions of production and commerce upon which class contradictions always repose. What he *ought* to do, what his party demands of him, again depends not upon him or the stage of development of the class struggle and its conditions. He is bound to the doctrines and demands hitherto propounded which, again, do not proceed from the class relations *of the moment* [18], or from the more or less *accidental* [19] level of production and commerce, but from his more or less penetrating insight into the general result of the social and political movement. Thus, he necessarily finds himself in an insoluble dilemma. What he *can* do contradicts all his previous actions, principles and immediate interests of his

party, and what he *ought* to do cannot be done. In a word, he is compelled to represent not his party or his class, but the class for whose domination the movement is then ripe. In the interests of the movement he is compelled to advance the interests of an alien class, and to feed his own class with phrases and promises, and with the asseveration that the interests of that alien class are their own interests. Whoever is put into this awkward position is irrevocably lost.” [20*]

Hence it follows that Mr. Tikhomirov is greatly mistaken when he imagines that the seizure of power by the revolutionaries would be the “starting-point of the revolution”. Quite the contrary: such a “seizure” would be a signal for reaction. It would not consolidate the influence of the country’s progressive forces, but, having exhausted them in the first sterile effort, it would guarantee the triumph of the conservative and reactionary parties. Not only would the Russian revolution diverge from the example of the French Revolution which our Jacobins treasure and which is the only comprehensible one for them, but in its development it would be the exact opposite of that revolution. Whereas up to a certain time every new wave of the French Revolution brought on to the arena of history a more extreme party, our home-reared Jacobins would reduce to nil the corresponding period of the Russian revolution. Shattered and discredited, they would withdraw from the stage under a hail of hostile accusations and mockery, and the unorganised and disunited masses of the people, having no leaders, would be unable to overcome the systematic resistance of their enemies. At the very best the popular revolt would end in the overthrow of the remnants of the old regime without bringing the working class the reforms which most directly and immediately affect their interests.

As Marx notes, all facts of great importance in world history occur, as it were, twice: the first time as tragedy, the second as farce. [21*] The history of the French Jacobins is a

majestic tragedy, full of burning interest. But the history of the conspiratorial plans of the modern Blanquists (Russian and foreign) *despite the heroism* of individuals remains a farce whose tragi-comicality lies in the complete inability of the cast to understand the meaning and character of the impending working-class revolution.

Author's Footnotes

10. **Vestnik Narodnoi Voli** No.2, pp.255-56.

11. [*Note to the 1905 edition.*] This is what our present "socialist-revolutionaries" still refuse to understand when they put themselves out to resuscitate our old "revolutionary" prejudices.

12. [*Note to the 1905 edition.*] This was confirmed a few years later by Mr. Borodin's excellent study on the Ural Cossack troop.

13. «Крестьяне на Руси», 2-ое изд., Москва 1879, стр.19. [**The Peasants in Russia**, 2nd edition, Moscow 1879, p.19.]

14. [*Note to the 1905 edition.*] This again applies in full to the present "socialist-revolutionaries".

15. **Vestnik Narodnoi Voli** No.2, *What Can We Expect*, etc., p.258.

16. [*Note to the 1905 edition.*] Of course this demand is inconsistent only as an *ideal*, as a *transitional* measure it can turn out to be perfectly expedient.

17. [*Note to the 1905 edition.*] I here refer to my exposition and criticism of Rodbertus' economic doctrine.

18. [*Italics by Plekhanov.*]

19. [*Italics by Plekhanov.*]

Notes

14*. From Goethe's *Faust*.

15*. See M. Kovalevsky's book *Communal Land Tenure, the Causes, Course and Consequences of Its Disintegration*, Moscow 1879.

16*. F. Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, Moscow 1959, p.34-35.

17*. From Goethe's *Faust*.

18*. Arthur Arnoult, *L'état et la révolution*, Geneva and Brussels, *Rabotnik*, 1877.

19*. The reference is to K. Marx's *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, published in Berlin in 1859.

20*. F. Engels, *The Peasant War in Germany*, Moscow 1956, pp.138-39.

21*. K. Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. Cf. K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol.1, Moscow 1958, p.247.

Chapter V

True Tasks of the Socialists in Russia

1. Social-Democrats and Man-Handling

And so, “Russian socialism as expressed in the Narodnaya Volya party”, will be alien to the great tasks of European socialism until it abandons for ever its intermediary position between Bakunin’s anarchism and Tkachov’s Blanquism, i.e., until it acknowledges the barrenness of Mr. Tikhomirov’s theoretical constructions.

But as these constructions are the last desperate attempt to revive our revolutionary theories of the good old times, our socialism, by raising itself to the height of such an acknowledgement, will cease to be “*Russian*” and will merge with world socialism “as expressed” in the works of Marx and Engels and partly in those of Lassalle.

Its supporters will then understand that:

1. The *communist* revolution of the working class cannot in any way grow out of the petty-bourgeois peasant socialism professed at present by nearly all our revolutionaries.
2. By the inherent character of its organisation the rural community tends first and foremost to give place to bourgeois, not communist, forms of social life.
3. In the transition to the latter its role will be not *active*, but *passive* it is not in a position to *advance* Russia on the

road to communism; it can only *offer less resistance* to that advance than small individual landownership.

4. The initiative in the communist movement can be assumed only by the working class in our industrial centres, the class.
5. Whose emancipation can be achieved only by its own conscious efforts.

Once they have understood these simple truths, the Russian socialists “from the privileged sections” will put aside all thoughts of seizing power, leaving that to our workers’ socialist party of the future. Then their efforts will be directed only *towards the creation of such a party and the removal of all conditions which are unfavourable to its growth and development.*

Needless to say, such activity cannot have anything in common with that uniting of the working class by means of “depriving them of land, fining and man-handling them” which Mr. Tikhomirov speaks of as the outcome – the only possible one at present – for the Russian Social-Democrats. [1*] This fiction alone would be enough to perpetuate our author’s name in literature if only it were not distinguished, like all his arguments, by its complete lack of originality. In this case our author only repeated what was said and printed long ago by our Narodniks, legal and illegal. Even fiction writers of the would-be-peasant trend have given Marxists the role of myrmidons of capitalism in their writings. Two years ago Mr. Ertel published in **Vestnik Yevropy** a tale called *The Young Lady of Volkonsk*. [2*] In this amusing story we see a liberal landowner, an enlightened bourgeois, a Narodnik who spends part of his time collecting songs and part making love to the heroine, and finally a Marxist who has dedicated his energies to improving agriculture on the liberal landlord’s estate. True, Ertel’s Marxist does not like “fining and man-handling” but he waxes enthusiastic over the mere thought of the landlord

acquiring a new kind of machine, not to mention a works or factory. He has become so imbued with the interests of capitalism that he hastens to contract a close and fraternal alliance with the enlightened bourgeois already referred to as soon as the latter pays a visit to his protector. Such a “programme” has indeed nothing attractive about it, but that is the fault neither of Marxism in general nor of the above-mentioned Marxist in particular. He could only imagine the kind of programme Mr. Ertel thought fit to bestow on him. It has long been noted that the fruit does not fall far from the tree and that the heroes of fiction are no more ingenious than their authors. To corroborate that old truth we could cite the new proof that Ertel’s Narodnik himself says a lot of completely incoherent things; for instance, in a conversation with the Marxist he assures him that Marx “has been dealt the final blow” by the publication of some new articles in Russian journals (not Mr. V.V.’s articles in **Otechestvenniye Zapiski?** [3*]). If the reader takes this truth into consideration and exonerates the “Marxist”, he will have to be all the more condescending towards Marxism itself, whose crime consists only in the representatives of Russian exceptionalism not being able to understand and assess it.

