

Study Guide for *What Is to Be Done?* *Burning Questions of Our Movement* by Vladimir Lenin

First Edition

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This document is in the public domain; however, I would like to emphasize that I disapprove of its usage in any generative, “AI,” for any reason. This current study guide assumes that the reader has previously read *The State and Revolution* and its associated study guide.

The order these study guides are meant to be read in will likely be changed at a later time, however due to rapidly changing conditions what with the 50% completion of Project 2025 within only one year of fascist dictator Donald Trump being in office (compared to his predecessor of following instructions from bourgeois-class-conscious organization The Heritage Foundation, Ronald Reagan—who fascinatingly enough *also* followed a document called Mandate for Leadership—this is significantly faster, albeit the bricks for his road had already been laid by bipartisan neoliberalism), the invasion of Venezuela, and the explosive growth of the Amestapo (primarily through ICE), I find it more integral to provide theory explaining how Communist Parties should function at this time.

This will unfortunately provide a theoretical gap from anti-utopian, anti-idealist, and anti-dogmatic theory explained in works such as *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, but this will hopefully only be a temporary issue.

Introduction

What Is to Be Done is one of the most frequently cited important documents of Vladimir Lenin. This document, as the title suggests, contains Lenin’s recommendations for what should be done—specifically, in regards to explosive Communist Party growth, and how members of that Party should behave and be trained.

While Chapter 5 and the Conclusion are the parts of the document that actually answer the question in the title, and the former is perhaps the most applicable to modern USAmerican conditions (due to peasants being a minority or arguably non-existent in the USA), it’s important to have the context of the previous 4 chapters to understand why and how Lenin came to his conclusions, and the critiques he, a Bolshevik, made against the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries.

This document, fascinatingly, also provides some context for the origin of the hammer-and-sickle as a popular symbol of Communism, albeit it’s not mentioned in the document originally; it represented unity between the peasants (using the sickle) and the proletariat (using the hammer), which

today can still be used as unity between agricultural workers and industrial workers, as these represent the common relations that existed between the Russian peasantry and proletariat at the time.

During Lenin's time, the Russian Empire had recently experienced a bourgeois revolution against the feudal lords, creating room for an industrial revolution and leading to the development of capitalism in a country where the peasantry were largely using wooden tools and living in unheated, overcrowded wooden homes without water, electricity, or privacy (and these conditions unfortunately remained rather common until the mass housing block construction following the proletarian October Revolution).

In response to this, three major camps of opinion on how to proceed followed: the Mensheviks argued that capitalism had to fully develop in order to transition to Socialism, the Socialist-Revolutionaries argued that Socialism could be developed by deliberately expanding the peasant class into many small land-owners, and the Bolsheviks argued that, despite the proletariat being a minority, and capitalism having barely developed, the Socialists were already ready for revolution and could overthrow the system—history has shown that the Bolsheviks were the correct group here.

As new terms come up in the document that may be unfamiliar or have experienced lingual drift, they'll be clarified for their individual sections. Additionally, to encourage reading the document rather than seeking summaries, key takeaways for different sections will be presented as questions for the reader to answer, allowing them to seek the answers themselves and come to a greater understanding of the document.

This is unfortunately due to the fact that—while being somewhat viable as onboarding to reading Socialist theory, assuming someone is actively encouraged to learn and possibly assisted in doing so (as opposed to berated)—summarized Socialist theory significantly waters down the original documents and will only provide a rudimentary understanding.

The headings beyond this point in the document will simply denote the relevant sections of *What Is to Be Done*.

Preface

Important Context:

- Economism refers to the primary focus of improving the economic conditions of workers over the political conditions of workers; while the political conditions are tied to the economic relations, improving the relations under capitalism doesn't solve the problem of the exploitation of surplus labour.

While improving these conditions *are* important (as emphasized by Marx in *Value, Price, and Profit*, to be anti-trade-union is to be not only anti-Marxist, but also counter-revolutionary), trade unionism is not the end-all-be-all of developing Socialism—workers will never truly be free from the conditions of capitalism without seizing broad political power by whatever means are necessary (as was later reiterated by other Socialist philosophers like Malcolm X).

- Where *all-Russia* is seen, this can be taken to mean all-state, applicable to whichever country you live in; for example, all-Ghana, all-Iraq, all-Ireland, et cetera.
- *Ab ovo* is a Latin term meaning, “from the egg;” i.e. to start from the beginning.
- When Social-Democracy is capitalized (and hyphenated in this study guide), this study guide is referring to Bolshevism, i.e. Marxism-Leninism. If social democracy is lowercase, it’s referring to what we consider social democracy today—the unfortunate domination of the Bernsteinian movement. Lenin will use the term Social-Democratic to describe the entire Socialist movement in Russia due to there being ideological fractures between what we call the Marxist-Leninists and the social democrats today.
- The Socialism For All (often abbreviated to S4A) audiobook recording of *What Is to Be Done* omits the extra notes from Lenin present in the Marxists Internet Archive copy—even where *Lenin deliberately moved them to the primary portion of the document*—claiming that it would be, “too confusing”; notes will be present when these are missing if these are more than just sources or clarifications of terminology.

