

Stalin, J.W.

**The Class Struggle
November 14, 1906**



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"The unity of the bourgeoisie can be shaken only by the unity of the proletariat."

— Karl Marx

Present-day society is extremely complex! It is a motley patchwork of classes and groups — the big, middle and petty bourgeoisie; the big, middle and petty feudal landlords; journeymen, unskilled labourers and skilled factory workers; the higher, middle and lower clergy; the higher, middle and minor bureaucracy; a heterogeneous intelligentsia, and other groups of a similar kind. Such is the motley picture our society presents!

But it is also obvious that the further society develops the more clearly two main trends stand out in this complexity, and the more sharply this complex society divides up into two opposite camps — the capitalist camp and the proletarian camp. The January economic strikes (1905) clearly showed that Russia is indeed divided into two camps. The November strikes in St. Petersburg (1905) and the June-July strikes all over Russia (1906), brought the leaders of the two camps into collision and thereby fully exposed the present-day class antagonisms.

Since then the capitalist camp has been wide awake. In that camp feverish and ceaseless preparation is going on; local associations of capitalists are being formed, the local associations combine to form regional associations and the regional associations combine in all-Russian associations; funds and newspapers are being started, and all-Russian congresses and conferences of capitalists are being convened. . . .

Thus, the capitalists are organising in a separate class with the object of curbing the proletariat.

On the other hand, the proletarian camp is wide awake too. Here, too, feverish preparations for the impending struggle are being made. In spite of persecution by the reaction, here, too, local trade unions are being formed, the local unions combine to form regional unions, trade union funds are being started, the trade union press is growing, and all-Russian congresses and conferences of workers' unions are being held. . . .

It is evident that the proletarians are also organising in a separate class with the object of curbing exploitation.

There was a time when "peace and quiet" reigned in society. At that time there was no sign of these classes and their class organisations. A struggle went on at that time too, of course, but that struggle bore a local and not a general class character; the capitalists had no associations of their own, and each capitalist was obliged to deal with "his" workers by himself. Nor did the workers have any unions and, consequently, the workers in each factory were obliged to rely only on their own strength. True, local Social-Democratic organisations led the workers' economic struggle, but everybody will agree that this leadership was weak and casual; the Social-Democratic organisations could scarcely cope with their own Party affairs.

The January economic strikes, however, marked a turning point. The capitalists got busy and began to organise local associations. The capitalist associations in

St. Petersburg, Moscow, Warsaw, Riga and other towns were brought into being by the January strikes. As regards the capitalists in the oil, manganese, coal and sugar industries, they converted their old, "peaceful" associations into "fighting" associations, and began to fortify their positions. But the capitalists were not content with this. They decided to form an all-Russian association, and so, in March 1905, on the initiative of Morozov, they gathered at a general congress in Moscow. That was the first all-Russian congress of capitalists. Here they concluded an agreement, by which they pledged themselves not to make any concessions to the workers without previous arrangement among themselves and, in "extreme" cases — to declare a lockout. 1 That was the starting point of a fierce struggle between the capitalists and the proletarians. It marked the opening of a series of big lockouts in Russia. To conduct a big struggle a strong association is needed, and so the capitalists decided to meet once again to form a still more closely-knit association. Thus, three months after the first congress (in July 1905), the second all-Russian congress of capitalists was convened in Moscow. Here they reaffirmed the resolutions of the first congress, reaffirmed the necessity of lockouts, and elected a committee to draft the rules and to arrange for the convocation of another congress. Meanwhile, the resolutions of the congresses were put into effect. Facts have shown that the capitalists are carrying out these resolutions to the letter. If you recall the lockouts the capitalists declared in Riga, Warsaw, Odessa, Moscow, and other large cities; if you recall the November days in St. Petersburg, when 72 capitalists threatened 200,000 St. Petersburg workers with a cruel lockout, then you will easily understand what a mighty force the all-Russian association of capitalists represents, and how punctiliously they are carrying out the decisions of their association. Then, after the second congress, the capitalists arranged another congress (in January 1906), and finally, in April this year, the all-Russian inaugural congress of the capitalists took place, at which uniform rules were adopted and a Central Bureau was elected. As the newspapers report, these rules have already been sanctioned by the government.

Thus, there can be no doubt that the Russian big bourgeoisie has already organised in a separate class, that it has its own local, regional and central organisations, and can rouse the capitalists of the whole of Russia in conformity with a single plan.

To reduce wages, lengthen the working day, weaken the proletariat and smash its organisations — such are the objects of the general association of capitalists. Meanwhile, the workers' trade union movement has been growing and developing. Here, too, the influence of the January economic strikes (1905) made itself felt. The movement assumed a mass character; its needs grew wider and, in the course of time, it became evident that the Social-Democratic organisations could not conduct both Party and trade union affairs. Something in the nature of a division of labour between the Party and the trade unions was needed. Party affairs had to be directed by the Party organisations, and trade

