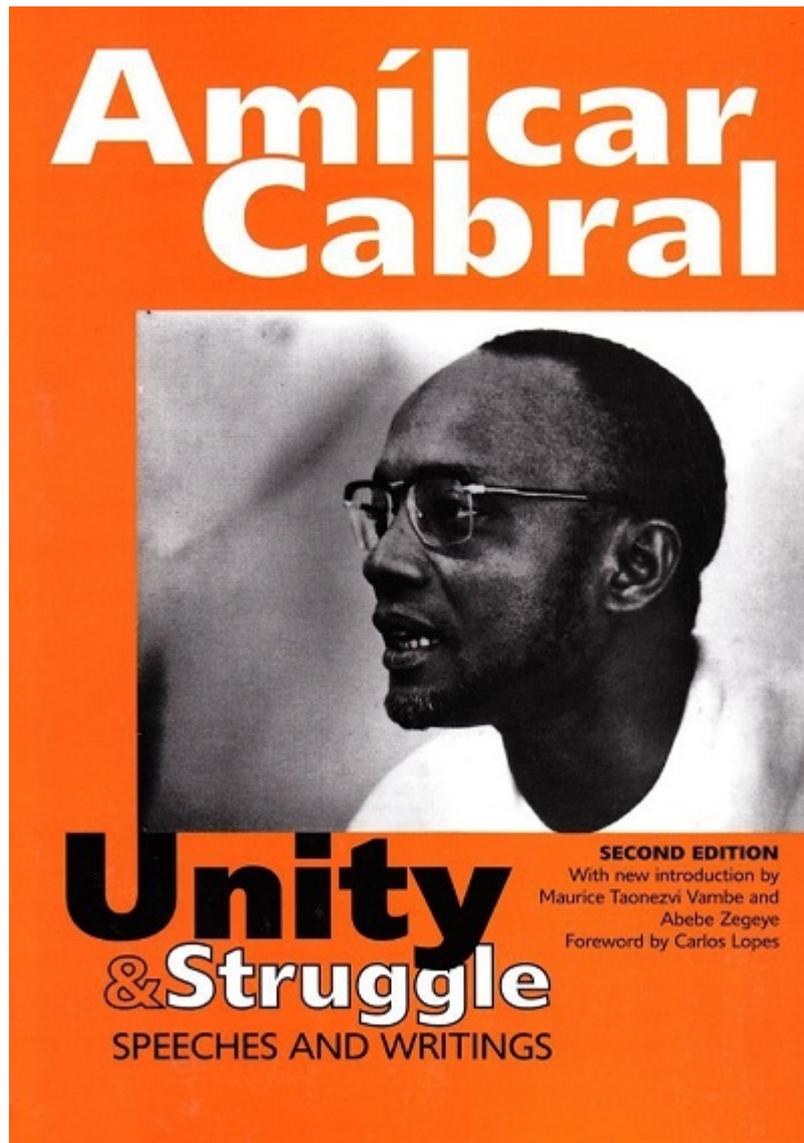


Amilcar Cabral, from *Unity and Struggle*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, pages 296-300.

## Apply Party Principles in Practice

*Date unknown*



Writings of [Amilcar Cabral](#), 1924-1973

# Apply Party Principles in Practice

[Date unknown]

In the current phase of our struggle and in order to strengthen our organisation in the face of the great responsibilities it has, it is not enough to put into operation all the leadership bodies of the party, it is not enough to do good political work and to operate effectively and victoriously on the military level. In order that the party should be constantly better and rise to the level of its responsibilities, it is essential to apply at all echelons of our life and our struggle the principles of organisation and work which the party adopted as basic norms for its action. A case in point is the of *criticism* and *self-criticism* to solve internal questions and contradictions, the principle of *collective leadership* in *leadership* of party life, the principle of *democratic centralism* and *revolutionary democracy* in the decisions to be taken at all levels and in the practice of party watchwords.

1. Develop the spirit of *criticism* between militants and responsible workers. Give everyone at every level the opportunity to criticise, to give his opinions about the work and the behaviour or the action of others. Accept criticism, wherever it comes from, as a contribution to improving the work of the party, as a demonstration of active interest in the internal life of our organisation.

Always remember that criticism is not to *speak ill* nor engage in intrigues. Criticism is and should be the act of expression an open, candid opinion in front of those concerned, on the basis of facts and in the spirit of fairness, to assess the thought and action of others, with the aim of improving that thought and action. Criticism is to be constructive, to show proof of sincere interest in the work of others, for the improvement of that work.