Key Takeaways:

- What are the two primary questions being answered in *What Is to Be Done*?

Chapter 1: Dogmatism and “Freedom of Criticism”

Section 1: What Does “Freedom of Criticism” Mean?

Important Context:

- Dogmatism is when something is taken as true, “because it’s true”—the, “because I said so,” of Socialist theory. Dogmatic theory relies on the supposition that what’s been written is incontrovertibly true, and either asserts that criticisms and counterpoints are wrong and irrelevant without addressing the contents within and why they’re wrong, or ignoring them entirely and acting as though criticisms and counterpoints don’t exist.

This is unfortunately a common criticism applicable to anarchist theory, but can also frequently be seen in social democratic theory, and even in allegedly Marxist theory. Marx’s original theory frequently cited sources, including those from bourgeois philosophers like Adam Smith, and explains in-depth as to why they’re wrong using factual evidence.

Unfortunately, this isn’t consistently practiced among all theorists, and several have become notorious for attempting to convert concepts like Socialism with a specific country’s characteristics into dogmas that they consider to be universally applicable and even superior to other ideologies even when evidence and tangible attempts prove this wrong (as will be briefly mentioned with the French attempting Bernstein’s concept of social democracy).

The reason Marxism, and by extension, Marxism-Leninism, are known to be universally

applicable, is due to the broad range of conditions these theories have been attempted and successfully put into practice; however, some conditions, such as responding to the Russian condition of having a majority peasant population and minority proletariat population, are *not* universally applicable.

Dogmatism is inherently incompatible with dialectical materialism, and is the reason that in theory ranging from Lenin to Mao to the ComIntern to Ho Chi Minh, assertions can frequently be found that no Socialist system (Soviet-style Socialism, Socialism with Chinese characteristics, Ho Chi Minh thought, etc.) is universally applicable due to a wide variety of conditions, and that only a basic set of criteria can be universally applicable.

- A note from Lenin is present in this section on Socialist internationalism, present in the Marxists Internet Archive copy.
- To my understanding, “democrats,” when taken alone (in the example, “*controversies between Socialists and democrats*,”) refers to bourgeois liberals. In the USAmerican example, this would refer to the democratic party, and perhaps to an extent be applicable to the republican party on account of their broad ideological overlap.
- Proletarianisation, sometimes referred to as proletarianization, refers to the conversion of the population into proletarians, i.e. workers who sell their labour to a capitalist who purchases their labour, as opposed to peasants who sell commodities they produce by working on their own private property.
- The allusion to social democracy (as we understand it today) birthing fully-developed from within the Marxist movement being similar to the birth of Minerva from Jove (Jupiter) references how, in the original Roman religion, Jupiter raped Metis to trick her into turning into a fly to avoid a prophecy wherein his child would overthrow him, assuming the child would be male, and swallowed Metis whole.

Metis followed this by giving birth to Minerva inside of Jupiter, and she forged weapons and armour for Minerva while still inside Jupiter, causing Jupiter great pain. To relieve this pain, Vulcan—a god of metalworking—split Jupiter’s head with a hammer, and Minerva arose from the crack in his head, fully grown and armoured.

Groady religious story aside, this essentially means that Lenin was alluding to the social democrat movement appearing fully-formed within Marxism being due to the bourgeoisie deliberately grooming students from a young age to sympathize with the bourgeoisie and their political methods as they grew up in an increasingly Marxist society, meaning the social democrats had been, “born inside,” the Marxist movement.

- While not technically theoretically relevant, I feel it’s prudent to mention at this point that Lenin is famous for his sarcasm in his theory, and will oftentimes make jokes in his writing, like that of comparing social democrats advocating for social reform to people walking off the path and

into a marsh. This is also quite common in Marx's writing, albeit Marx is generally a much angrier man, especially in *Capital*.

Key Takeaways:

- What was cut out of the Socialist movement when Eduard Bernstein demanded, "Social-Democracy (Marxism) must change from a party of social revolution into a democratic party of social reforms?"
- Is the social democrat concept of, "class collaboration," familiar? (Note: What was the concept in relation to class struggle the Italian and German fascists told workers to adopt? What two ideologies does searching the term, "class collaboration," yield? Is there overlap between the beliefs of social democrats (like those in Norway and Sweden) and those of fascists (like those in the USA and Israel), and why?)
- How does Lenin compare the social democrats' use of the word, "freedom," to that of scientists?

Section 2: The New Advocates of "Freedom of Criticism"

Important Context:

- The, "Ilovaisky manner," of teaching mentioned refers to Great Man Theory, the popular (despite its inaccuracy) method of teaching history under capitalism. Great Man Theory perceives history through so-called, "Great Men," who lead historical movements, such as Alexander III, Ramesses II, Napoleon Bonaparte, Vladimir Lenin, Mao Tse-Tung, Ho Chi Minh, or for more modern examples, Vladimir Putin, Donald Trump, Joe Biden, Xi Jinping, et cetera.

