

From The Mass Strike, The Political Party, and the Trade Unions

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The question that now arises is that of the extent to which the lessons that can be drawn from Russian mass strikes are applicable to Germany. Completely different social and political relations obtain in Germany and Russia, and likewise there is a wide divergence between the history and status of the respective workers' movements in the two countries. At first sight, it might appear that the internal laws of mass strikes in Russia as registered above are merely the product of specifically Russian relations that do not hold in the case of the German proletariat. There exists the tightest of internal connections between the political and economic struggles in the Russian Revolution; their unity is given expression in the period of mass strikes. But is this not simply a consequence of Russian absolutism? In a state in which all forms and expressions of the workers' movement are prohibited, where the simplest strike is a political crime, every economic struggle must logically turn into a political one.

Moreover, if the converse is true—namely, that the very first outbreak of political revolution entailed a universal settling of accounts between the Russian working class and the entrepreneurial class—this is, in turn, the simple consequence of the circumstance that the Russian worker had the lowest standard of living up to that point and had never engaged in any kind of regular economic struggle over the improvement of his condition. To a certain extent, the proletariat in Russia had first to work its way out of the harshest of conditions, and it is no wonder that it took to the task with youthful audacity as soon as the revolution had introduced the first breath of fresh air into the asphyxiating atmosphere of absolutism. And finally, the stormy revolutionary course of the Russian mass strikes, as well as their predominantly spontaneous, elemental character, can be explained, on

the one hand, as following from the political backwardness of Russia and the necessity of first overthrowing Oriental despotism,² and on the other, as a consequence of the lack of organization and schooling of the Russian proletariat. In a country in which the working class has at its disposal thirty years of experience in political life, a 3-million-strong Social Democratic Party, and an elite troop consisting of 1.25 million unionized workers, political struggle and mass strikes cannot possibly have the stormy and elemental character that they do in a semi-barbarian state taking the first leap out of the medieval era and into the modern, bourgeois order. Such is the generally accepted conception among those who would infer the degree of maturity of the social relations of a given country from the wording of its drafted legislation.

Let us examine these questions in sequence. First of all, in terms of historical dating, it is perverse to claim that economic struggle in Russia only began with the outbreak of the revolution. In actual fact, strikes and wage struggles had increasingly been the order of the day in Russia proper since the beginning of the 1890s, and in Russian Poland³ even since the end of the 1880s; these movements ultimately achieved de facto civil rights. Although brutal police repression often ensued from such struggles, the latter were nonetheless a daily phenomenon. In Warsaw and Łódź, for example, a significant general strike fund was already in existence in 1891, and the enthusiasm for labor unions in these years even generated the “economic” illusions that would be so rampant a few years later in Petersburg and the rest of Russia.⁴

Likewise, there is much exaggeration in the notion that proletarians throughout the tsarist empire had without exception the living standards of paupers before the revolution. The stratum of workers in large-scale industry in the urban centers that was most actively and ardently engaged in the economic as well as the political struggle had a material standard of living that was scarcely beneath that of the corresponding layer of the German proletariat, and, in some occupations, the same level of wages was to be found in Russia as in Germany—with wages in Russia in some instances even outstripping those of workers in corresponding industries in Germany. Similarly, there was scarcely a significant difference between the two countries with regard to working time in large-scale industrial enterprises. Thus, notions of a supposed material and cultural helotry on the part of the Russian working class are pure fiction. Given a little reflection, the mere fact of the revolution itself—and the prominent role played by the proletariat within it—ought to suffice to dispel such conceptions.

With paupers, no revolutions of such political maturity and lucidity are to be made, and the industrial worker at the forefront of the struggle in Petersburg, Warsaw, Moscow, or Odessa is far closer to his Western European counterpart in cultural and intellectual terms than is reckoned by those who regard bourgeois parliamentarianism and standard labor union practice as the only—and indispensable—cultural schooling for the proletariat. The modern large-scale capitalist development of Russia and the intellectual influence exerted over a decade and a half by Social Democracy—during which time it has galvanized and directed economic struggle—have both had a significant cultural effect on the proletariat, even without the external guarantees provided by the bourgeois legal order.