If any attention at all is given to this question it is obvious that the Social-Democrats, far from being ever or anywhere capable of allying with the bourgeoisie in enslaving the workers, are, on the contrary, the only ones who can organise serious resistance to capitalist exploitation. To make this palpable let us resort once more to a practical example. Let us remember the contemporary condition of the handicraft weavers and see what attitude the various socialist groups may and must adopt to them.

It is useless to say much about the anarchists. They would recommend “propaganda by action” to the handicraftsmen

and would advise them to blow up some inn or to maim some manufacturer. No systematic mode of action can be indicated by a programme whose main feature is the negation of logical order and system of any kind. The most interesting for us are the Blanquists. In France, Blanqui's native country, his followers have a systematic mode of action only insofar as their programme loses all its distinctive features and merges with that of the "workers' party", as we see in the electoral campaigns, the propaganda of the class struggle, etc., etc. But whenever the Blanquists preserve intact their "particular imprint" their mode of action becomes deprived of any kind of guiding thread and is reduced to the formula: "Let's make a noise, brothers, let's make a noise!" [4*] Today they agitate for the presentation of a revolver to Brzozowsky [5*] as a mark of honour, tomorrow they will demand the abolition of the standing army and the day after they will get excited over a "Chapel of Atonement", and so on. Of course, such "noisy" activity is out of the question for Blanqui's Russian followers, i.e., for open or secret supporters of *Nabat*. The Blanquists' propaganda in Russia is necessarily reduced mainly to "terror" and their organisational work to setting up secret conspiratorial societies. The question is: What role in this can the handicraftsman play as such, i.e., without getting lost among the intelligentsia, but remaining in his craft and maintaining all the relations to capital which history has imposed on him? Only isolated individuals can take part in the terrorist struggle. Now it is not the time to invite the handicraftsmen to unite in a single workers' party, for the "worker capable of class dictatorship hardly exists; hence he cannot be given political power", etc. All the weavers can do is to place their hopes in the future and support the revolutionary party in its striving to seize power in the hope that the result of that seizure will be "the foundation of the socialist organisation of Russia".

The master will come

And settle our quarrel.[6]*

But the “master” may be late in coming or may not come at all; he may be deported as soon as he arrives and have no time to lay the famous “foundation”. What immediate practical profit will the revolutionary movement then bring the handicraftsmen? Will it make their own condition clear to them? Will it teach them to defend their own interests by union and organisation?

No, it will not! And if it does it will only do so accidentally and incidentally, since the main efforts of the Blanquists are by no means directed at socialist propaganda among the workers. We have already seen that Tikhomirov’s revolution hopes to rally the forces of the people round “points” whose explanation “needs no special propaganda”. And yet “special propaganda” is the very thing that is needed for the handicraftsmen’s serious and successful struggle against their exploiters. From this it follows that in spite of all their desire to “take the people as they are” the Russian Blanquists are bound to ignore a whole series of the people’s practical needs and requirements.

What, then, will be the position adopted towards the handicraftsmen by the Russian Social-Democrat, who has so often and so insistently been accused of fantasy and of being unpractical? Knowing that the emancipation of the workers must be conquered by the workers themselves and that the degree of capitalist exploitation is determined, among other things, by the level of the requirements and development of the exploited, he will endeavour to rouse the workers to independent struggle against capital. As the scattered efforts of the workers in individual factories and workshops cannot guarantee the success of such a struggle, he will have to give it a class character. For that he will have to conduct with great energy and perseverance that “special propaganda” which is called the propaganda of socialism. But we already know that every class struggle is a political struggle. Therefore, our Social-Democrat’s propaganda must

immediately assume a *social and political* character. He will say to the workers: "A rise in the standard of your material prosperity is possible only with resolute intervention by the state. It can and must help some of you, namely those who have almost become full-fledged factory workers, first and foremost by legislation to protect the interests of the working men, women and children; those among you whose independent small production is still struggling against capitalism can stabilise their position only by means of state credit to workers' associations. But not every state will assume the role of your ally. The state will be wholly and entirely on your side only if it is wholly and entirely yours, a workers' state. That is the aim at which you must direct all your efforts. And as long as it is not attained you must *force* even a state which is hostile to you to make concessions to you. And in so doing, do not forget that the more resolute you are in demands and the stronger your party, the more decisive those concessions will be. So set up such a party, unite in a single, formidable, disciplined force. When you have succeeded in winning the final victory you will throw off completely the yoke of capital, but until then you will at least hold it in check to some extent, you will at least safeguard yourselves and your children against physical, moral and intellectual degeneration. You have only two ways out of your present condition: either struggle or complete subjection to capital. I call to my side those who wish to struggle!

What do you think, reader? Will such activity be the most practical of all that are possible? You will say that its success will be too slow and unsure. We grant that. But other forms of activity hold out still less certainty of success. Neither anarchist "propaganda by action" nor Blanquist conspiracies will advance the class struggle a single step in Russia, and it is on the course of that struggle that the emancipation of the workers depends.

The Social-Democrat, of course, will do only what he *can*, but the advantage of his position is that *he can do much more for the working class* than any other "socialist-

revolutionary”. He will bring *consciousness* into the working class, and without that it is impossible to begin a serious struggle against capital. And once he brings that consciousness he will give the revolutionary movement a strength, endurance and intensity that cannot even be dreamed of if one adheres to the old “programmes”.

And note that our Social-Democrat has no need at all to “fuss about” (a typically Russian expression!) “over the creation of the class in whose name he wishes to act.” Only somebody who is completely ignorant of the economic relations in Russia today can be in the dark as to the indisputable fact that that class is partly already created and partly *being created* with increasing speed by the implacable course of social development. Only somebody who does not at all understand the historical role of all-levelling capital can compare the condition of our working class with the more or less exceptional position of our “gentry”. [7*] The French Anglomaniacs at the end of the last century and the beginning of this failed in transplanting into their country England’s aristocratic institutions; but the French workers’ party can, without in the least falling into utopianism, adhere to the same programme as the British Democratic Federation. Whence this difference? It is a secret which, by the way, Mr. Tikhomirov himself will discover if only he reads attentively the **Manifesto of the Communist Party**. Recommending to him this wonderful work, we for our part shall say a few words more about the tasks of the socialists of that “trend which considers Russian capitalism a historical inevitability” and to which we ourselves belong.