Combat severely the *evil tongue*, the obsession with intrigues, the 'so-and-so says', unfair and unfounded criticism. To assess the thought and action of a comrade is not necessarily to speak ill of it. To speak highly, to praise, to encourage, to stimulate – this is also criticism. While we must always be watchful against conceit and personal pride, we must not stint praise to someone who deserves it. Praise with cheerfulness, with frankness, in front of others, all those whose thought and action properly serve the progress of the party. We must likewise apply fair

criticism, denounce frankly, censure, condemn and demand the condemnation of all those who practise acts against the progress and interests of the party, fight face to face errors and faults, help others to improve their work. Derive a lesson from every mistake we make or which others make, in order to avoid making new mistakes, so that we do not fall into the follies into which others have already fallen. Criticising a comrade does not mean putting oneself against the comrade, making a *sacrifice* in which the comrade is the victim: it is to show him that we are all interested in his work, that we are all one and the same body, that his errors harm us all, and that we are watchful, as friends and comrades, to help him overcome his weaknesses and contribute increasingly in order that the party should be increasingly better.

Develop the principle of criticism at all party meetings, in all committees and within the armed forces. In the guerrilla force or in the army, after every operation against the enemy, we must assess the results of that action and the behaviour of every combatant. Derive all the lessons from the action in order to make new and better actions. In education, in production, in commercial activity, in care – in all branches of our life and struggle – we must be capable of criticising and accepting criticism.

But criticism (proof of the willingness of others to help us or of our willingness to help others) must be complemented by self-criticism (proof of our own willingness to help ourselves to improve our thoughts and our action).

Develop in all the militants, responsible workers and combatants the spirit of self-criticism: The ability of each person to make a specific analysis of his own work, to distinguish in it what is bad, to acknowledge his own errors and to discover the causes and the effects of these errors. To make self-criticism is not merely to say 'Yes, I recognise my fault, my error and I ask forgiveness', while remaining ready to commit new faults, new errors. It is not pretending to be repentant of the evil one has done, while remaining convinced deep down that it is the other who do not understand. Still less is making self-criticism to make a *ceremony* so as to go on later with a clear conscience and carry on committing errors. To criticise oneself is not to pay a *response* or an *indulgence* not to offer *penance*. Self-criticism is an act of frankness, courage, comradeship and awareness of our responsibilities, a proof of our will to accomplish properly, a demonstration of our determination to improve constantly and to make a better contribution to the progress of our party. Honest self-criticism does not necessarily demand absolution: it is a pledge that we make with our conscience not to commit further errors; it is to accept our responsibilities before others and to mobilise all our capabilities to do more and better. To criticise oneself is to recognise oneself within oneself in order to serve better.

2. *Apply progressively at all levels of the party leadership the principle of collective leadership.* Do everything possible in order that the leading bodies of the party may operate genuinely, not on the basis of one, two or three persons, but all of their members, men and women.

Collective leadership means leadership, and order or command made by a group of persons and not by one person alone or some persons in the group. To lead collectively, in a group, is to study questions jointly, to find their best solution, and to take decisions jointly, it is to benefit from experience and intelligence of each and all so as to lead, order and command better. In collective leadership, each person in the leadership must have his own clearly defined duties and is responsible for the carrying out of decisions taken by the group in regard to his duties. To lead collectively is to give to each leader the opportunity of thinking and acting, to demand that he takes the responsibilities within his competence, that he has initiative, that he demonstrates his creative capacity with determination and freedom, and that he correctly serves the teamwork, which is the product of the efforts and the contributions made by all. To lead collectively is to co-ordinate the thought and action of those who form the group, to derive the greatest return in the accomplishment of the groups tasks, within the limits of their competence and in the framework of the activities of the organisation. But to lead collectively is not and cannot be, as some suppose, to give to all and everyone the right of uncontrolled views and initiatives, to create anarchy (lack of government), disorder, contradiction between leaders, empty arguments, a passion for meetings without results. Still less is it to give vent to incompetence, ignorance, intellectual foolhardiness, only so as to pretend that everyone gives orders. Although it is true that two heads are better than one, we must be able to distinguish between the heads, and each head must know exactly what is has to do. In the framework of the collective leadership, we must respect the opinion of more experienced comrades who for their part must help the others with less experience to learn and to improve their work. In the framework of the collective leadership there is always one or other comrade who has a higher standing as party leader and who for this reason has more individual responsibility, even if the responsibility for the group's tasks falls on all the members of the group. We must allow prestige to these comrades, help them to have constantly higher standing, but not allow them to monopolise (take over) the work and responsibility of the group. We must, on the other hand, struggle against the spirit of slackness, and disinterest, the fear of responsibilities, the tendency to agree with everything, to obey blindly without thinking.