The contrast becomes even less marked if we look a little more closely at the actual standard of living of the *German* working class. In Russia, the great political mass strikes have from the first instant roused the broadest strata of the proletariat and hurled them into febrile economic struggle. In Germany, on the other hand, are there not entire dark zones within the topography of the working class—areas until now scarcely penetrated by the warming light of the labor unions—entire, broad strata of workers that have until now made no attempt at all, or only unsuccessful attempts, to raise themselves up out of social helotry by means of ordinary wage struggles? Take, for example, the destitution of *the miners*. Even within the peaceful, leisurely working routine in Germany, amid the

cool atmosphere of its parliamentary monotony—just as in other countries, even in that labor union El Dorado, England—the wage struggle of the miners manifests as virtually nothing other than tremendous eruptions, as mass strikes of a typical, elemental character. This simply demonstrates that the antagonism between capital and labor here is too acute and too enormous for it to allow itself to be dissipated through peaceful, scheduled, partial labor union struggles. However, this destitution of the miners, in all its volatility, which forms a most vehement cyclone even in “normal” times, ought to erupt immediately and inevitably into a tremendous economic and social struggle in Germany with every large-scale political mass action on the part of the working class, with every larger jolt that disturbs the momentary equilibrium of everyday social life. Consider further the misery of the *textile workers*. In this case, too, the bitter outbreaks of the wage struggle that sweeps through Vogtland every few years—outbreaks that for the most part end without result—offer only a faint intimation of the vehemence with which the large, agglomerated mass of the helots of cartelized textile capital ought to explode during a political convulsion, during a powerful and audacious mass action on the part of the German proletariat. Take the further examples of the destitution of *the workers of the putting-out system, the assembly workers, or the electricity workers*—all these are akin to the eye of the storm, in which it is all the more certain that tremendous economic struggles will erupt with every political turbulence in Germany; the less frequently the proletariat in these branches takes up the struggle in quiet times, the more unsuccessfully it struggles each time, and the more brutally it is compelled by capital to return to the yoke of slavery, gnashing its teeth all the while.

Now, however, entire broad categories of the proletariat come into consideration that, in the “normal” course of events, remain altogether excluded from any possibility of engaging in a calm economic struggle to improve their situation, and that are barred from any exercise of the right of association. The example par excellence to be cited here is that of the abject poverty of the *railroad and postal employees*. For these state employees, Russian conditions obtain in the heart of the parliamentary constitutional state of Germany—i.e., Russian conditions like these prevailed prior to the revolution, during the untarnished splendor of absolutism. The Russian railroader already towered above his German counterpart with regard to his economic and social freedom of movement during the great strike of October 1905. The Russian railroad workers and postal employees conquered the right of association de facto by storm, and although lawsuits and disciplinary action hailed down upon them, nothing could take their internal solidarity from them. It would be an entirely false psychological prognosis, however, to assume, as is done by German reactionaries, that the slavish obedience of the German railroad workers and postal employees will last forever, that it is a rock that cannot be eroded. If the German union leaders have also become so accustomed to the prevailing conditions that they can survey with gratification the successes of labor union struggle in Germany, undisturbed by this ignominy that is almost without precedent in Europe, the latent, pent-up resentment among the uniformed state slaves will inevitably seek to vent itself in the context of a general uprising of industrial workers. And when the industrial vanguard of the proletariat attempts to seize further political rights or to defend the old ones through mass strikes, the great contingents of railroad workers and postal employees will, as a natural necessity, be compelled to focus on their own particular ignominy and to finally rise up in order to emancipate themselves from the extra portion of Russian absolutism that was specifically established for them in Germany. The pedantic conception, which aims to expedite large-scale popular movements according to a schema or formula, regards the conquest of the right of association for railroad workers as the necessary *precondition* that would first “permit any thought” of a mass strike in Germany. The actual and natural course of events can only be the reverse: It is only a powerful, spontaneous mass strike action that can engender the right of association for German railroad workers and postal employees. And those tasks that are insoluble under the prevailing conditions in Germany will suddenly discover their feasibility and their solution under the influence of, and pressure from, a general political mass action on the part of the proletariat.