The most usual argument against that trend – an argument which comes *from the heart* if not “from reason” – is the reference to the impossibility of the revolutionary movement developing rapidly in Russia if its chances depend on the strength and growth of the Russian working class. This consideration gives rise, on the one hand, to the inclination towards exceptionalist programmes, and, on the other, to the fear that we have already mentioned of the revolutionaries themselves having, perhaps, to enter the

service of Russian capital. This argument, of course, will not be long in being brought to bear against our reasoning.

That is why we do not think it superfluous to draw our reader's attention to the strange inconsistency of those from whom we hear objections similar to the one just quoted. That inconsistency is a palpable indication that many of the so-called pupils of Chernyshevsky have mastered only the results of his study and have not formed the slightest idea of his method.

When it is a question of the probable destiny of Russian capitalism or of its influence on our political relations, the Narodniks generally begin by pointing out the supposedly indisputable fact that our capitalism is in the same stage of development as was that "in Western Europe" more than a century ago. From this it is concluded that a whole century must elapse before capitalism renders our history the same "service" as it rendered the history of the "West". That is a long time, and as our intelligentsia have long been in the habit of substituting their revolutionary will for revolutionary development, they look to the village community and refer to the possibility proved by Chernyshevsky of its immediate transition to a socialist form of communal life. Thus they invoke the probability of the *complete omission* of one phase in social development largely because they do not understand the possibility of that phase *being shortened*. It does not even occur to them that the complete omission of a particular historical period is but a particular case of its shortening, and that by proving the possibility of the former we at the same time, and to a larger extent, affirm the probability of the latter.

We have already seen above from the example of P.N. Tkachov that this gross error in logic underlay our Blanquists' programme. Unfortunately not only the Blanquists repeat it.

Many people think that the social revolution can take place in Russia "now, or in a very remote future, perhaps never" – in other words on the basis either of our present economic

relations or of a system whose institution and consolidation are a matter of the most hazy future. But we already know – and this we learn from the history of that same Western Europe – that only the first step was difficult for capitalism and that its uninterrupted advance from “West” to East is taking place with constantly increasing acceleration. Not only the development of capitalism in Russia cannot be as slow as it was in England, for example, its very existence cannot be so lasting as it has been fated to be in the “West European countries”. Our capitalism will fade before it has time to blossom *completely* – a guarantee for which we find in the powerful influence of international relations. But neither is it possible to doubt that the course of affairs is advancing to its more or less complete victory. Neither unsubstantiated denials of an already existing fact nor grieved exclamations about the disintegration of the old, “traditional” forms of the people’s communal life – nothing will stop the advance of a country “which has entered the road of the natural law of its development”. But this development will be more or less slow, the birth-pangs will be more or less painful, depending on the combination of all the social and international relations of the country in question. The more or less favourable character of that combination for the working class depends, in turn, on the conduct of those who have understood the meaning of the evolution which awaits their country. Capitalism developed in Germany at a time when the working class there was more highly developed than in England or France, and that is why the rebuff given to capitalist exploitation in that country was swifter and more resolute. The German Communists did not even think of entering the service of capitalism. They knew that the more or less early victory of the working class depends, among other things, on the influence that those who understand the meaning of historical development have on that class. They actively set about the work of propaganda among the workers and success exceeded their expectations. Why should we not follow their example?

The manufacturer is just as unthinkable without the worker as the “master”, according to Aristotle’s remark, without the slave. The development of the bourgeoisie presupposes the development of the working class; the historical growth of capitalism is a two-sided process, each side being the rallying point for the corresponding class in society. On the whole, each of these classes is chained to its place “more securely than Vulcan’s chains bound Prometheus to the rock”. In capitalist society the commodity dominates the producer and prescribes his behaviour. But some individuals have the possibility to make a conscious choice between the two opposite poles. It is to these individuals that our so-called “intellectuals” belong. It will depend on their own moral and intellectual development what attitude they adopt to the cause of the working class. No kind of sophism can provide any justification for the socialist who deserts to the camp of the exploiters. And the possible sophisms in this case are so wretched and impotent that they cannot for a minute appear convincing to him who can correctly construct even a single syllogism.

Only owing to the rectilinear and angular views typical of our exceptionalists can there possibly be any talk about a logical necessity of the socialist’s personal participation in the capitalist development of a country. The exceptionalist is accustomed to substituting his own will for historical development, he is used to contenting himself with a dogmatic outlook instead of a critical one. He judges as follows: capitalism is inevitable as a transitional stage, hence there must be people who will create capitalist relations. And yet I can no longer serve the knights of primitive accumulation, I cannot “plunder the worker with a clear conscience and energy”. What if there are many people like me? What if *all* are imbued with my views? Then there will be no capitalism, which is necessary as a transitional stage, etc. Thus, the poor exceptionalist finds himself involved in a real vicious circle of premises followed by further concentric circles of conclusions. Is it not better to “renounce socialism for a time and apply one’s energies to the spreading and

strengthening of capitalism, since capitalism is absolutely necessary”? “On what grounds,” asks Mr. Tikhomirov, “will we soak the worker himself with socialist ideas which divert the best forces of that class from striving towards the capitalist career which nobody will carry out better than people from among the workers themselves?” [8*] We shall have time to return to socialism when capitalism has fulfilled its historic mission, etc. The exceptionalist lives perpetually in a world of ready-made and sharply defined facts and concepts, but he has not the slightest idea of *the process by which* these facts and concepts *came into existence*. That is why, dealing with each of them apart from the others, he completely loses sight of their mutual connection and dependence.

He proceeds from the assumption that it is impossible successfully to spread socialist ideas without the development of capitalism. But in his desire to reduce his opponents’ views to the absurd as quickly as possible he soon forgets this assumption and begins to talk about the rapid spread of socialist ideas hindering the development of capitalism. He agrees to consider one phenomenon as a consequence and another as a cause, but he fears that the consequence may appear sooner than the cause and thus prevent it from manifesting its action, i.e., from giving rise to this very consequence. Thus, our exceptionalist falls into the very same pit of absurdity that he so carefully dug for his opponents. All these have to do then is to pull him out by means of the following very simple argument.

If the successful spread of socialist ideas among the popular masses were thinkable, they will say, without the radical revolution in relationships of life, revolution which capitalism gives rise to, there would be no need for talk about any kind of transitional phases in our social development. These phases have a meaning for us only for the very reason that they clear the ground for socialist propaganda. It would, therefore, be ridiculous to fear that our present propaganda will stop the development of capitalism in our country. But, on the other hand, it would

be absurd to abandon that propaganda since its very possibility is an indication that history has already prepared a certain part of the ground for it. The sooner we cultivate that part, the sooner our historical development will be accomplished and the fewer sacrifices and efforts the road opening out before our people will cost them. We do not wish to go against history, but neither do we wish to lag even a single step behind. As Chernyshevsky puts it, we have no pity for anything which has outlived its time, but we refuse to delay, even for a minute, a matter which already now appears timely and possible. We undertake to spread our ideas, being able to prove mathematically that every step Russia makes on the road of social development brings closer the time when those ideas will triumph and ease our subsequent work.