union affairs by trade unions. And so the organisation of trade unions began. Trade unions were formed all over the country — in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Warsaw, Odessa, Riga, Kharkov and Tiflis. True, the reactionaries placed obstacles in the way, but in spite of that the needs of the movement gained the upper hand and the unions grew in number. Soon the appearance of local unions was followed by the appearance of regional unions and, finally, things reached the stage when, in September last year, an all-Russian conference of trade unions was convened. That was the first conference of workers' unions. The upshot of that conference was, among other things, that it drew together the unions in the different towns and finally elected a Central Bureau to prepare for the convocation of a general congress of trade unions. The October days arrived — and the trade unions became twice as strong as they were before. Local and, finally, regional unions grew day by day. True, the "December defeat" appreciably checked the rate of formation of trade unions, but later the trade union movement recovered and things went so well that in February of this year the second conference of trade unions was called, and it was more widely and fully representative than the first conference. The conference recognised the necessity of forming local, regional and all-Russian centres, elected an "organising commission" to make arrangements for the forthcoming all-Russian congress, and passed appropriate resolutions on current questions affecting the trade union movement.

Thus, there can be no doubt that, notwithstanding the reaction that is raging, the proletariat is also organising in a separate class, is steadily strengthening its local, regional and central trade union organisations, and is also steadily striving to unite its innumerable fellow-workers against the capitalists.

To secure higher wages, a shorter working day, better conditions of labour, to curb exploitation and to thwart the capitalist associations — such are the objects of the workers' trade unions.

Thus, present-day society is splitting up into two big camps; each camp is organising in a separate class; the class struggle that has flared up between them is expanding and growing more intense every day, and all other groups are gathering around these two camps.

Marx said that every class struggle is a political struggle. This means that, if the proletarians and capitalists are waging an economic struggle against each other today, they will be compelled to wage a political struggle tomorrow and thus protect their respective class interests in a struggle that bears two forms. The capitalists have their particular business interests. And it is to protect these interests that their economic organisations exist. But in addition to their particular business interests, they also have common class interests, namely, to strengthen capitalism. And it is to protect these common interests that they must wage a political struggle and need a political party. The Russian capitalists solved this problem very easily: they realised that the only party which

"straightforwardly and fearlessly" championed their interests was the Octobrist Party, and they therefore resolved to rally around that party and to accept its ideological leadership. Since then the capitalists have been waging their political struggle under the ideological leadership of this party; with its aid they exert influence on the present government (which suppresses the workers' unions but hastens to sanction the formation of capitalist associations), they secure the election of its candidates to the Duma, etc., etc.

Thus, economic struggle with the aid of associations, and general political struggle under the ideological leadership of the Octobrist Party — that is the form the class struggle waged by the big bourgeoisie is assuming today.

On the other hand, similar phenomena are also observed in the proletarian class movement today. To protect the trade interests of the proletarians trade unions are being formed, and these fight for higher wages, a shorter working day, etc. But in addition to trade interests, the proletarians have also common class interests, namely, the socialist revolution and the establishment of socialism. It is impossible, however, to achieve the socialist revolution until the proletariat conquers political power as a united and indivisible class. That is why the proletariat must wage the political struggle, and why it needs a political party that will act as the ideological leader of its political movement. Most of the workers' unions are, of course, non-party and neutral; but this merely means that they are independent of the party only in financial and organisational matters, i.e., they have their own separate funds, their own leading bodies, call their own congresses and, officially, are not bound by the decisions of political parties. As regards the ideological dependence of the trade unions upon any given political party, such dependence must undoubtedly exist and cannot help existing, because, apart from everything else, members of different parties belong to the unions and inevitably carry their political convictions into them. Clearly, if the proletariat cannot dispense with the political struggle, it cannot dispense with the ideological leadership of some political party. More than that. It must itself seek a party which will worthily lead its unions to the "promised land," to socialism. But here the proletariat must be on the alert and act with circumspection. It must carefully examine the ideological stock-in-trade of the political parties and freely accept the ideological leadership of the party that will courageously and consistently champion its class interests, hold aloft the Red Flag of the proletariat, and boldly lead it to political power, to the socialist revolution. Until now this role has been carried out by the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party and, consequently, it is the task of the trade unions to accept its ideological leadership.

It is common knowledge that they actually do so.

Thus, economic clashes with the aid of trade unions, political attacks under the ideological leadership of Social-Democracy — that is the form the class struggle of the proletariat has assumed today.

There can be no doubt that the class struggle will flare up with increasing vigour. The task of the proletariat is to introduce the system and the spirit of organisation into its struggle. To accomplish this, it is necessary to strengthen the unions and to unite them, and in this the all-Russian congress of trade unions can render a great service. Not a "non-party workers' congress," but a congress of workers' trade unions is what we need today in order that the proletariat shall be organised in a united and indivisible class. At the same time, the proletariat must exert every effort to strengthen and fortify the party which will act as the ideological and political leader of its class struggle.

Akhali Droyeba (New Times), 2 No. 1, November 14, 1906

Notes

1. Lockout—a strike of employers, during which the employers deliberately shut down their factories in order to break the resistance of the workers and to frustrate their demands.
2. Akhali Droyeba (New Times)—a trade union weekly newspaper published legally in the Georgian language in Tiflis from November 14, 1906, to January 8, 1907, under the directorship of J. V. Stalin, M. Tskhakaya, and M. Davitashvili. Was suppressed by order of the Governor of Tiflis.