Finally, consider the largest and most important case: the misery of *agricultural workers*. If British⁵ labor unions are exclusively tailored to industrial workers, this is a phenomenon that can be understood in terms of the specific character of the British national economy and the reduced role of agriculture in economic life as a whole. In Germany, a labor union organization—no matter how brilliantly developed—that merely encompasses industrial workers and that is thus inaccessible to the entire great army of agricultural workers will only ever give a faint, partial picture of the situation of the proletariat as a whole. In turn, it would be a calamitous illusion to believe that rural conditions are immutable and fixed, that neither the tireless work of enlightenment undertaken by Social Democracy nor even the entire internal class politics in Germany serve to continually undermine the external passivity of the agricultural worker, and that the rural proletariat would not also rise up during any given large-scale general class action taken for whatever purpose by the German industrial proletariat. Such an uprising can naturally only manifest initially as a turbulent general economic struggle, as tremendous mass strikes by rural workers. Thus, the image of the alleged economic superiority of the German proletariat over its Russian counterpart is altered very significantly if we shift our focus from the index of unionized branches of industry and crafts to those large groupings of the proletariat that stand entirely outside the union struggle or whose particular economic situation cannot be forcibly made to fit inside the narrow framework of the everyday guerrilla warfare waged by the labor unions. In so doing, we see one enormous sphere after another in which the intensification of antagonisms has reached its outer limits, with explosive material galore ready to be detonated and a series of vast regions that contain a great deal of “Russian absolutism” in its most naked form, and in which, in economic terms, the most elementary settling of accounts with capital is yet to be undertaken.

All these unsettled accounts would inevitably be presented to the ruling system within the context of a general political mass action by the proletariat. Of course, an artificially arranged one-off demonstration by the urban proletariat, a mass strike action executed merely through discipline and following the conductor’s baton wielded by the party executive, might leave the broader strata of the population cold and indifferent. Only a real, powerful, and ruthless action of struggle by the industrial proletariat—an action born of a revolutionary situation—would be guaranteed to cause a reaction among deeper-lying strata and to draw along into a turbulent general economic struggle precisely all those who in normal, peaceful times stand beyond the daily union struggle.

Yet if we return to the organized vanguard of the German industrial proletariat while on the other hand retaining a focus on the goals of the economic struggle as striven for today by the Russian workforce, we find that the latter are endeavors that the oldest of the German labor unions would have no reason at all to view with condescension, much as one might regard the worn-out shoes of childhood. Thus, the most important universal demand of Russian strikes since January 22, 1905—the eight-hour day—certainly does not represent a standpoint that the German proletariat has already surpassed; on the contrary, it constitutes in most cases a beautiful, yet distant, ideal. The same is true of the struggle with the “landlord’s standpoint,” the struggle for the introduction of workers’ committees in all factories, for the abolition of piecework, for the abolition of the putting-out system of labor in handicrafts, for the full implementation of the day of rest on Sunday, and for the recognition of the right of association. To be sure, on closer inspection all of the objects of the economic struggle of the Russian proletariat in the current revolution are also highly relevant for the German proletariat, touching as they do nothing but sore points in terms of the worker’s existence.

From this it follows, above all, that the purely political mass strike—the preferred mode of operation—is also in the case of Germany nothing but a lifeless theoretical schema. If it is true that mass strikes—in the form of a resolute political struggle by the urban workforce—will ensue by natural means from a powerful revolutionary ferment, they will equally naturally flip over into an entire period of elementary economic struggles, just as they did in Russia. The fears of the labor

union leaders—that the struggle over economic interests could be simply sidelined and smothered during a period of turbulent political struggles, of mass strikes—are founded upon a schoolchild's notion of the course of things, a conception that hovers in midair. On the contrary, in Germany as well, the revolutionary period would transform the character of labor union struggle and reinforce it to such an extent that today's guerrilla war by the labor unions will be child's play in comparison. And on the other hand, the political struggle would also constantly gain fresh impulses and new forces from this elemental economic mass strike cyclone. The reciprocal interaction between economic and political struggle that forms the internal driving force of today's mass strikes in Russia and simultaneously constitutes the regulating mechanism, so to speak, of the revolutionary action of the proletariat—such an interaction would ensue equally naturally from those in Germany, too.

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

The position taken by some labor union leaders with regard to this question usually amounts to no more than the following: "We are not yet strong enough to risk such a hazardous trial of strength as a mass strike." Now, this point of view is untenable, insofar as it is an insoluble task to determine by means of a calmly considered arithmetic calculation when the proletariat would be "strong enough" for any given struggle. Thirty years ago, the German labor unions had 50,000 members. This was evidently a number that, according to the yardstick outlined above, ruled out any consideration of a mass strike. Fifteen years later, the unions were four times as strong, and had a combined membership of 237,000. If, however, today's union leaders had been asked at the time whether the organization of the proletariat was then sufficiently mature for a mass strike, they would surely have responded that this was not the case by a long shot, and that the unionized workforce would first have to number millions. Today, there are more than a million organized labor union members, but the views of their leaders are unchanged, and apparently could remain so ad infinitum. The tacit assumption here is that the entire working class in Germany, down to the last man and the last woman, must first be affiliated to labor unions before these can be deemed "strong enough" to risk a mass action—an action that would in any case probably turn out to be "superfluous," according to the old formula. This theory is completely utopian, however, for the simple reason that it exhibits an internal contradiction and is beset by vicious circularity. Before the workers can engage in any direct class struggle, they must all be organized. Yet the relations, the conditions, of capitalist development and of the bourgeois state entail that in the "normal" course of things, without turbulent class struggles, determinate strata—and in fact these form the majority, the most important, the most downtrodden strata of the proletariat, the strata most oppressed by capital and the state—cannot be organized at all. We see, even in Britain, that all that has been achieved by a whole century of relentless labor union work without any "disturbances"—disregarding for a moment the period of the Chartist movement—without any "revolutionary romantic" deviations or distractions, is the organization of a *minority* of the better-situated strata of the proletariat.