The problem with this perspective of history is that it fails to acknowledge the more important drivers of historical movements: *the people themselves*. Historical materialism utilizes dialectical materialism when looking at history, which immediately demonstrates Great Man Theory to be an extremely warped perception of history—in reality, historical movements are led by workers and determined by material factors, which are oftentimes created by economic relations.

In essence, the critique Lenin is making here is that a lot of people who call themselves, "Marxists," often uncritically perceive history in the way they were groomed to do so by bourgeois education, leading to an unscientific development in their theory, which in turn rapidly departs from Marxism, becoming utopian, idealist, and oftentimes opportunist (attempting to seek unity between irreconcilable ideologies, such as Marxism and liberalism, which is what social democrats are attempting; an offshoot of social democracy, democratic socialism, is attempting to do this with Marxism and neoliberalism).

- There are multiple notes here wherein Lenin criticizes the Mensheviks for acknowledging the original revolutionary-opportunist split, but denying the Jacobin-Gironde split, a note wherein

Lenin acknowledges that German Marxism developed so rapidly because of harsh critiques of opportunism (directly citing Engels' *Anti-Dühring*), and a note wherein Lenin critiques *Rabochaya Dyelo* for repeatedly paraphrasing what other Socialists say instead of presenting their own opinions, which are all present in the Marxists Internet Archive copy.

Key Takeaways:

- Is there a similarity between how the social democrats and the nazis call themselves, “socialists,” despite not enacting Socialist praxis?
- How is the Bernsteinian (social democrat) trend demonstrated to not stand for class struggle in the example of Germany? (Note: How were they tolerated by German Communists?)

Section 3: Criticism in Russia

Important Context:

- A note is present from Lenin in this section, criticizing how the Russian social democrats advocated for, “freedom of criticism,” but wouldn’t even form or join political parties.

Key Takeaways:

- What is the primary requirement of Socialist alliances?
- How did Bernsteinism (social democracy), “vulgarize,” Marxism?
- Does the tendency of social democrats to avoid criticism and disagreements in the theory and execution of Socialism sound familiar? (Note: Have you noticed the common thought-stopping phrase, “leftist infighting,” utilized any time social democrats or democratic socialists are criticized, despite having wildly different ideologies from their criticizer, and not being in the same formal organizations—if in organizations at all?)
- What are the three suggestions Lenin makes for combating opportunism in Communist parties? (Note: Do you know of a Socialist organization actively developing theory—for example, are there any Socialist parties in the USA or Canada developing *Socialism with North American characteristics*? Do you know anyone willing to engage in Unity-Struggle-Unity to help develop theory?)

Section 4: Engels On the Importance of the Theoretical Struggle

Important Context:

- Great elaborations on how to develop theory, such as Unity-Struggle-Unity and the ever-relevant statement of, “No investigation, no right to speak,” are explained in the works of Mao Tse-Tung, particularly in *Oppose Book Worship, On Practice, On Contradiction*, and *On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People*.

Key Takeaways:

- Does critiquing dogmatism mean anything without taking concrete actions against it (for example, developing theory)?
- What is the precursor to a revolutionary movement? (Note: Are you part of a group that studies—not just reads, *studies*—Marxist theory? Do you share what you’ve learned studying theory with other people? Do you encourage other people to read theory, using specific examples of books you’ve read, studied, understood, and recognized as integral to understanding Marxism-Leninism?)
- How is the role of the vanguard fulfilled?
- What are the three forms of the workers’ struggle for Communist liberation?
- How can Socialists develop theory from the international struggle? (Note: How did the German Marxists in Engels’ time develop theory after watching the English and French attempts?)

Chapter 2: The Spontaneity of the Masses and the Consciousness of the Social-Democrats

Section 1: A Beginning of the Spontaneous Upsurge

Important Context:

- There are three notes from Lenin in this section, one on trade union agitation and its relation to political struggle—primarily in that while trade unions contain political struggle, its differences will be elaborated in Chapter 3, one where Lenin verifies information received by noting that the person it was received from died from consumption (tuberculosis) after catching it in solitary confinement shortly before banishment to Eastern Siberia, and one wherein Lenin criticizes the economists for claiming that the failures of the Social-Democrats was due to a, “lack of conditions,” despite the only condition lacking being the training of the movement’s leaders, all of which are present in the Marxists Internet Archive copy.

Key Takeaways:

- Is it possible to develop class consciousness without assistance from the intelligentsia; i.e. the highly educated people, especially of economic and political fields? (Note: This is where the first half of Communist theory comes from—the second source comes from a dialectical materialist analysis of tangible experiences to resist the capitalist system. Without the former, the second can’t come to fruition, as it will otherwise lack the understanding of the economic background of their struggle, hence why it will naturally develop a trade union or anarchist stance at best.)
- Is it possible for a Communist party to train its leaders and develop revolutionary training for its members through spontaneous actions? How is this training to be acquired? (Note: Lenin will later directly criticize random acts of terrorism in this document.)