Combat the spirit of the '*big man*', the traditional chief, *boss* or *foreman* among responsible workers. But combat also the spirit of the *vassal*, *subject* in the chief's service, the *blue-eyed worker*, the *servant* or the houseboy between responsible

workers and militants. In the framework of collective leadership, the higher bodies must demand from the more elevated that they provide specific tasks to accomplish, clear watchwords and take decisions on questions within their competence.

Combat the spirit of the group and of sects, closed circles, and obsession with secrecy among some persons, personal questions and the ambition to give orders.

Collective leadership must strengthen the leadership capability of the party and create specific circumstances to make full use of members of the party.

**3. *Develop, respect and ensure respects for the correct application of democratic centralism in the practice of decisions and the carrying out of party watchwords.*** Specifically limit the duties of each leadership body and the bodies at the base, thoroughly study each question or each new initiative, take objective decisions and give clear watchwords for every task and the practical achievement of party watchwords.

*Democratic centralism* means that the power to make decisions, to formulate watchwords, to define tasks – to lead – is concentrated in central bodies or entities, with clearly defined duties, but that these decisions, watchwords etc., must be arrived at democratically, on the basis of interests and opinion of representatives of the masses, on the basis of respect for the opinion and interests of the majority. It means that each decision concerning a new question must be taken after a full and free discussion within the bodies affected by it or from the base to the top, if the matter is one which affects the whole life of the party. After this discussion and in accordance with what emerges from it, the central bodies take a decision which must immediately be carried out at all levels concerned, and without further discussion.

*Centralism* because the power, the capability to decide and to lead, is concentrated in special bodies and no other body or individual can exercise this power. Democratic because the exercise of power by these bodies does not depend merely on the will of those who give the orders, but is based on the interests and on the opinions expressed by the majority. In order constantly to improve the practice of democratic centralism we must pay attention to the aspirations and opinions of the mass of the people with regard to every important question of our life and our struggle. We must bring into operation all the bodies at the base of the party and allow constant prestige to the responsible workers and leaders who fulfil their duty. Democratic centralism is a school of discipline, of respect for the views of others, of democracy and the ability to put into practice the decisions taken.

**4. Practise revolutionary democracy in all aspects of party life.** Every responsible worker must bravely assume his responsibilities, must demand from others respect for his activity and must respect the activity of others. Do not hide anything from the mass of the people, do not lie, fight against lies, do not disguise the difficulties, errors and failures, do not believe in easy victories, nor in appearances.

Revolutionary democracy demands that we should combat opportunism, tolerance towards errors, unfounded excuses, friendships and comradeships on the basis of interests opposed to those on the party and the people, the obsession that one or other responsible worker is irreplaceable in his post, Practise and defend the truth and always the truth in front of militants, responsible workers, the people whatever the difficulties knowledge of the truth might cause. Revolutionary democracy demands that the militant should not be afraid of the responsible worker, that the responsible worker should have no dread of the militant, nor fear the mass of the people. It demands that the responsible worker live in the middle of the people, in front of the people and behind the people, that he work for the party serving the people.

In the framework of revolutionary democracy, power comes from the people, from the majority, and no one should be afraid of losing power. The leader must be the faithful interpreter of the will and the aspirations of the revolutionary majority and not the lord of power, the absolute master who uses the party and does not serve the party. In the framework of revolutionary democracy, we must avoid demagogy, promises we cannot keep, exploitation of the people's feelings and the ambitions of opportunists. We must act in accordance with realities, to give everyone the possibility to progress, to verify through his own action and that of others that the party is the achievement of us all and that we all belong to the party, which is the instrument our people created for the winning of our freedom and for the construction of their progress. In the framework of revolutionary democracy and in the specific circumstances of our struggle, we must constantly increase the strength of the people, advance bravely for the conquest of power by the people, for the radical transformation (at the base) of the life of our people, for a stage in which the weapons and means of defence of our revolution will be entirely in the hands of the people. Do not be afraid of the people and persuade the people to take part in all the decisions which concern them – this is the basic condition of revolutionary democracy, which little by little we must achieve in accordance with the development of our struggle and our life.