On the other hand, the labor unions, like all organizations of struggle of the proletariat, cannot maintain themselves in any other way than through struggle—and, more precisely, not only through struggle in the sense of *The Battle of Frogs and Mice*⁶ in the stagnant waters of the bourgeois-parliamentary period, but also in the sense of the turbulent, revolutionary periods of mass struggle. The rigid, mechanical-bureaucratic conception will only recognize struggle as the product of organization that has attained a certain level of strength. On the contrary, however, the living, dialectical development gives rise to organization as a product of struggle. We have already witnessed a superb example of this phenomenon in Russia, where a proletariat that was barely organized—if at all—created a comprehensive network of incipient organizations within a year and a half of turbulent revolutionary struggle. Another example of this type is provided by the German

labor unions' own history. In 1878, labor union members numbered 50,000. According to the theory of today's labor union leaders, such organization was, as noted above, far from being "strong enough" to engage in an intense political struggle. Yet, as weak as they might have been at the time, German labor unions *did* take up the struggle—namely, the struggle against the Antisocialist Law—and not only proved themselves "strong enough" to emerge victorious from this struggle, but also saw their strength increase by a factor of five as a result: Their combined membership following the repeal of the Antisocialist Law in 1891 mounted to 277,659. It is true that the method with which the unions prevailed in the struggle against the Antisocialist Law did not correspond to the ideal of a peaceful, beelike, uninterrupted expansion; first, they were reduced to ruins in struggle, only to soar up out of the next wave and be reborn. Yet this is precisely the specific method of growth corresponding to proletarian class organizations: to test themselves in struggle, and to emerge from the struggle having reproduced themselves within it.

On closer inspection of German relations and the situation of the various strata of workers, it is evident that the coming period of turbulent political mass struggles will not entail the dreaded impending demise of German unions; on the contrary, it will afford new, unforeseen perspectives of a rapid, spasmodic expansion of its sphere of power. Yet the question has another side to it. Any plan to undertake mass strikes as serious political class action with organized workers alone is generally an utterly hopeless one. If the mass strike is to be successful, or rather, if mass strikes are to be successful, they have to become *popular movements*—i.e., they have to draw the broadest strata of the proletariat into the struggle. Already in the parliamentary form, the power of the proletarian class struggle does not depend upon the small organized core, but upon the broad surrounding periphery of the revolutionary-minded proletariat. If the Social Democratic Party were to attempt to contest an electoral campaign with only its few hundred thousand organized members, it would condemn itself to oblivion. And if Social Democracy tends toward the recruitment, as far as is possible, of almost the entire great reserve army of its electors into its party organizations, after thirty years of experience of Social Democracy, the mass of voters has not increased through the growth of the party organization; instead, the reverse is true: the fresh strata of the workforce won over through each electoral campaign form the fertile soil in which the seed of organization can be subsequently sown. Here, too, it is not merely the case that the organization provides troops for the struggle: On the contrary, the struggle also supplies new recruits for the organization, and does so to an even greater extent. The same tendency that can be identified in parliamentary struggle evidently applies to a far higher degree to direct political mass action. While it is true that the Social Democratic Party constitutes, as the organized core of the working class, the leading vanguard of the entire working population, and that it is precisely from this organization that the political clarity, the strength, and the unity of the workers' movement, all flow, the class movement of the proletariat should never be conceived of as one of an organized minority. Each truly large-scale class struggle must be based on the support and involvement of the broadest masses, and any strategy for the class struggle that did not reckon with such involvement, that were merely tailored to neatly executed marches by the small contingent of the proletariat that is quartered in barracks, would be condemned in advance to being a dismal fiasco.