Section 2: Bowing to Spontaneity. *Rabochaya Mysl*

Important Context:

- *Rabochaya Mysl*, as well as *Rabochaya Dyelo*, were rival Russian Socialist newspapers to Iskra that lacked the Bolsheviks' understanding of Marxist theory.
- There are notes from Lenin in this section, one where he critiques, "V. I.," (no relation to Vladimir Ilyich Lenin) for being an editor of *Rabochaya Dyelo* who denied the split in ideology while being the source of it, a note wherein he asserts a metaphor he used could be taken literally, as one of the people who told the police who the, "Decembrists," were had been in contact with the, "Decembrists," and was subsequently murdered by the workers for his sabotage, a note directly critiquing, "V. V.," for clearly not having read theory, a note emphasizing that while the specific relations between Iskra and *Rabochaya Dyelo* were specific to Lenin's time, their conditions may still be relevant if your current organizations also repeat the same mistakes, a note wherein Lenin emphasizes that the workers can only become class conscious by reading advanced documents from the intelligentsia (for example, Marx and Engels were intelligentsia), and only bad intellectuals will rely on repeating information about working conditions—directly calling out Proudhon for doing so, and a note from Lenin clarifying that while workers will naturally gravitate towards Socialism, the overwhelming propaganda of the bourgeois ideology will result in the latter dominating without deliberate effort to counter it, all of which are present in the Marxists Internet Archive copy.

Key Takeaways:

- Are union strikes enough to liberate the workers? (Note: Why did the, "blue coats," (allusion to the tsarist *gendarmes*, a derogatory French term for police) arrest the original leaders of the Social-Democrat movement, but then allow workers to simply perform trade union strikes?)
- Why did the West European bourgeoisie deliberately allow the ideological import of simply agitating for trade unionism and wage increases to their countries?
- Why does attempting to create an ideology of class collaboration (as Lenin phrases it, "a third ideology;" "a non-class or above-class ideology") result in a bourgeois ideology?
- What is the task of Communists in relation to the trade union movement?

Section 3: The Self-Emancipation Group and *Rabochaya Dyelo*

Important Context:

- Notes from Lenin are present here, including one where he criticizes *Rabochaya Dyelo* for lying about being unaware of the Economist trend despite supporting it multiple years earlier, and a critique where Lenin asserts that economic victory is neither necessary nor truly possible before the workers seize political power, both of which are present in the Marxists Internet Archive copy.

Key Takeaways:

- Should specific, detailed plans be written far ahead of time for political struggle? Should specific, details plans be written for current political struggles? (Note: What did Lenin say about developing general treatments of disease vs. treatments for a specific disease? How does this relate?)
- What is the correct response to a reactionary government declaring Socialism illegal? (Note: How did the German Socialists respond to the anti-Socialist law? How was Bernstein's proposal similar to modern social democrats? How was Hasselmann's proposal similar to modern Socialism-appropriating opportunist and Socialism-appropriating terrorist organizations like *The Shining Path* (a Gonzaloist party in Peru that advocates for frequent terrorist attacks for a, "blood quota")? What was the third response?—this will be very relevant later.)
- Why did Lenin praise the usage of the word, "inopportune?" (Note: Why did the Black Lives Matter movement take on a violent element for a time? What happened to the movement when opportunists and bourgeoisie alike watered it down?)
- What is the necessary response to the growth of a Socialist movement?

Chapter 3: Trade-Unionist Politics and Social-Democratic Politics

Section 1: Political Agitation And Its Restriction By the Economists

Important Context:

- Notes are present from Lenin here, which includes a note clarifying that by *economic struggle* Lenin means trade unions, a note regarding that while this chapter primarily focuses on political struggle, he also noticed the other illegal Socialist newspapers weren't doing enough in the economic struggle either, a clarification about cases existing where economic struggle should be the primary catalyst but that stating it should be the general policy for all of a state (in his case, Russia) is absurd, and that in the next chapter he'll be discussing politicians who do the opposite and entirely ignore economic struggle, all of which are included in the Marxists Internet Archive copy.