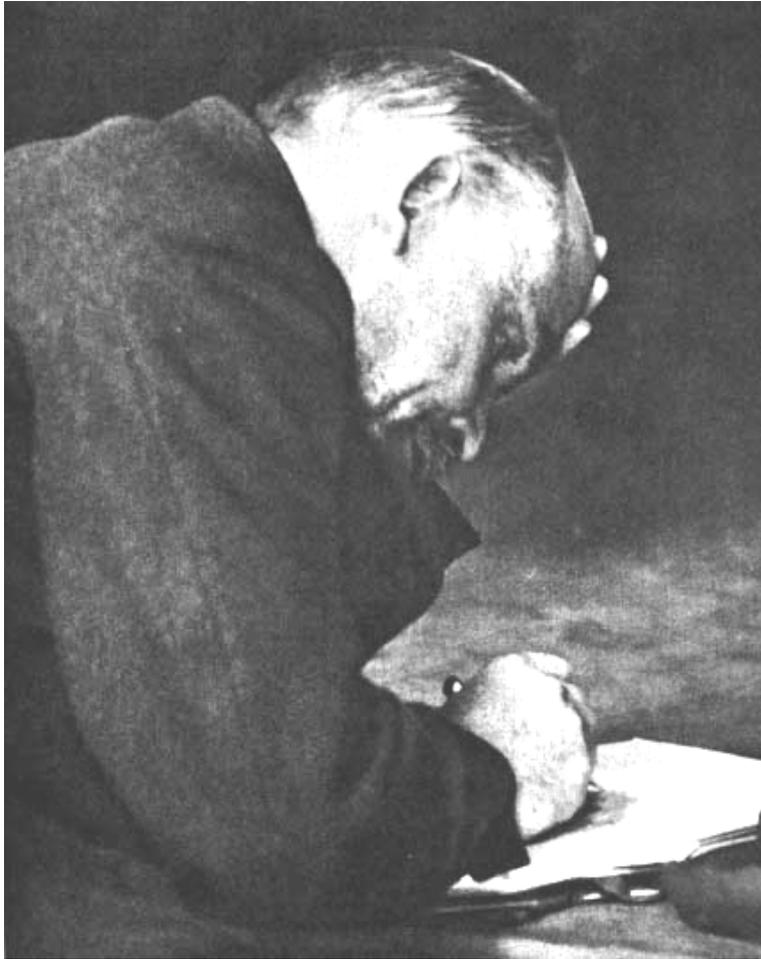
Revolutionary democracy demands that there should be at the head of our party and our people the best descendants of our land. Step by step we have to purge the

unworthy elements from our party, the opportunists, the demagogues (deceivers of the people), the dishonest, those who fail in their duty. So as to clear the way increasingly for those who understand and live in its entirety the life of our party, to those who really want to serve the party and the people, to those who carry out and increasingly want to carry out and better their duties as militants, responsible workers and revolutionaries. The correct application of the principles of criticism and self-criticism, of collective leadership, of democratic centralism and of revolutionary democracy is the most effective way for us to gain one to the most important victories, if not the most important, of our life and of our struggle, namely: *to act so that our Party belongs more and more to those who are able to make it constantly better; to make of our Party an effective instrument for the construction of freedom, peace, progress and happiness for our people in Guinea and Cape Verde.*

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**Cabral**



**Lenin**

## Chapter 5

### The “Plan” For an All-Russia Political Newspaper

#### B. Can A Newspaper Be A Collective Organiser?

The quintessence of the article “Where To Begin” consists in the fact that it discusses *precisely* this question and gives an affirmative reply to it. As far as we know, the only attempt to examine this question on its merits and to prove that it must be answered in the negative was made by L. Nadezhdin, whose argument we reproduce in full:

“... It pleased us greatly to see *Iskra* (No. 4) present the question of the need for an all-Russia newspaper; but we cannot agree that this presentation bears relevance to the title ‘Where To Begin’. Undoubtedly this is an extremely important matter, but neither a newspaper, nor a series of popular leaflets, nor a mountain of manifestoes, can serve as the basis for a militant organisation in revolutionary times. We must set to work to build strong political organisations in the localities. We lack such organisations; we have been carrying on our work mainly among enlightened workers, while the masses have been engaged almost exclusively in the economic struggle. *If strong political organisations are not trained locally, what significance will even an excellently organised all-Russia newspaper have?* It will be a burning bush, burning without being consumed, but firing no one! *Iskra* thinks that around it and in the activities in its behalf people will gather and organise. *But they will find it far easier to gather and organise around activities that are more concrete.* This something more concrete must and should be the extensive organisation of local newspapers, the immediate preparation of the workers’ forces for demonstrations, the constant activity of local organisations among the unemployed (indefatigable distribution of pamphlets and leaflets, convening of meetings, appeals to actions of protest against the government, etc.). We must begin live political work in the localities, and when the time comes to unite on this real basis, it will not be an artificial, paper unity; not by means of newspapers can such a unification of local work into an all-Russia cause be achieved!” (*The Eve of the Revolution*, p. 54.)