Mass strikes or political mass struggles cannot be sustained alone by those who are organized, nor can they be quantified on the basis of veritable leadership emanating from a party headquarters. However, what is decisive here—as in Russia—is neither "discipline," nor "schooling," nor indeed the most meticulous prior calculation of the requisite levels of support and financing, but rather class action that is truly revolutionary and resolute, namely action that would be capable of winning over and sweeping along the broadest strata of the disorganized, but—given their mood and situation—revolutionary, proletarian masses.

The overestimation and false evaluation of the role of the organization within the class struggle of

the proletariat is usually complemented by the underestimation of the disorganized proletarian mass and its political maturity. It is only in a revolutionary period, in the tempest of large-scale, rousing class struggles, that the entire educational effect of rapid capitalist development and of Social Democratic influences upon the broadest strata of the population first reveals itself; by contrast, charts detailing membership of organizations and even election statistics in quiet times merely yield a faint idea of this effect.

We have seen in Russia over the last two years that a large-scale, general action by the proletariat can arise out of the most minor partial conflict between the workers and the entrepreneurial class, out of the slightest local brutality on the part of the organs of government. Everyone regards this as natural, because in Russia there is "the revolution." Yet what does this mean? It signifies that class sentiment, class instinct, is alive to the highest degree among the Russian proletariat, such that the latter experiences each partial issue concerning any given small group of workers as a general matter, as a class issue, and thus the whole proletariat reacts in lightning fashion to the dispute. Whereas in Germany, France, Italy, or Holland, even the most intense labor union conflicts do not elicit a general action by the working class, the slightest affair in Russia raises an entire storm. As paradoxical as it might sound, however, this implies nothing other than that class instinct is currently infinitely stronger among the young, unschooled, dimly enlightened, and even more feebly organized Russian proletariat than is the case among the organized, schooled, and enlightened workforce in Germany or any other Western European country. And this is no particular virtue of the "young, unspent East" in contrast with the "lazy West": It is rather a simple result of immediate revolutionary mass action. In the case of the German enlightened worker, the class consciousness that has been implanted within him by Social Democracy is a *theoretical, latent* one: In the period of the rule of bourgeois parliamentarianism, it cannot as a rule be activated as direct mass action; in this case, class consciousness consists in the ideal aggregate of the 400 parallel actions in the various electoral districts, the many partial economic struggles, and the like. In the revolution, where the mass itself appears in the political arena, class consciousness becomes *practical* and *active*. Thus, a single year of revolution gave the very "schooling" to the Russian proletariat that thirty years of parliamentary and labor union struggle could not give by artificial means to the German proletariat. Admittedly, this vibrant, active class sentiment of the proletariat in Russia will also significantly fade, or rather be transformed into a concealed, latent one after the conclusion of the period of revolution and the establishment of a bourgeois-parliamentary constitutional state. Yet the reverse is equally certain: In a period of powerful political actions in Germany, a vibrant and effective revolutionary class sentiment will grip the broadest and deepest strata of the proletariat, and will do so all the more rapidly and forcefully, the more extensively the Social Democratic organizations have performed their educational task up to that point. This educational work and the agitational and revolutionizing effect of contemporary German politics as a whole will express themselves in the circumstance that all those cohorts that, in an apparent state of political stultification, currently remain insensitive to all attempts at organization by the Social Democrats and by the labor unions will, in an earnest revolutionary period, suddenly obey the flag of Social Democracy. Six months of a revolutionary period will accomplish the work of schooling these currently disorganized masses that a decade of popular assemblies and distribution of leaflets would not have been able to achieve. And when relations in Germany have attained the degree of maturity for such a period, the most disorganized and backward strata today will naturally form the most radical and tumultuous element in the struggle, as opposed to being merely dragged along by it. If it should come to mass strikes in Germany, it is virtually certain that it will not be the best organized—the printers, for example—but rather the worst organized or those that are completely disorganized—the miners, the textile workers, perhaps even agricultural laborers—who will develop the greatest capacity for action.

In this way, we reach the same conclusions with regard to the actual tasks of *leadership* and the role

of Social Democracy vis-à-vis mass strikes in Germany that we drew previously in our analysis of the processes in Russia. That is, if we abandon the pedantic schema of a demonstrative mass strike of the organized minority, a mobilization artificially contrived by order of the party and the labor unions, and turn our attention instead to the vivid image of a real popular movement that has emerged with elemental force from the extreme intensification of class antagonisms and the political situation, it is evident that the task of Social Democracy consists not in the technical preparation and direction of the mass strike, but first and foremost in the *political leadership* of the whole movement.