We differ from you inasmuch as, while the development of the present economic relations is carrying you increasingly farther away from your *community* ideals, our *communist* ideals are coming closer and closer to us thanks to that same development. You remind one of a man who wishes to go north and gets into a south-bound train; we, on the other hand, know where we are going and board the train of history that takes us at full speed to our goal. It is true that you are confused by the direction we have taken; you think that a socialist may have no sympathy for the development of bourgeois modes of production. But the reason for that is that your logic is too exceptionalist.

You imagine that a socialist, if he remains faithful to his ideals, must everywhere and always hinder the development of capitalism. In that case you are once again arguing in the most primitive manner: to hinder the development of capitalism, you say, means to harm the interests of the employers; and as those interests are diametrically opposed to the workers' everything which is detrimental to capital will be profitable to labour. You do not even suspect that capitalism is opposed *not only to the following, but also to the preceding* link in the chain of historical development; that it fights not only the revolutionary efforts of the

proletariat, but the reactionary strivings of the nobility and the petty bourgeoisie too. You burn with hatred for capitalism and are prepared to attack it wherever possible. This zeal often makes you rejoice over those defeats of capitalism which can be useful *only to the reactionaries*. The programme of your “Russian socialism” coincides in that respect with the programme of the German “social-conservatives” and has no trace of progressive tendencies. In order to avoid such miserable metamorphoses you must at last become imbued with the dialectical view of history. You must at the same time support capitalism in its struggle against *reaction* and be the implacable enemy of the same capitalism in its fight against the working-class *revolution* of the future. Only such a programme is worthy of a party which considers itself to be the representative of the most progressive strivings of its time. To adopt this standpoint you need again to abandon your position as a kind of intermediary between the various classes and to merge with the workers.

2. Propaganda Among the Workers

But is such a merger possible at present? Is propaganda among the workers at all possible in the present political circumstances?

Impossibility is a particular case of difficulty. But there are two forms of difficulty which occasionally become impossibility. One type of difficulty depends on the personal qualities of the agents, on the dominant character of their strivings, views and inclinations. This type of difficulty is created by social surroundings through the intermediary of individuals, and therefore its shades are as varied as the qualities of individuals. What was *difficult* for Goldenberg was *easy* for Zhelyabov; what is impossible for a man of one type of character and convictions may appear necessary and therefore possible, though perhaps difficult, for another with different habits and views. [9*] The impossible is often not what is in itself impossible, but what, in the opinion of a

certain individual, brings profits which do not compensate for the efforts exerted. But the appraisal of the profits a given political matter brings depends entirely on the agent's view of the matter. Mr. V.V., being convinced that the government itself will undertake the organisation of national production which he thinks desirable, will naturally consider superfluous the sacrifices and efforts which propaganda among the workers will cost at present. Similarly, the conspirator who relies mainly on some "committee" or other will declare without great inner struggle that propaganda is impossible among the workers, who, in his opinion, are *important* "for the revolution" but are far from being the only representatives of the revolution. [10*] This is by no means the way the Social-Democrat speaks; he is convinced that it is not a case of the workers being necessary *for the revolution*, but of the revolution being necessary *for the workers*. For him propaganda among the workers will be the main aim of his efforts, and he will not give it up until he has tried all means at his disposal and exerted all the efforts he is capable of. And the more our revolutionary intelligentsia become imbued with truly socialist views, the more possible and the easier work among the workers will seem to them, for the simple reason that their desire for such work will be all the greater.

We do not wish and would not be able to deceive anybody. Everybody knows how many difficulties and persecutions await the propagandist and popular agitator in our country today. But those difficulties must not be exaggerated. Every kind of revolutionary work without exception is made very difficult in our country today by persecution from the police, but that does not mean that the white terror has achieved its aim, i.e., that it has "rooted out sedition". Action calls for counteraction, persecution gives birth to self-sacrifice, and no matter how energetic the reactionary steps taken by the

government, the revolutionary will always be able to evade them if only he devotes the necessary amount of energy to that purpose. There was a time when the blowing up of the Winter Palace and the undermining in Malaya Sadovaya would have seemed unpracticable and unfeasible to the revolutionaries themselves. [11*] But people were found who did the impossible, carried out the unfeasible. Can such persistence be unthinkable in other spheres of revolutionary work? Are the spies that track down the “terrorists” less skilful and numerous than those who guard our working class against the “pseudo-science of socialism and communism”? Only he can affirm that who has made up his mind to avoid any kind of work that is unpleasant for him.

As far as the qualities of the working class itself are concerned, they do not by any means justify the gloomy prophecies of our pessimists. Properly speaking, hardly anybody has ever undertaken propaganda among the workers in our country with any consistency or system. And yet experience has shown that even the scattered efforts of a few dozen men were sufficient to give a powerful impulse to the revolutionary initiative of our working class. Let the reader remember the Northern Union of Russian Workers, its Social-Democratic programme and its organisation, which was very far-flung for a secret society. This Union has disintegrated, but before accusing the workers of that our intelligentsia should recall whether they did much to support it. [12*] Yet it was quite possible and not even so very difficult to support it. In their *Letter to the Editors of Zemlya i Volya* representatives of the Union even defined the type of help that was desirable and indispensable for them. They requested co-operation in setting up a secret printshop for the publication of their working-class paper. The “intellectual” society *Zemlya i Volya* considered it untimely to fulfil that request. The main efforts of our

“intellectual” socialists were then aimed in a completely different direction. The result of those efforts was not support for the workers but intensification of the police persecutions whose victims, among others, were the workers’ organisations. Is it astonishing that, left to their own resources in a conspiracy which they were by no means accustomed to, the Workers’ Union broke up into small sections not linked by any unity of plan or of action? But those small circles and groups of socialist workers have still not ceased to exist in our industrial centres; all that is needed to unite them again in one impressive whole is a little conviction, energy and perseverance.

Needless to say the workers’ secret societies do not constitute a workers’ party. In this sense, those who say that our programme is meant far more for the future than for the present are quite right. But what follows from that? Does it mean we need not set to work immediately on its implementation? The exceptionalists who argue in that way are again being caught in a vicious circle of conclusions. A widespread working-class movement presupposes at least a temporary triumph of free institutions in the country concerned, even if those institutions are only partly free. But to secure such institutions will in turn be impossible without political support from the most progressive sections of the people. Where is the way out? West European history broke this vicious circle by slow political education of the working class. But there is no limit to our revolutionaries’ fear of punctilious old woman history’s slowness. They want the revolution as soon as possible, cost what it may. In view of this one can only wonder at them not remembering the proverb: If you want to ride the sledge, pull it up the hill – a proverb whose political meaning amounts to the irrefutable proposition that anyone who wishes to win freedom quickly must try to interest the working class in the fight against