We have emphasised the passages in this eloquent tirade that most clearly show the author’s incorrect judgement of our plan, as well as the incorrectness of his point of view in general, which is here contraposed to that of *Iskra*. Unless we train strong political organisations in the localities, even an excellently organised all-Russia newspaper will be of no avail. This is incontrovertible. But the whole point is

that *there is no other way of training* strong political organisations except through the medium of an all-Russia newspaper. The author missed the most important statement *Iskra* made *before it proceeded* to set forth its “plan”: that it was necessary “to call for the formation of a revolutionary organisation, capable of uniting all forces and guiding the movement in actual practice and *not in name alone*, that is, *an organisation ready at any time to support every protest and every outbreak* and use it to build up and consolidate the fighting forces suitable for the decisive struggle”. But now after the February and March events, everyone will agree with this in principle, continues *Iskra*. Yet what we need is not a solution of the question in principle, but its *practical solution*; we must immediately advance a definite constructive plan through which all may immediately set to work to build *from every side*. Now we are again being dragged away from the practical solution towards something which in principle is correct, indisputable, and great, but which is entirely inadequate and incomprehensible to the broad masses of workers, namely, “to rear strong political organisations”! This is not the point at issue, most worthy author. The point is how to go about the rearing and how to accomplish it.

It is not true to say that “we have been carrying on our work mainly among enlightened workers, while the masses have been engaged almost exclusively in the economic struggle”. Presented in such a form, the thesis reduces itself to *Svoboda’s* usual but fundamentally false contraposition of the enlightened workers to the “masses”. In recent years, even the enlightened workers have been “engaged almost exclusively in the economic struggle”. That is the first point. On the other hand, the masses will never learn to conduct the political struggle until we help *to train* leaders for this struggle, both from among the enlightened workers and from among the intellectuals. Such leaders can acquire training *solely* by systematically evaluating *all* the everyday aspects of our political life, *all attempts* at protest and struggle on the part of the various classes and on various grounds. Therefore, to talk of “rearing political organisations” and at the same time *to contrast* the “paper work” of a political newspaper to “live political work in the localities” is plainly ridiculous. *Iskra* has adapted its “plan” for a newspaper to the “plan” for creating a “militant preparedness” to support the unemployed movement, peasant revolts, discontent among, the Zemstvo people, “popular indignation against some tsarist bashi-bazouk on the rampage”, etc. Anyone who is at all acquainted with the movement knows full well that the vast majority of local organisations have *never even dreamed* of these things; that many of the prospects of “live political work” here indicated *have never* been realised by a single organisation; that the attempt, for example, to call attention to the growth of discontent and protest among the Zemstvo intelligentsia rouses feelings of consternation and perplexity in Nadezhdin (“Good Lord, is this newspaper intended for Zemstvo people?”—*The Eve*, p. 129), among the Economists (Letter to *Iskra*, No. 12), and among many practical workers.

Under these circumstances, it is possible to “begin” *only* by inducing people to *think* about all these things, to summarise and generalise all the diverse signs of ferment and active struggle. In our time, when Social-Democratic tasks are being degraded, *the only way* “live political work” can be *begun* is with live political agitation, which is impossible unless we have an all-Russia newspaper, frequently issued and regularly distributed.