Key Takeaways:

- How did workers respond to Communist leaflets being spread around?
- Should Communist newsletters include political education, not just trade grievances? (Note: What do you think would happen if Communist newsletters explicitly outlined ICE raids and the corruption of government officials? What if they included Communist theory, like these study guides, as explicit parts of the newsletters?)
- What does the economic struggle (trade unionism) actually accomplish? (Note: The sale and purchase of labour power—particularly of surplus labour (for example, an 8 hour shift where

you're paid for 4 hours of your value and the capitalist takes 4 hours of surplus value)—is how capitalism works, allowing it to perpetuate the cycle of capital by the process of $M \rightarrow L + MP \rightarrow C \rightarrow M' \rightarrow L' + MP' \rightarrow C' \rightarrow M'' \rightarrow$ loop ad nauseam (as complicated as this looks, this is unfortunately wildly oversimplified; this also has the notable interactions of $C \rightarrow M \rightarrow C'$, $M \rightarrow C \rightarrow M'$, and that $M \rightarrow C \rightarrow M'$ contains $L + MP$ between the M and C), where L is Labour power, MP is Means of Production, C is Commodities, M is Monetary capital, and an apostrophe is, “prime,” ex. M' is Monetary capital prime, i.e. more money, which is used to expand production via increased Labour power (through literal expansion of the workforce, or increasing absolute surplus labour (the amount of hours worked) or relative surplus labour (increasing the productivity (better equipment, advances in technology) and intensity (how hard we work)) and Means of Production—hence why Communists demand *seize the means of production*, not *seize the money*.)

- How do economic concessions benefit bourgeois governments?

Section 2: How Martynov Rendered Plekhanov More Profound

Key Takeaway:

- What is the distinction between a *propagandist* and an *agitator*? (Note: A proper Communist movement will have both.)

Section 3: Political Exposures And “Training In Revolutionary Activity”

Important Context:

- The S4A audiobook recording alters a line from Lenin, which should read: “For this reason the conception of the economic struggle as the most widely applicable means of drawing the masses into the political movement, which our Economists preach, is so extremely harmful and reactionary in its practical significance.” This is due to the fact that S4A makes a few long audio takes, rather than many smaller takes wherein the best recordings are selected, ironically ignoring the principle of the transformation of quantity into quality wherein individual recordings are concerned.
- There are two notes here from Lenin, one which discusses how Communists should utilize economic struggles to educate workers about and advance the political struggle rather than relying on the spontaneous, brief conversions of economic struggles into political struggles (which lack the political and economic context the intelligentsia provide), and a harsh critique where Lenin points out that the other Socialist factions are *aware* the proletariat lacks political education and is doing *nothing* in response.

Key Takeaways:

- What builds proper political class consciousness for the proletariat? (Note: Which is more effective—wearing frog suits and performing yoga and a dance party in front of an ICE

concentration camp detaining suffering people, or a disruptive anti-ICE and anti-USA protest explicitly agitating for Marxism-Leninism against the regimes neoliberal and fascist alike?)

- Who should make calls to action, and why?
- What should Communist publishers do in response to the political struggle?
- How can intellectuals help the Communist movement?

Section 4: What Is There In Common Between Economism and Terrorism?

Important Context:

- This section discusses how a reactionary terrorist and the social democrat movement (as we understand them today) had overlap in beliefs. This is synonymous with how social democrats and fascists both advocate for class collaboration.
- There is a note here from Lenin where he clarifies the source of the, “two perspectives,” and elaborates that the Bolsheviks were engaging in more useful economic struggle by ensuring to not only utilize it for political struggle, but also utilize political struggle even when not directly tied to economic struggle, which can be found in the Marxists Internet Archive copy.

Key Takeaway:

- What will convert, “droplets,” into a, “torrent?” (Note: What were the Russian workers clamouring for?)

Section 5: The Working Class As A Vanguard Fighter For Democracy

Important Context:

- It must be noted at this time that the previous study guide for *The State and Revolution* asserted that the bourgeois proletariat (not to be confused with the petit bourgeois) are a distinct class: **this was wrong**, and consequently my misunderstanding should be publicly rectified for all readers. The concept of the bourgeois proletariat describes an *ideological tendency*, not a class.

The concept of the bourgeois proletariat describes how proletarians will oftentimes side with the bourgeoisie, developing false consciousness, due to privileges they receive in society. In Marx’s time, this could be seen in how Irish workers identified with English industry against Irish workers in Ireland, but were also oppressed in England by the English workers who viewed the Irish as inferior, which resulted in both groups having a significantly harder time organizing.

This can also be seen in trade unionism, where, for example, the United Food and Commercial Workers union *only* fights in the trade union struggle for food and commercial workers, the

United Farm Workers union *only* fights in the trade union struggle for farm workers, the Teamster's union *only* fights in the trade union struggle for distribution workers, the Starbucks Workers United union *only* fights in the trade union struggle for Starbucks baristas, the National Education Association union *only* fights in the trade union struggle for teachers—and consequently, by not working together, by not unifying into a single, larger, Marxist-Leninist union, they apply significantly less pressure to their capitalist oppressors, and can only improve working conditions in small sectors of industry, rather than for workers as a whole, especially in regards to extremely low union membership when compared to prior decades.