absolutism. The development of the political consciousness of the working class is one of the chief forms in the struggle against the “principal enemy which prevents any at all rational approach” to the question of creating in our country a workers’ party on the West European pattern. What, indeed, is the meaning of the assurances given by historians that in such and such a historical period the bourgeoisie – or, what comes to almost the same, society – was fighting against absolutism in such and such a country? No more and no less than that the bourgeoisie was inciting and leading the working class to fight, or at least was counting on its support. Until the bourgeoisie were guaranteed that support they were cowardly, because they were powerless. What did the republican bourgeoisie – deservedly deprived of that support – do against Napoleon III? All that they could do was to choose between hopeless heroism and hypocritical approval of the accomplished fact. When did the revolutionary bourgeoisie show courage in 1830 and 1848? When the working class was already getting the upper hand at the barricades. Our “society” cannot count on such support from the workers; it does not even know who the insurgent workers will aim their blows at – the defenders of absolute monarchy or the supporters of political freedom. Hence its timidity and irresoluteness, hence the leaden, hopeless gloom that has come over it now. But if the state of affairs changes, if our “society” is guaranteed the support from at least the city suburbs, you will see that it knows what it wants and will be able to speak to the authorities in the language worthy of a citizen. Remember the Petersburg strikes in 1878–79. Reports about them were far from interesting to the socialists alone. They became the event of the day and nearly all the intelligentsia and thinking people in Petersburg showed an interest in them. [13*] Now imagine that those strikes had expressed, besides the antagonism of interests between the employers and the

workers of a given factory, the political discord which was appearing between the Petersburg working *class* and the absolute monarchy. The way the police treated the strikers gave occasion enough for such political discord to be manifested. Imagine that the workers at the Novaya Bumagopryadilnya Mill had demanded, besides a wage rise for themselves, definite political rights for all Russian citizens. The bourgeoisie would then have seen that they had to consider the workers' demands more seriously than before. Besides this, all the liberal sections of the bourgeoisie, whose economic interests would not have been immediately and directly threatened had the strikers been successful, would have felt that their political demands were at last being provided with some solid foundation and that support from the working class made the success of their struggle against absolutism far more probable. The workers' political movement would have inspired new hope in the hearts of all supporters of political freedom. The Narodniks themselves might have directed their attention to the new fighters from among the workers and have ceased their barren and hopeless whimpering over the destruction of the "foundations" they cherished so much. [1]

The question is who, if not the revolutionary intelligentsia, could promote the political development of the working class? During the 1878–79 strikes even the self-reliant intelligentsia could not boast of clear political consciousness. That was why the strikers could not hear anything at all instructive from them about the connection between the economic interests of the working class and its political rights. Now, too, there is much confusion in the heads of our "revolutionary youth". But we are' willing to entertain the hope that confusion will at last give way to the theories of modern scientific socialism and will cease to paralyse the success of our revolutionary movement. Once that fortunate

time comes, the workers' groups, too, will not delay in adopting the correct political standpoint. Then the struggle against absolutism will enter a new phase, the last; supported by the working masses, the political demands of the progressive section of our "society" will at last receive the satisfaction they have been waiting for so long.

Had the death of Alexander II been accompanied by vigorous action of the workers in the principal cities of Russia, its results would probably have been more decisive. But widespread agitation among the workers is unthinkable without the help of secret societies previously set up in as large numbers as possible, which would prepare the workers' minds and direct their movement. It can, therefore, be said that without serious work among the workers, and consequently without conscious support from the secret workers' organisations, the terrorists' most daring feats will never be anything more than brilliant sorties. The "principal enemy" will only be hit, not destroyed by them; that means that the *terrorist* struggle will not achieve its aim, for its only aim must be the complete and merciless destruction of absolutism.

Thus, far from the political situation in Russia today compelling us to renounce activity among the workers, *it is only by means of such activity that we can free ourselves from the intolerable yoke of absolutism.*

Let us now consider another aspect of the matter. The foregoing exposition has once more confirmed for us the truth that the working class is very important "for the revolution". But the socialist must think first and foremost of making the revolution useful for the working population of the country. Leaving the peasantry aside for the time being, we shall note that the more clearly the working class sees the connection between its economic needs and its political rights, the more profit it will derive from its political

struggle. In the “West European countries” the proletariat often fought absolutism under the banner and the supreme leadership of the bourgeoisie. Hence its intellectual and moral dependence on the leaders of liberalism, its faith in the exceptional holiness of liberal mottoes and its conviction in the inviolability of the bourgeois system. In Germany it took all Lassalle’s energy and eloquence to do as much as only to *undermine* the moral link of the workers with the progressists. Our “society” has no such influence on the working class and there is no need or use for the socialists to create it from scratch. They must show the workers their own, working-class banner, give them leaders from their own, working-class ranks; briefly, they must make sure that not bourgeois “society”, but the workers’ secret organisations gain dominating influence over the workers’ minds. This will considerably hasten the formation and growth of the Russian workers’ socialist party, which will be able to win itself a place of honour among the other parties after having, in its infancy, promoted the fall of absolutism and the triumph of political freedom.

In order thus to contribute to the intellectual and political independence of the Russian working class, our revolutionaries need not resort to any artificial measures or place themselves in any false or ambiguous position. All they need is to become imbued with the principles of modern Social-Democracy and, not confining themselves to political propaganda, constantly to impress upon their listeners that “the economical emancipation of the working classes is ... the great end to which every political movement ought to be subordinate as a means.” [14*] Once it has assimilated this thought, our working class will itself be capable of steering between Scylla and Charybdis, between the political reaction of state socialism and the economic quackery of the liberal bourgeoisie.

In promoting the formation of the workers' party, our revolutionaries will be doing the most fruitful, the most important thing that can be pointed to a "progressive man" in present-day Russia. The workers' party alone is capable of solving all the contradictions which now condemn our intelligentsia to theoretical and practical impotence. We have already seen that the most obvious of those contradictions is at present the necessity to overthrow absolutism and the impossibility of doing so without the support of the people. Secret workers' organisations will solve this contradiction by drawing into the political struggle the most progressive sections of the people. But that is not enough. Growing and strengthening under the shelter of free institutions, the Russian workers' socialist party will solve another, not less important contradiction, this time of the economic character. We all know that the village community of today must give place to communism or ultimately disintegrate. At the same time, the economic organisation of the community has no springs to start it off on the road to communist development. While *easing* our peasants' transition to communism, the community cannot impart to them the *initiative* necessary for that transition. On the contrary, the development of commodity production is more and more undermining the traditional foundations of the community principle. And our Narodnik intelligentsia cannot remove this basic contradiction in one fell swoop. Some of the village communities are declining, disintegrating before their eyes and becoming a "scourge and a brake" for the poorest of the community members. Unfortunate as this phenomenon may seem to the intelligentsia, they can do absolutely nothing to help it at present. There is absolutely no link whatever between the "lovers of the people" and the "people". The disintegrating community is still alone on its side, and the grieving intelligentsia are alone on theirs, neither being able to put an

end to this sad state of affairs. How can a way out of this contradiction be found? Will our intelligentsia indeed have to say Bah! to all practical work and console themselves with “utopias” of the kind Mr. G. Uspensky likes? Nothing of the sort! Our Narodniks can at least save a certain number of village communities if only they will consent to appeal to the dialectics of our social development. But such an appeal is also possible only through the intermediary of a workers’ socialist party.