Those who regard the *Iskra* “plan” as a manifestation of “bookishness” have totally failed to understand its substance and take for the goal that which is suggested as the most suitable means for the present time. These people have not taken the trouble to study the two comparisons that were drawn to present a clear illustration of the plan. *Iskra* wrote: The publication of an all-Russia political newspaper must be *the main line* by which we may unswervingly develop, deepen, and expand the organisation (viz., the revolutionary organisation that is ever ready to support every protest and every outbreak). Pray tell me, when bricklayers lay bricks in, various parts of an enormous, unprecedentedly large structure, is it “paper” work to use a line to help them find the correct place for the bricklaying; to indicate to them the ultimate goal of the common work; to enable them to use, not only every brick, but even every piece of brick which, cemented to the bricks laid before and after it, forms a finished, continuous line? And are we not now passing through precisely such a period in our Party life when we have bricks and bricklayers, but lack the guide line for all to see and follow? Let them shout that in stretching out the line, we want to command. Had we desired to command, gentlemen, we would have written on the title page, not “*Iskra*, No. 1”, but “*Rabochaya Gazeta*, No. 3”, as we were invited to do by certain comrades, and *as we would have had a perfect right to do* after the events described above. But we did not do that. We wished to have our hands free to wage an irreconcilable struggle against all pseudo-Social-Democrats; we wanted our line, if properly laid, to be respected because it was correct, and not because it had been laid by an official organ.

“The question of uniting local activity in central bodies runs in a vicious circle,” Nadezhdin lectures us; “unification requires homogeneity of the elements, and the homogeneity can be created only by something that unites; but the unifying element may be the product of strong local organisations which at the present time are by no means distinguished for their homogeneity.” This truth is as revered and as irrefutable as that we must train strong political organisations. And it is equally barren. *Every* question “runs in a vicious circle” because political life as a whole is an endless chain consisting of an infinite number of links. The whole art of politics lies in finding and taking as firm a grip as we can of the link that is least likely to be struck from our hands, the one that is most important at the given moment, the one that most of all guarantees its possessor the possession of the whole chain.<sup>[7]</sup> If we had a crew of experienced bricklayers who had learned to work so well together

that they could lay their bricks exactly as required without a guide line (which, speaking abstractly, is by no means impossible), then perhaps we might take hold of some other link. But it is unfortunate that as yet we have no experienced bricklayers trained for teamwork, that bricks are often laid where they are not needed at all, that they are not laid according to the general line, but are so scattered that the enemy can shatter the structure as if it were made of sand and not of bricks.

Another comparison: “A newspaper is not only a collective propagandist and a collective agitator, it is also a collective organiser. In this respect *it may be compared to the scaffolding* erected round a building under construction; it marks the contours of the structure and facilitates communication between the builders, permitting them to distribute the work and to view the common results achieved by their organised labour.”<sup>[8]</sup> Does this sound anything like the attempt of an armchair author to exaggerate his role? The scaffolding is not required at all for the dwelling; it is made of cheaper material, is put up only temporarily, and is scrapped for firewood as soon as the shell of the structure is completed. As for the building of revolutionary organisations, experience shows that sometimes they may be built without scaffolding, as the seventies showed. But at the present time we cannot even imagine the possibility of erecting the building we require without scaffolding.

Nadezhdin disagrees with this, saying: “*Iskra* thinks that around it and in the activities in its behalf people will gather and organise. *But they will find it far easier to gather and organise around activities that are more concrete!*” Indeed, “far easier around activities that are more concrete”. A Russian proverb holds: “Don’t spit into a well, you may want to drink from it.” But there are people who do not object to drinking from a well that has been spat into. What despicable things our magnificent, legal “Critics of Marxism” and illegal admirers of *Rabochaya Mysl* have said in the name of this something more concrete! How restricted our movement is by our own narrowness, lack of initiative, and hesitation, which are justified with the traditional argument about finding it “far easier to gather around something more concrete”! And Nadezhdin — who regards himself as possessing a particularly keen sense of the “realities of life”, who so severely condemns “armchair” authors and (with pretensions to wit) accuses *Iskra* of a weakness for seeing Economism everywhere, and who sees himself standing far above the division between the orthodox and the Critics — fails to see that with his arguments he contributes to the narrowness that arouses his indignation and that he is drinking from the most spat-in well! The sincerest indignation against narrowness, the most passionate desire to raise its worshippers from their knees, will not suffice if the indignant one is swept along without sail or rudder and, as “spontaneously” as the revolutionaries of the seventies, clutches at such things as “excitative terror”, “agrarian terror”, “sounding the tocsin etc. Let us take a glance at these “more concrete” activities around which he thinks it will be “far easier” to gather and organise: (1) local newspapers; (2)