It must also be noted, especially in racism, that people in the oppressor class (in this example, whomever is considered, “white” (if it needs to be stated, this is a concept that was deliberately invented to justify exploitation and colonialism, and is malleable to include whatever the oppressors want; racism isn't based in science, it's based in classism) must unite with the struggles of the oppressed class (for example, Black workers, Haitians, Palestinians, the Sudanese, the Congolese, etc.); it's much more reasonable for the oppressor classes to unite with the oppressed classes and demand the system of oppression which they benefit from should be abolished than to ask the oppressed class to unite with the oppressor class in their liberation without giving in return—to put it bluntly, the Marxist movement *cannot advance* without direct action to support the liberation of oppressed classes, and especially relevant to North American (especially USAmerican!) conditions, ***the Marxist movement cannot advance without Black and Indigenous liberation.***

- A small note from Lenin here is present where he clarifies the counter-attack response to the Economists' letter in regards to Iskra was placed in What Is to Be Done? rather than in Iskra on account of a lack of space and appropriate time to respond, which is present in the Marxists Internet Archive copy.

Key Takeaways:

- How can Communists bring political knowledge to the workers?

(Note: While the proletariat is the majority in highly industrialized countries like the USA, there are still other classes present.

For instance, the self-employed and small business owners (who, if it must be bluntly stated, are still exploiting workers for surplus labour, even in cooperatives) are petit bourgeois (please consult *The Communist Manifesto* for a brief elaboration and clarification of why they'll still benefit from Communist revolution—

—they are in fact mentioned directly), and the agricultural workers—given that they own land (which is private property, and hence capital in the form of the means of production), but have to work on that land and directly sell commodities to pay the land taxes—

—range from arguably semi-peasantry to petit bourgeois to explicitly bourgeoisie (in the case

that the land owner does no work and purchases the labour power of others); these classes must also be spoken to and taught political knowledge—

—but it must be noted that this knowledge should be relevant to their labour; for instance, agricultural workers are more likely to be interested in how they can increase farm yields than complex economic theory.

There is also the lumpenproletariat, like the homeless and the unemployed, who are outcast from proletarian society, and consequently can't fully understand proletarian conditions, and will gravitate towards reactionary, or when surrounded by proletarians, idealist ideologies (for example, anarchism). These people, too, must also be taught and given aid where possible, including giving them paid Communist Party labour where possible.)

- Given the correction on the terminology of *bourgeois proletariat*, what is the answer this chapter gives to correcting this mindset? (Note: This particularly focuses on the trade union aspect of the bourgeois proletarian mindset.)

Section 6: Once More “Slanderers”, Once More “Mystifiers”

Important Context:

- A note is present here from Lenin, where he addresses that revolutionary movements aren't necessarily inherently *Communist* revolutionary movements, providing the example that the revolution against the autocracy was originally carried out by the bourgeoisie as a bourgeois revolution (to transition from feudalism to capitalism), and consequently a naturally revolutionary tendency among workers in capitalist society, while it *may* take on a Socialist character, is more likely to be trade unionist in character, and by that nature falling into the trap of bourgeois democracy, which is present in the Marxists Internet Archive copy.

Key Takeaways:

- What caused the original Communist movement in Russia to be behind the natural workers' movement? How can this be avoided in modern movements?

Chapter 4: The Primitiveness of the Economists and the Organization of the Revolutionaries

Section 1: What is Primitiveness?

Key Takeaway:

- What are the tasks a Communist organization *must* undertake to hinder infiltration and prevent the movement outstripping its growth and development of revolutionary organizations, leading to its breakup and potential dissolution? (Note: Take particular note of what was written regarding training, centralization (combination) and membership.)

Section 2: Primitiveness and Economism

Key Takeaways:

- Is easily accessible disruptive activity—for example, a general strike—a viable replacement for the Communist Party being both well-trained and well-organized?
- What should Communists do in response to, “secret,” events, like local strikes? (Note: What would happen if information for a, “secret,” event like a local strike were to be broadcast to the entire working class through the all-state newspaper?)
- Should Communists engage in secret political activity? (Note: Can a corporation prepare for a strike if word of it never makes it to social media, or to managers and petit bourgeois store owners, or to the bourgeoisie, prior to the actual start of the strike?)

Section 3: Organisation of Workers and Organisation of Revolutionaries

Important Context:

- As the phrasing in a section of this may be unclear, “efface,” means to erase something or make oneself appear insignificant. In relation to Lenin’s discussion of the revolutionary organizations—the *vanguard*—this means that all differences between whether someone is a worker (of any job) or an intellectual should be eroded: everyone has to be on the same page, and, ideally, all workers within the organization should also be intellectuals.

This secrecy was specifically in relation to the conditions in the Russian Empire wherein both trade unions and Socialist organizations were explicitly illegal and the leaders of the Socialist movements kept being repeatedly arrested; however, this may still be relevant in repressive regimes if, for example, the USA introduces an anti-Socialist law as it slides from neoliberalism into fascism.

- There are notes here from Lenin, one criticizing Rabochaya Dyelo for not recognizing how the Bolsheviks were carefully pushing for the legalization of trade unions without the concept of class collaboration being normalized, one where he clarifies that his rebuttals apply to all Economists, and a criticism of Svoboda for advocating that average workers should become terrorists, all of which is present in the Marxists Internet Archive copy.