The disintegration of our village community is an indisputable fact. But the speed and intensity of the process differ according to localities in Russia. To halt it completely in places where the community is freshest and most stable, our Narodniks must use the forces now being freed by the breaking up of communities in *gubernias* where industry is more developed. These forces are nothing else than the forces of the rising proletariat. They, and they alone, can be the link between the peasantry and the socialist intelligentsia; they, and they alone, can bridge the historical abyss between the “people” and the “educated” section of the population. Through them and with their help socialist propaganda will at last penetrate into every corner of the Russian countryside. Moreover, if they are united and organised at the right time into a single workers’ party, they can be the main bulwark of socialist agitation in favour of economic reforms which will protect the village community against general disintegration. And when the hour of the final victory of the workers’ party over the upper sections of society strikes, once more that party, and only that party, will take the initiative in the socialist organisation of national production. Under the influence of – and, if the case presents itself, under pressure from that party – the village communities still existing will in fact begin the transition to a higher, communist form. Then the

advantages offered by communal land tenure will become not only *possible*, but *actual*, and the Narodnik dreams of our peasantry's exceptional development will come true, at least as far as a certain portion of the peasantry is concerned.

Thus *the forces which are being freed by the disintegration of the village community in some places in Russia can safeguard it against total disintegration in other places*. All that is necessary is the ability to make correct and timely use of those forces and to direct them, i.e., to organise them as soon as possible into a Social-Democratic party.

But, the champions of exceptionalism may object, the small landowners will offer vigorous resistance to the socialist tendencies of the workers' party. Most probably they will, but, on the other hand, there will be somebody to fight that resistance. The appearance of a class of small landowners is accompanied by the growth in numbers and strength of the revolutionary proletariat, which will at last impart life and movement to our clumsy state apparatus. Resistance need not be feared where there is a historical force capable of overcoming it; this is just as true as, on the other hand, a presumed absence of resistance is by no means a fact to rejoice at when the people are not capable of *beginning* the socialist movement, when the heroic exertions of separate individuals are shattered by the inertia of the obscure and ignorant masses.

It must be borne in mind, moreover, that this workers' party will also be for us a vehicle of influence from the West. The working man will not turn a deaf ear to the movement of the European proletariat, as could easily be the case with the peasant. And the united forces of the home and international movement will be more than enough to defeat the reactionary strivings of the small landowners.

So once more: *The earliest possible formation of a workers' party is the only means of solving all the economic and political contradictions of present-day Russia.* On that road success and victory lie ahead; all other roads can lead only to defeat and impotence.

And what about terror? the Narodovoltsi will exclaim. And the peasants? the Narodniks, on the other hand, will shout. You are prepared to be reconciled with the existing reaction for the sake of your plans for a distant future, some will argue. You are sacrificing concrete interests for the victory of your doctrines like narrow-minded dogmatists, others will say horrified. But we ask our opponents to be patient for a while and we shall try to answer at least some of the reproaches showered on us.

First of all, we by no means deny the important role of the terrorist struggle in the present emancipation movement. It has grown naturally from the social and political conditions under which we are placed, and it must just as naturally promote a change for the better. But in itself so-called terror only destroys the forces of the government and does little to further the conscious organisation of its opponents. The terrorist struggle does not widen the sphere of our revolutionary movement; on the contrary, it reduces it to heroic actions by small partisan groups. After a few brilliant successes our revolutionary party has apparently weakened as a result of the great tension and cannot recover without an affluence of fresh forces from new sections of the population. We recommend it to turn to the working class as to the most revolutionary of all classes in present-day society. Does that mean that we advise it to suspend its active struggle against the government? Far from it. On the contrary, we are pointing out a way of making the struggle broader, more varied, and therefore more successful. But it goes without saying that we cannot consider the cause of the

working-class movement from the standpoint of how important the workers are “for the revolution”. We wish to make the very victory of the revolution profitable to the working population of our country, and that is why we consider it necessary to further the intellectual development, the unity and organisation of the working population. By no means do we want the workers’ secret organisations to be transformed into secret nurseries rearing terrorists from among the workers. But we understand perfectly that the political emancipation of Russia coincides completely with the interests of the working class, and that is why we think that the revolutionary groups existing in that class must co-operate in the political struggle of our intelligentsia by propaganda, agitation, and occasionally open action in the street. It would be unjust to leave all the hardships of the emancipation movement to be borne by the working class, but it is perfectly just and expedient to bring the workers, as well as others, into it.

There are other sections of the population for whom it would be far more convenient to undertake the terrorist struggle against the government. But outside the workers there is no section that could at the decisive minute knock down and kill off the political monster already wounded by the terrorists. Propaganda among the workers will not remove the necessity for terrorist struggle, but it will provide it with opportunities which have so far never existed. [2]

So much for the terrorists. Let us now speak to the Narodniks.

They are grieved at all programmes in which revolutionary work among the peasants is not given the chief place. But although such work is all that their own programme contains, the result is that

*The people's gains are still but small,
Their life's not easier yet at all!*

Since the late seventies, i.e., since the splitting of the Zemlya i Volya society, revolutionary work among the peasants, far from being extended, has become increasingly narrow. At present it would not be a great error to rate it at nil. And yet all this time there has been no lack of people who assumed that the main stress of our entire revolutionary movement should be immediately transferred to the peasantry. Whence this contradiction? It would be unjust to suspect the Narodniks of inactivity, cowardice or lack of resolution. So one must think that they have set themselves a task which they cannot carry out in the present circumstances, that it is not with the peasantry that our intelligentsia must begin its merger with the people. That is in fact what we think. But that is far from meaning that we *attribute no importance* to revolutionary work among the peasants. We note the fact and try to understand what it really means, convinced that once they have understood the true reasons for their failure the Narodniks will manage to avoid repeating it. It seems to us that the formation of a workers' party is what would free us from the contradiction as a result of which in Russia Narodniks have been able to exist for the last seven years only in a state of complete alienation from the people.

How the workers' party will do this can be seen from what has been set forth above. But it will do no harm to say a few words more on this subject.

To have influence on the numerous obscure masses one must have a certain minimum of forces without which all efforts of separate individuals will never achieve any more

than absolutely negligible results. Our revolutionary intelligentsia have not that minimum, and that is why their work among the peasants has left practically no trace. We point out to them the industrial workers as the intermediary force able to promote the intelligentsia's merger with the "people". Does that mean that we ignore the peasants? By no means. On the contrary, it means that we are looking for more effective means of influencing the peasantry.

Let us continue. Besides the definite minimum of forces necessary to influence the sections in question, there must be a certain community of character between the sections themselves and the people who appeal to them. But our revolutionary intelligentsia has no community with the peasantry either in its way of thinking or its fitness for physical labour. In this respect, too, the industrial worker is an intermediary between the peasant and the "student". He must, therefore, be the link between them.