preparations for demonstrations; (3) work among the unemployed. It is immediately apparent that all these things have been seized upon at random as a pretext for saying something; for, however we may regard them, it would be absurd to see in them anything especially suitable for “gathering and organising”. The selfsame Nadezhdin says a few pages further: “It is time we simply stated the fact that activity of a very pitiable kind is being carried on in the localities, the committees are not doing a tenth of what they could do ... the coordinating centres we have at present are the purest fiction, representing a sort of revolutionary bureaucracy, whose members mutually grant generalships to one another; and so it will continue until strong local organisations grow up.” These remarks, though exaggerating the position somewhat, no doubt contain many a bitter truth; but can it be said that Nadezhdin does not perceive the connection between the pitiable activity in the localities and the narrow mental outlook of the functionaries, the narrow scope of their activities, inevitable in the circumstances of the lack of training of Party workers confined to local organisations? Has he, like the author of the article on organisation, published in *Svoboda*, forgotten how the transition to a broad local press (from 1898) was accompanied by a strong intensification of Economism and “primitiveness”? Even if a “broad local press” could be established at all satisfactorily (and we have shown this to be impossible, save in very, exceptional cases) — even then the local organs could not “gather and organise” *all* the revolutionary forces for a *general* attack upon the autocracy and for leadership of the *united* struggle. Let us not forget that we are here discussing *only* the “rallying”, organising significance of the newspaper, and we could put to Nadezhdin, who defends fragmentation, the question he himself has ironically put: “Have we been left a legacy of 200,000 revolutionary organisers?” Furthermore, “preparations for demonstrations” cannot be *contraposed* to *Iskra*’s plan, for the very reason that this plan includes the organisation of the broadest possible demonstrations *as one of its aims*; the point under discussion is the selection of the practical *means*. On this point also Nadezhdin is confused, for he has lost sight of the fact that only forces that are “gathered and organised” can “prepare for” demonstrations (which hitherto, in the overwhelming majority of cases, have taken place spontaneously) and that we *lack* precisely *the ability* to rally and organise. “Work among the unemployed.” Again the same confusion; for this too represents one of the field operations of the mobilised forces and not a plan for mobilising the forces. The extent to which Nadezhdin here too underestimates the harm caused by our fragmentation, by our lack of “200,000 organisers”, can be seen from the fact that: many people (including Nadezhdin) have reproached *Iskra* for the paucity of the news it gives on unemployment and for the casual nature of the correspondence it publishes about the most common affairs of rural life. The reproach is justified; but *Iskra* is “guilty without sin”. We strive “to stretch a line” through the countryside too, where there are hardly any bricklayers anywhere, and we are *obliged* to encourage *everyone* who informs us even as regards the most

common facts, in the hope that this will increase the number of our contributors in the given field and will ultimately *train us all* to select facts that are really the most outstanding. But the material on which we can train is so scanty that, unless we generalise it for the whole of Russia, we shall have very little to train on at all. No doubt, one with at least as much ability as an agitator and as much knowledge of the life of the vagrant as Nadezhdin manifests could render priceless service to the movement by carrying on agitation among the unemployed; but such a person would be simply hiding his light under a bushel if he failed to inform all comrades in Russia as regards every step he took in his work, so that others, who, in the mass, still lack the ability to undertake new kinds of work, might learn from his example.

All without exception now talk of the importance of unity, of the necessity for “gathering and organising”; but in the majority of cases what is lacking is a definite idea of where to begin and how to bring about this unity. Probably all will agree that if we “unite”, say, the district circles in a given town, it will be necessary to have for this purpose common institutions, i.e., not merely the common title of “League”, but genuinely common work, exchange of material, experience, and forces, distribution of functions, not only by districts, but through specialisation on a town-wide scale. All will agree that a big secret apparatus will not pay its way (to use a commercial expression) “with the resources” (in both money and manpower, of course) of a single district, and that this narrow field will not provide sufficient scope for a specialist to develop his talents. But the same thing applies to the co-ordination of activities of a number of towns, since even a specific locality will be and, in the history of our Social-Democratic movement, has proved to be, far too narrow a field; we have demonstrated this above in detail with regard to political agitation and organisational work. What we require foremost and imperatively is to broaden the field, establish real contacts between the towns on the basis of regular, common work; for fragmentation weighs down on the people and they are “stuck in a hole” (to use the expression employed by a correspondent to *Iskra*), not knowing what is happening in the world, from whom to learn, or how to acquire experience and satisfy their desire to engage in broad activities. I continue to insist that we can start establishing real contacts only with the aid of a common newspaper, as the only regular, all-Russia enterprise, one which will summarise the results of the most diverse forms of activity and thereby stimulate people to march forward untiringly along all the innumerable paths leading to revolution, in the same way as all roads lead to Rome. If we do not want unity in name only, we must arrange for all local study circles immediately to assign, say, a fourth of their forces to active work for the common cause, and the newspaper will immediately convey to them<sup>[9]</sup>