Key Takeaways:

- How close should Marxist-Leninists be with trade unions? Should they fully merge, banning all non-Marxists from unions?
- How important is it for Communists to have talented and trained leaders?
- What were Lenin’s 5 assertions on how revolutionary organizations can remain stable? (Note: The element of democracy is elaborated upon in the section after next; as a brief note, a party

that has to operate in secret due to being illegal cannot be properly democratic, hence the phrasing)

- What is the task in relation to amateurs?

Section 4: The Scope of Organisational Work

Important Context:

- There are multiple notes here from Lenin, including one where he tells Communists to take advantage of the soldiers who have increasingly democratic fervour after having to repeatedly crush workers and deliberately cause agitation between the soldiers (Note: This is NOT the same as coddling soldiers. This is deliberately causing infighting within their formal organizations.), one where he emphasizes that—in the case that Communists specifically have a firmly established, abundant, and active Party—Communists within such a Party should strive to include as many people as possible within official aide positions, only carefully selecting the most trained for illegal activities, and a criticism wherein Lenin uses two quotes from Svoboda to point out their own hypocrisy in demanding their programs be carried out on the basis of it sounding important, while not actually carrying them out, all of which can be found in the Marxists Internet Archive copy.

Key Takeaway:

- What is the precursor to discussions of theory and praxis with workers? Is an appeal to the, “average worker,” necessary?

Section 5: “Conspiratorial” Organisation and “Democratism”

Important Context:

- There is a note from Lenin in this section wherein he criticizes Rabochaya Dyelo for either not understanding what they’re talking about or rapidly changing their belief systems (this mirrors Engels’ criticism decades earlier in *On Authority* on anarchists, albeit I don’t believe intentionally) by noting that a quote wherein Rabochaya Dyelo claimed that the pamphlet *The Tasks of the Russian Social-Democrats* aligned entirely with their program despite having multiple dissimilarities, which can be found in the Marxists Internet Archive copy.

Key Takeaways:

- How does a revolutionary organization come at odds with democracy, even wherein its post-revolution goal is immediate true democracy? (Note: Consider the separation of legal and illegal functions. How might relations be different under a bourgeois democracy than under an autocracy?)
- Is a Communist Party more effective as a direct democracy or a representative democracy? (Note: A direct democracy is a democracy wherein all members of a group vote on everything that happens, whereas a representative democracy involves members of a group voting for representatives who can handle tasks (such as the Party’s economic planning) and vote as part

of a representative congress.

The latter is the method used by modern democracies, as the former method was used in Athens between (arguably 621 BCE) 594 BCE–338 BCE (off and on, according to regime changes) and had multiple organizational problems, but proved an excellent starting point for developing checks and balances based on their experiences.

Notably, Socialist democracy, according to Engels, requires that all, “officials,” (in quotes, as the term doesn’t technically describe their position accurately anymore; the common replacement term is People’s Commissars (utilizing Russian grammar) or People’s Commissaries (our English translation), albeit I’d additionally like to note here that *Workers’* Commissars would technically be more accurate) can have their positions revoked at any time by popular decision, and the Soviets developed a method wherein the highest representatives of the highest stage organ (ex. The Party Chairworker of the National Assembly) are elected via congressional representatives, from within that body of congressional representatives (who in turn were elected to their positions by similar methods echoed all the way down to the local level, which over a period of development ensures that all are skilled workers familiar with every part of government), as opposed to direct election like in the USA; this is how the Party Chairworker is elected in the People’s Republic of China, for example.)

Section 6: Local and All-Russia Work

Important Context:

- There are notes here present from Lenin, including one wherein he critiques local parties for not participating in all-Russia work despite having the capabilities, a critique wherein he acknowledges that the quality of Yuzhny Rabochy unintentionally demonstrates the failure of mass organization due to its infrequency and scope being too large a task for only a local paper, and a note on how legal union newspapers can be eased by forcing through the legalization of unions, all of which are present in the Marxists Internet Archive copy.

Key Takeaways:

- What would strengthen local agitation?
- How can many small papers become one large paper? (Note: What would happen if sparse publications from many regions were spliced into one, regularly distributed newspaper?)
- What perspective must become a tradition before local municipal affairs can be tackled? (Note: What does Lenin mention about the Russian autocracy? How would this be applicable to a bourgeois democracy?)
- What should local Communist organizations do?
- What topics should trade union pamphlets contain?

- How can linking trade union pamphlets to the whole of the state help build the Communist movement? (Note: Do you know what happens in other unionized locations, or are you only limited to knowing what happens in *your* workplace? What would happen if seasonal or monthly newspapers were weekly instead?)

Chapter 5: The Plan for An All-Russia Political Newspaper

Section 1: Who Was Offended By the Article “Where To Begin”

Important Context:

- *Im Werden* is German for, “In the making.” (Note: While not necessary to understand the text, I want to share that nouns are capitalized in German, not verbs, leading to some personal confusion as to why *werden* (to become, to develop) is capitalized.)
- There’s a note here from Lenin wherein he acknowledges that the author of *The Working-Class Cause In Russia* asked him to clarify who published and edited it, and that a new edition would soon be released, which can be found in the Marxists Internet Archive copy.