Finally, one must not lose sight of still another, far from negligible, circumstance. No matter what is said about the alleged exclusively agrarian character of present-day Russia, there is no doubt that the "countryside" cannot attract all the forces of our revolutionary intelligentsia. That is unthinkable if only because it is in the town, not in the countryside, that the intelligentsia is recruited, that it is in the town, not in the countryside, that the revolutionary seeks asylum when he is persecuted by the police, even if it is for propaganda among the peasants. Our principal cities are, therefore, the centres in which there is always a more or less considerable contingent of the intelligentsia's revolutionary forces. It goes without saying that the intelligentsia cannot avoid being influenced by the town or living its life. For some time this

life has assumed a political character. And we know that despite the most extreme “Narodnik” programmes our intelligentsia have not been able to hold out against the current and have found themselves forced to take up the political struggle. As long as we have no workers’ party, the revolutionaries “of the town” are compelled to appeal to “society”, and therefore they are, in fact, its revolutionary representatives. The “people” are relegated to the background and thus not only is the establishment of a link between them and the intelligentsia delayed, but even the link which formerly existed between the intellectual revolutionaries “of the town” and those “of the countryside” is severed. Hence the lack of mutual understanding, the disagreements and differences. This would not be the case if the political struggle in the towns were mainly of a working-class character. Then the only difference between the revolutionaries of the town and those of the countryside would be in *the place*, and not the *substance* of their activity; both types of revolutionaries would be representatives of the *popular* movement in its various forms, and the socialists would not need to sacrifice their lives in the interests of a “*society*” which is alien to their views.

Such harmony is not an unfeasible Utopia. It is not difficult to realise in practice. If at present it is impossible to find ten Narodniks who have settled in the countryside because of their programme, because of their duty to the *revolution*, on the other hand, there are quite a number of educated and sincere democrats who live in the countryside because of their duty in the service of the *state*, because of their profession. Many of these people do not sympathise with our political struggle *in its present form* and at the same time do

not undertake systematic revolutionary work among the peasantry for the simple reason that they see no party with which they could join efforts, and we know that a single man on a battlefield is not a soldier. Begin a social and political movement among the workers, and you will see that these rural democrats will little by little come over to the standpoint of Social–Democracy and in their turn will serve as a link between the town and the countryside.

Then our revolutionary forces will be distributed in the following very simple manner: those who are obliged by professional duties to be in the countryside will go there. It goes without saying that there will be a fair number of them. At the same time, those who have the possibility of settling in towns or industrial centres will direct their efforts at work among the working class and endeavour to make it the vanguard of the Russian Social-Democratic army.

Such is our programme. It does not sacrifice the countryside to the interests of the town, does not ignore the peasants for the sake of the industrial workers. *It sets itself the task of organising the social-revolutionary forces of the town to draw the countryside into the channel of the world-wide historic movement.*

Author's Footnotes

1. [Note to the 1905 edition.] The events of last year brilliantly confirm what is said here: the proletariat aroused the political consciousness of Russian "society".

2. [Note to the 1905 edition.] On the basis of this passage it was subsequently said that the Emancipation of Labour group sympathised with "terrorism". But as long as it has existed that group has held that terrorism is *inconvenient* for the workers; it was certainly useless at that time to pronounce against the terrorist activity of the intelligentsia who believed in it as in a god.

Notes

1*. In his article *What Can We Expect from the Revolution?* Tikhomirov opposes the views of the members of Narodnaya Volya to those of the Emancipation of Labour group, which, he maintains, had no other way out than to promote the development of Russian capitalism and to fight for a liberal constitution. According to his assertion, Narodnaya Volya fought for a constitution to hand over power to the people, not "to give the bourgeoisie a new instrument for organising and disciplining the working class by depriving them of land, by fines and manhandling." (Cf. **Vestnik Narodnoi Voli**, No.2, 1884, p.237.)

2*. A tale by A. Ertel, a liberal writer who in his writings represented merchants and businessmen as the organisers of the economy and vehicles of progress, was published in **Vestnik Yevropy**, Nos.6-8, 1883.

3*. **Otechestvenniye Zapiski (Fatherland Notes)** – a literary political magazine published in Petersburg from 1820. In 1839 it became the best progressive publication of its day. Among its contributors were V.G. Belinsky, A.I. Herzen, T.N. Granovsky, and N.P. Ogaryov. In 1868 the magazine came under the direction of M.Y. Saltykov-Shchedrin, N.A.

Nekrasov and G.Z. Yeliseyev. This marked the onset of a period in which the magazine flourished anew, gathering around itself the revolutionary-democratic intellectuals of Russia. The *Otechestvenniye Zapiski* was continually harassed by the censors, and in April 1884 was closed down by the tsarist government.

4*. Words of Repetilov in Griboyedov's *Wit Works Woe*.

5*. A reference to the unsuccessful attempt to assassinate Alexander II made by A.I. Brzozowski, a Polish revolutionary, in Paris on June 6, 1867.

6*. From Nekrasov's poem *The Forsaken Village*.

7*. Here Plekhanov probably refers to the passage in Tikhomirov's article where he draws a parallel between the conservative, who sees the salvation of Russia in a strong gentry, and the Social-Democrat, who sees it in the working class.

8*. **Vestnik Narodnoi Voli**, No.2, 1884, p.236.

9*. Plekhanov's comparison bears on the conduct of the Narodnaya Volya member Goldenberg after his arrest. He broke the rules of conspiracy and was caught by the secret police. Realising that he had involuntarily betrayed the cause, he committed suicide in the Peter and Paul Fortress. Zhelyabov is contrasted with Goldenberg as the type of strong-willed underground conspirator.

10*. Plekhanov here quotes the programmatic article in **Kalendar Narodnoi Voli for 1883** – *Preparatory Work of the Party*. The section of this article on the urban workers begins with the words: "The working population of the towns, which is of particularly great significance for the revolution both by its position and its great development, must be the object of the Party's serious attention." (p.130.)

11*. The explosion in the Winter Palace, carried out by Stepan Khalturin, and the sapping of the Malaya Sadovaya were stages in the plans for the assassination of Alexander II, worked out by the Executive Committee of

Narodnaya Volya and ending in the terrorist act of March 1, 1881 – the assassination of Alexander II.

12*. *The Northern Union of Russian Workers* was formed out of workers' study groups in Petersburg at the end of 1878. It had more than 200 members and existed until 1880. The Union's programme said that in its tasks it was close to the Social-Democratic parties in the West and that its final aim was to carry out the socialist revolution and its immediate task – the political emancipation of the people and their winning of political rights.

This programme gave rise to no little alarm among the Russian Narodniks. (Cf. G.V. Plekhanov, *The Russian Worker in the Revolutionary Movement*, **Works**, Russ. ed., Vol.III, p.184).

The members of the Northern Union of Russian Workers wrote a *Letter to the Editors* which was published in No.5, April 8, 1879, of **Zemlya i Volya**, in reply to the Zemlya i Volya organisation, proving that their "demands would remain nothing more than demands" until they fought the autocracy. "We also know," the Letter said, "that political freedom can guarantee us and our organisation against the tyranny of the authorities and give us the possibility to develop our outlook more correctly and achieve greater success in our propaganda."

13*. The end of the seventies was marked by a wave of strikes embracing a number of branches of industry, chiefly the textile industry, in which the exploitation of the workers was most intense. During the three years from 1878 to 1880 there were over a hundred strikes. These were of a purely economic character, the workers still believed in the tsar and even addressed a "petition" to Alexander III, who succeeded to the throne. Some Narodnaya Volya members, in particular Plekhanov, took an active part in the organisation of these strikes. (See Plekhanov's correspondence and the article *The Russian Workers in the Revolutionary Movement*.)

