

Vladimir Illyich Lenin: What is to be Done, 1902

The history of all countries shows that the working class, on its own, is able to only realize the necessity for combining in unions, for fighting against the employers and for striving to compel the government to pass necessary labor legislation, etc...

...The political struggle carried on by [the Communist revolutionaries] is far more extensive and complex than the economic struggle the workers carry on against the employers and the government...

A workers' organization must be as wide as possible; and it must be as public as conditions will allow. On the other hand, the organizations of revolutionaries must consist first and foremost of people whose profession is that of a revolutionary (that is why I speak of organizations of *revolutionaries*...). Such an organization must of necessity be not too extensive and as secret as possible...

No movement can last without a stable organization of leaders to maintain continuity;

The more widely the masses are drawn into the struggle and form the basis of the movement and participate in it, the more necessary is it to have such an organization, and the more stable must it be (for it is much easier for demagogues to sidetrack the more backward sections of the masses);

The organization must consist chiefly of persons engaged in revolutionary activities as a profession;

In a country with an autocratic government, the more we *restrict* the membership of this organization to persons who are engaged in revolutionary activities as a profession and who have been professionally trained in the art of combating the political police, the more difficult will it be to catch the organization, and the *wider* will be the circle of men and women of the working class or of other classes of society able to join the movement and perform active work in it....

The active and widespread participation of the masses...will benefit by the fact that a "dozen" experienced revolutionaries, no less professionally trained than the police, will centralize all the secret side of the work-prepare leaflets, work out approximate plans and appoint bodies of leaders for each urban district, for each factory district and to each educational institution, etc. (I know that exception will be taken to my "undemocratic" views...). We must have *as large a number as possible* of public organizations having the widest possible variety of functions; for example, trade unions, workers' circles for self-education and the reading of illegal literature, and socialist and also democratic circles for *all other sections of the population*. It is absurd and dangerous to *confuse these with organizations of revolutionaries*, to erase the difference between them...