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<sup>[9]</sup> *A reservation*: that is, if a given study circle sympathises with the policy of the newspaper and considers it useful to become a collaborator, meaning by that, not

only for literary collaboration, but for revolutionary collaboration generally. *Note for Rabocheye Dyelo*: Among revolutionaries who attach value to the cause and not to playing at democracy, who do not separate “sympathy” from the most active and lively participation, this reservation is taken for granted.—*Lenin*

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the general design, scope, and character of the cause; it will give them a precise indication of the most keenly felt shortcomings in the all-Russia activity, where agitation is lacking and contacts are weak, and it will point out which little wheels in the vast general mechanism a given study circle might repair or replace with better ones. A study circle that has not yet begun to work, but which is only just seeking activity, could then start, not like a craftsman in an isolated little workshop unaware of the earlier development in “industry” or of the general level of production methods prevailing in industry, but as a participant in an extensive enterprise that reflects the whole general revolutionary attack on the autocracy. The more perfect the finish of each little wheel and the larger the number of detail workers engaged in the common cause, the closer will our network become and the less will be the disorder in the ranks consequent on inevitable police raids.

The mere function of distributing a newspaper would help to establish actual contacts (if it is a newspaper worthy of the name, i.e., if it is issued regularly, not once a month like a magazine, but at least four times a month). At the present time, communication between towns on revolutionary business is an extreme rarity, and, at all events, is the exception rather than the rule. If we had a newspaper, however, such communication would become the rule and would secure, not only the distribution of the newspaper, of course, but (what is more important) an exchange of experience, of material, of forces, and of resources. Organisational work would immediately acquire much greater scope, and the success of one locality would serve as a standing encouragement to further perfection; it would arouse the desire to utilise the experience gained by comrades working in other parts of the country. Local work would become far richer and more varied than it is at present. Political and economic exposures gathered from all over Russia would provide mental food for workers of all trades and *all stages of development*; they would provide material and occasion for talks and readings on the most diverse subjects, which would, in addition, be suggested by hints in the legal press, by talk among the people, and by “shamefaced” government statements. Every outbreak, every demonstration, would be weighed and, discussed in its every aspect in all parts of Russia and would thus stimulate a desire to keep up with, and even surpass, the others (we socialists do not by any means flatly reject all emulation or all “competition”!) and consciously prepare that which at first, as it were, sprang up spontaneously, a desire to take advantage of the favourable conditions in a given district or at a given moment for modifying the plan of attack, etc. At the same time, this revival of local

work would obviate that desperate, “convulsive” exertion of all efforts and risking of *all* forces which every single demonstration or the publication of every single issue of a local newspaper now frequently entails. On the one hand, the police would find it much more difficult to get at the “roots”, if they did not know in what district to dig down for them. On the other hand, regular common work would train our people to adjust the force of a *given* attack to the strength of the given contingent of the common army (at the present time hardly anyone ever thinks of doing that, because in nine cases out of ten these attacks occur spontaneously); such regular common work would facilitate the “transportation” from one place to another, not only of literature, but also of revolutionary forces.

In a great many cases these forces are now being bled white on restricted local work, but under the circumstances we are discussing it would be possible to transfer a capable agitator or organiser from one end of the country to the other, and the occasion for doing this would constantly arise. Beginning with short journeys on Party business at the Party’s expense, the comrades would become accustomed to being maintained by the Party, to becoming professional revolutionaries, and to training themselves as real political leaders.

And if indeed we succeeded in reaching the point when all, or at least a considerable majority, of the local committees, local groups, and study circles took up active work for the common cause, we could, in the not distant future, establish a weekly newspaper for regular distribution in tens of thousands of copies throughout Russia. This newspaper would become part of an enormous pair of smith’s bellows that would fan every spark of the class struggle and of popular indignation into a general conflagration. Around what is in itself still a very innocuous and very small, but regular and *common*, effort, in the full sense of the word, a regular army of tried fighters would systematically gather and receive their training. On the ladders and scaffolding of this general organisational structure there would soon develop and come to the fore Social-Democratic Zhelyabovs from among our revolutionaries and Russian Bebels from among our workers, who would take their place at the head of the mobilised army and rouse the whole people to settle accounts with the shame and the curse of Russia.

That is what we should dream of!

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