Social Democracy is the most enlightened, most class-conscious Vanguard of the proletariat. It cannot, and must not, await in fatalist fashion, with folded arms, the onset of the “revolutionary situation”—it cannot wait for such a spontaneous popular movement to fall from the sky. On the contrary, it must, as always, anticipate the development of events and seek to *accelerate* them. It cannot do this, however, through suddenly and indiscriminately issuing a “call” for a mass strike at what might be the right or the wrong point in time, but rather, and above all, by making clear to the broadest proletarian strata the inexorable onset of this revolutionary period and by clarifying the internal *social moments* that lead to it and its *political consequences*. If the broadest strata of the proletariat are to be won over for a political mass action on the part of Social Democracy, and if, conversely, Social Democracy is to seize and retain effective leadership during a mass movement and to gain control over the entire movement *in the political sense*, then it must be capable of implanting its *tactics* and *goals* within the German proletariat with the utmost clarity, coherence, and resolution in the period of the coming struggles.

Notes

1. This text was first published as a pamphlet in 1906 as *Massenstreik, Partei, und Gewerkschaften* (Hamburg: Verlag von Erdmann Dubber). Shortly after her release from prison on July 8, 1906, Luxemburg traveled to Kuokkala, Finland, where she engaged in extensive discussions with Lenin and his fellow Bolsheviks, including Grigori Zinoviev, Lev Kamenev, and Alexander Bogdanov, on the significance of the 1905 Revolution; as Zinoviev later put it, she was “the first Marxist who was able to evaluate the Russian Revolution correctly and as a whole”; see J. P. Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg* (London and New York: Verso, 2019), p. 357. It was during this period in Finland that she composed the *Mass Strike* pamphlet, which had been commissioned by the Executive Committee of the Social Democratic Organization of the Federal State of Hamburg, and by the Executive Committees of the Social Democratic Associations of Altona, Ottensen, and Wandsbek. This original edition is based on the printed manuscript dating from 1906. It is translated by Nicholas Gray.

2. It was common among European Marxists of the time (including Russian ones) to refer to tsarist absolutism as a form of “Oriental despotism,” in part due to the alleged influence of the Mongol invasion and occupation of large parts of southern Russia from the thirteenth century onward.

3. Russian Poland (Congress Poland) refers to the Kingdom of Poland, a state established in 1815 by the Vienna Conference. Existing until 1915, the Kingdom of Poland was connected by personal union with Russia and subjected to tsarist rule.

4. [Footnote by Luxemburg] Comrade [Henriette] Roland-Holst thus commits a factual error when she states the following in the prologue to the Russian edition of her book on the mass strike: “The proletariat (in Russia—*R.L.*) had become acquainted with the mass strike virtually since the emergence of large-scale industry for the simple reason that partial strikes had proven impossible under the political repression of absolutism” (*Neue Zeit*, 1906, No. 33). The reverse was in fact true. Thus the rapporteur of the Saint Petersburg Labor Union Combine made the following declaration at the beginning of his report to the Second Conference of Russian Labor Unions in February 1906: “In view of the composition of this conference, I do not need to emphasize that our labor union

movement has its origins neither in the 'liberal' period of Prince Svyatopolk-Mirsky (in 1904—*R.L.*), nor in the events of January 22, as is asserted by some; the labor union movement has far deeper roots, and is inseparably bound up with the entire past history of our workers' movement. Our labor unions are merely new organizational forms for the purpose of directing the economic struggle that the Russian proletariat has waged for decades. Without going too far back in history, it can be said that the economic struggle of the workers of Saint Petersburg has taken on more or less organized forms since the memorable strike of 1896-97. Favorably combined with the leadership of the political struggle, the leadership of this struggle becomes the affair of the Social Democratic organization formerly known as the Saint Petersburg League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class, which transformed itself into the Saint Petersburg Committee of the Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party after its conference in March 1898. A complex system of factory, district, and suburban organizations was created; these represented innumerable threads that connected the headquarters to the masses of workers, allowing it to react to all of the needs of the working class by producing leaflets. This established the possibility of supporting and leading strikes.

5. *Englischen* in the original.

6. *Batrachomyomachia*, or *The Battle of Frogs and Mice*, is an ancient parody of the *Iliad*; its authorship has not been conclusively established. Marx often used the phrase to refer to the endless feuds between radical sects, especially of those in exile.