Key Takeaways:

- Should Communist parties make definitive plans for organization?
- What should Communist organizations do if the central organs of their Parties have become stagnant or disintegrated? (Note: What would happen if the Communist Party USA had, by its own admission, noticed a distressing lack of Marxism-Leninism, and even just Marxism in general, in the Western Socialist movement, but continued a Party line that failed to reinvigorate its organizations?)

Section 2: Can A Newspaper Be A Collective Organiser?

Important Context:

- There are notes here from Lenin where he sarcastically jabs at the authors of *Rabochaya Dyelo*, *Krichevsky* and *Martynov*, that they should write an article accusing Lenin of being an autocrat for suggesting that the disorganized Communists should be neatly organized into a strong Party line, and one wherein he emphasizes that local organizations working with the all-state Party should focus on not just literary activity, but also revolutionary activity, both of which can be found in the Marxists Internet Archive copy.

Key Takeaways:

- What is the key to training strong revolutionary organizations?
- What is the catalyst for live political work?
- What are Lenin’s comparisons of the Party line to brick-layers and housing scaffolding? (Note: What does this mean in the context of Party organization?)

- What should Communists who work among the agricultural workers and the unemployed do in relation to Communists abroad? (Note: What would happen if Communists providing aid to the homeless interviewed the homeless about how they're being treated in tent cities and homeless shelters, and broadcasted their grievances nationwide, especially to the other homeless people, and spoke to them about the Communists' solutions? What would happen if Communists performed similar work with agricultural workers who have grievances against the corporations that rent them their equipment and the governments whom they contract with?)
- What should be the dialectical relationship (i.e. how they affect each other) between local organizations and the all-state Party?

Section 3: What Type of Organisation Do We Require?

Important Context:

- There are notes here from Lenin, including one critiquing Nadezhdin for providing no contributions to the development of modern theory (much alike how many in the US American Socialist movement have made absolutely no contributions to the development of Socialism with North American characteristics) and his misunderstanding that if he really believes the revolution will occur too soon, it's pointless to fight against people trying to move the Party line under the assertion that it's, "too late," as the results of that struggle will be promptly necessary post-revolution, a critique of Nadezhdin repudiating long-term work by elaborating that the work of Marxists should be focused on the liberation of all of mankind and consequently Marxists shouldn't shy away from long-term work, and one wherein he elucidates that his specific choice to use the word, "agent," was to clearly elucidate that they all operate on a common cause, and sarcastically asserts the Martynovs would instead utilize a ludicrously long title, all of which can be found in the Marxists Internet Archive copy.

Key Takeaways:

- What is Lenin's critique of spontaneous acts of terrorism? What should the, "regular troops," of the Communist Party do in relation to mass upsurges instead? (Note: This is in relation to the concept of vanguardism, where the Communist intelligentsia—those trained both in Marxist-Leninist theory *and* in combat where possible—function as the *leaders* who spearhead the revolution, so that it has an actual direction to move towards, rather than being scattered and effectively achieving nothing more than a coup d'état that barely alters existing relations—in the case of the Russian Empire, this could have been a second bourgeois revolution against the autocracy, simply establishing a bourgeois democracy like we see in the current Russian Federation.)
- How does nationwide organization help with spearheading a revolution?
- How does nationwide organization guard against dissolution by raids?
- What is the most practical way Communists can plan for the inevitability of a popular uprising?

Conclusion

Important Context:

- The S4A recording does not read this or the proceeding sections whatsoever, asserting that Chapter 5 was the end of the book. Thankfully, this means I no longer have to clarify when S4A doesn't read footnotes, as he didn't even read the *regular* sections—please consult the Marxists Internet Archive copy, which will contain these footnotes.

Key Takeaways:

- What caused the revolutionary movement in Russia to be diluted? (Note: Did you know that I've had correspondence with the leaders of the Socialist Party USA, including the Party Chairworker, who directly admitted that they aren't Marxist-Leninists, and directly rebuked Lenin and Mao's theory, asserting that Eugene Debs (a social democrat who contributed greatly to obliterating the USAmerican Socialist movement—he hadn't even read *Capital* until *after* he was arrested for agitating for his vibes-based conception of Socialism) provided the, "real," path of, "revolutionary democratic socialism," through non-violent means?)
- What is Lenin's final answer to, "what is to be done?" (Note: What was the distinction of the Third Period, additionally elucidated in the former takeaway?)

Appendix: The Attempt to Unite *Iskra* With *Rabochaya Dyelo*

Key Takeaways:

- What were the principles Lenin highlighted, critiquing opportunism?
- What is the proper distribution of literary functions of a Communist organization?

Correction to *What Is To Be Done?*

Important Context:

- This section is just a clarification of the interactions between two groups.