14*. K. Marx, *General Rules of the International Working Men's Association*. Cf. K. Marx and F. Engels, **Selected Works**, Vol.1, Moscow 1958, p.386.

Chapter VI

Conclusion

We now permit ourselves to say a few concluding words to the reader.

In all that concerns the defence of our *standpoint* we should like to appeal to his reason, not to his feelings. Valuing exclusively the interests of truth we shall succeed in reconciling ourselves to it, even if it disagrees with the convictions which are dearest of all to us. That is why we have only one request to the reader: let him criticise our arguments with the attention that the revolutionary questions we deal with deserve. Whether he approves or disapproves of the solutions we offer, in any case, Russian revolutionary thought will only gain from the new review of the results it has achieved.

But there is another aspect of the matter, and it concerns not the substance of our views but the form in which we chose to expound them. We – or I should say *I* – may be accused of excessive severity, a hostile attitude to groups which have rendered no small services to the cause of the revolution and, therefore, beyond doubt, deserve respect.

“Bachelors” of science with whom I am already familiar may even go further and accuse me of a hostile attitude to the Russian revolution.

In all that concerns *this* question, I consider it will not be superfluous to appeal to the feelings of the reader that we call justice and impartiality.

Now, in the concluding chapter as in the beginning, in the *Letter to P.L. Lavrov*, I can repeat in all sincerity that my wishes for Narodnaya Volya are not of failure but of further success. And if I was severe towards the literary exercises of one of its representatives, there were enough reasons for that which have nothing in common with hostility towards the revolution or any revolutionary group. [1]

One must first of all bear in mind that a revolutionary is not the revolution and that *theories of revolutionaries* far from always and not in all their parts deserve the name of *revolutionary theories*.

I by no means deny the importance and usefulness of the revolutionary actions carried out by the Narodovoltsi; but I do not interpret them in the same way as the official representatives of the “party”. I see them in a light which irritates the eyes of Narodnaya Volya publicists. My view of the significance of these actions was made sufficiently clear in the pamphlet *Socialism and the Political Struggle*, where I said that “Narodnaya Volya cannot find a justification for itself – nor should it seek one – outside modern scientific socialism”.

It pleased Mr. Tikhomirov to express another view on this question, a view which he thought more correct and more revolutionary.

Grieved by the fact that in “certain sections of the socialists” ... the “political democratic idea” ... “has taken forms which distort its very substance”, he decided to improve the matter and in the article *What Can We Expect from the Revolution?* he endeavoured to adapt his party’s activity to the theories of Bakunin and Tkachov. Thanks to such a twist,

the “Narodnaya Volya party’s” official theories ceased to be revolutionary and could be criticised just as severely as all other phenomena of the now more and more intensifying Russian literary reaction, without any harm to the revolution.

Reactionary theories in general are not attractive, but they are not dangerous as long as they come forward under their own banner. They become dangerous poison, real venom of the mind only when they begin to disguise themselves under a revolutionary banner. In such a case it is not the one who tears the revolutionary mask off them but the one who remains indifferent to the sight of intentional or unintentional literary forgery who is the opponent of the revolution.

I am incapable of such indifference, and I do not try to display it either. Hating reaction generally, I hate it all the more when it attracts people over to it in the name of the revolution. Neither can I confess to excessive severity towards Mr. Tikhomirov until the following two propositions are proved:

1. That Mr. Tikhomirov’s theories are not a new edition of the teachings of Bakunin and Tkachov.
2. That these teachings cannot be acknowledged as reactionary in comparison with Karl Marx’s scientific socialism.

Let my opponents try to prove these two propositions and not show any haste in accusing me of treason towards the Russian revolution. I myself will declare my severity out of place if their arguments are convincing.

But for that it is necessary, among other things, to base the argument on the very propositions of Mr. Tikhomirov which served as the occasion for my polemic with him. The general trend of *Vestnik Narodnoi Voli* is so vague and ill-defined that the Bakuninist and Tkachovian tendencies of the article *What Can We Expect from the Revolution?* “ cannot prevent Marxist tendencies from being manifest in articles by the other contributors, and perhaps unexpected as this may be – in new articles by Mr. Tikhomirov. There is nothing impossible in the fact that our author will remember the part of *Vestnik*’s programme which lies on the other side of the fatal “but” and will write a few eloquent pages on the *only* road leading to the achievement of the general “socialist aims”. But such a change of front will not weaken the reactionary tendency of the article we have analysed; it will only prove that our author has no definite views.

I wish to remind those readers who are more impartial than Mr. Tikhomirov’s defenders that one can sympathise from the bottom of one’s heart not only with the revolution in general, but also with the revolutionary “Narodnaya Volya party” in particular, and at the same time think that that party’s most urgent task, the first and most necessary success, must be an *unconditional break with its present theories*.

The supporters of Narodnaya Volya are wrong when they think that to effect such a break would be to betray the memory of the heroes of the Russian terrorist struggle. The most outstanding terrorists began with a critical attitude to the then generally recognised “programmes” of revolutionaries. Why then should people who are following in their footsteps be unable to adopt a similar critical

attitude to the “programmes” of their time; why do they think that Zhelyabov’s critical thought should stop before Mr. Tikhomirov’s dogmatic outlook?

That is a question which the young members of our Narodnaya Volya would do well to think over. [2]

Author’s Footnotes

1. [Note to the 1905 edition.] Here is another thing to be noted: I was well aware that Mr. Tikhomirov was completely “disappointed” in the programme of Narodnaya Volya long before his article *What Can We Expect from the Revolution?* was published. That is why his defence of it was outrageously hypocritical.

2. [Note to the 1905 edition.] I have so far received no serious answer to my book. In the fifth issue of *Vestnik Narodnoi Voli* there was, it is true, a short bibliographical note [1*] which said that to answer me would mean first and foremost to speak of my *personal character*. Beyond this *hint*, which was obviously intended to be *spiteful*, the editors of *Vestnik* said *absolutely nothing* in defence of Mr. Tikhomirov’s expectations from the revolution, but some years later Mr. Tikhomirov himself stated that those expectations were unrealistic and admitted that already at the time of his arrival abroad he had considered his “party” as a *corpse*. That was an unexpected but very significant conclusion to the whole of our argument. All that remained for me was to sum up, which I did in the article *Inevitable Change* published in the symposium *Sozial-Demokrat*, and in the pamphlet *A New Champion of Autocracy, or Mr. L. Tikhomirov’s Grief*, Geneva 1889. [2*]

Notes

1*. Tikhomirov’s contribution – signed L.T. – *G. Plekhanov – Our Differences, Geneva 1885.*” (*Vestnik Narodnoi Voli*, No.5, Section 2, 1886, p.40, *Notes on New Books.*)

2*. Plekhanov wrote the article *Inevitable Change* in connection with Tikhomirov’s foreword to the second edition of his book *La Russie politique et sociale*. The article *A New Champion of Autocracy, or Mr. L. Tikhomirov’s Grief* was a reply to Tikhomirov’s pamphlet *Why I Ceased to Be a Revolutionary*, on which Plekhanov also wrote a short review.